

SERMONIC PREDICTORS OF BLACK BAPTIST CHURCH
ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL JUSTICE AS A MINISTRY

by

Karl Frederick Brower

A DOCTORAL PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	4
Black Church and Social Justice Work- History and Mythology.....	11
Black Church as Cornerstone of the Black Community and Black Power.....	16
Issues that Need to Be Addressed.....	19
The Adaptive Challenge	27
Objective.....	28
Chapter 2 - Biblical, Theological, Sociological, and Ideological Foundations	33
Sociological and Ideological Foundations	34
Sociological	35
Ideological	39
Biblical and Theological Analysis	46
The Ineluctability of Social Justice Work.....	46
The Final Measure	50
Meaning for the Church Today.....	57
Individual or Communal Judgment	58
Chapter 3 - What is Black Preaching? An Examination of Black Preaching from some Masters 60	
Introduction.....	60
What is Black Preaching?	62
Categories of Sermons	65
Social Activism Preaching.....	68
Black Identity Preaching	70
Cultural Survival.....	71
Empowerment Preaching.....	73
Review of Exemplars of Black Preaching	76
Additional Category of Sermons: Affirmation of Faith.....	81
Dialectical Description of the Black Church and Black Preaching	83
Chapter 4 – The Project and Results.....	95
Research Methodology	95
Identification of Group A, Group B, and Group C Churches.....	97
Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry and Dialectical Polarity Preferences.....	99
Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry and Sermonic Characteristics	108

Sermonic References	108
Analysis of Sermonic References (Self-Assessed).....	110
Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry and Sermons Preached.....	118
Observations from Sermons Reviewed.....	132
Observed Distribution of Sermon Types	133
Observed Presence of Dialectical Polarities	136
Conclusion	147
Fostering Social Justice Preaching and Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	149
Actions of Ministers' Conferences and Faith-Based Organizations.....	154
Closing Thoughts.....	155
Appendices.....	158
Appendix A- Description of Exemplar Sermon Sources.....	158
Appendix B- Categorization of Sermons from <i>Preaching with Sacred Fire</i>	161
Appendix C- Sermon Evaluation Form	164

Table of Tables

Table 1 Mapping of Sermon Simmons and Thomas' Categories of Black Sermons and LaRue's Preaching Domains	67
Table 2 Categorization of Sermons Reviewed from Sermon Anthologies.....	76
Table 3 Sermon Characteristics: Sermons the Black Experience, Racial Issues, and Social Issues	79
Table 4 Seventeen Dialectical Polarities- Indicators of Orientation to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	88
Table 5 Count of Polarities in Exemplar Sermons (n=122).....	90
Table 6 Example of Polarity Reinforcement- Open and Liberal Polarity Reinforcement and Closed and Conservative Polarity Reinforcement	91
Table 7 Priest vs Prophetic and Other-Worldly vs. This-Worldly Interaction	92
Table 8 Mean Dialectical Polarities by Sermon Categorization and by Preacher Type	93
Table 9 Number of Congregations with Reported Ministries by Type	98
Table 10 Column A and Column B Dialectical Polarity Preferences by Church Ministries and Social Justice Advocacy, and Groups.....	100
Table 11 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-Test Results for Mean Polarity Preferences within and Between Groups.....	101
Table 12 Dialectical Pair Polarity Counts with Sample and Intra-Group Ho Decisions by Dialectical Pairs	103
Table 13 Selected Inter-Group t-Test of the Average Dialectical Pair Polarities.....	106
Table 14 Average Frequency of Reference to Issues in Sermons by Group	110

Table 15 H ₀ Determinations based on Pairwise t-Test for Frequency of Sermonic References	111
Table 16 Group B Pairwise t-Test Decisions for the Means of the Frequency of Sermonic Reference	112
Table 17 Group C Pairwise t-Test Decisions for the Means of the Frequency of Sermonic Reference	114
Table 18 Self-Report of Social Activism Sermons Preached over the Last Year by Group	118
Table 19 Most Important Preaching Domain by Group	119
Table 20 Relative Importance of Sermon Types by Groups	121
Table 21 Group A Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Sermon Category - Ordered by Group A Priorities	124
Table 22 Sociological, Ideological, and Theological Questions and Response Data and Expectations	129
Table 23 H ₀ Decisions for Sociological, Ideological, and Theological Assessments by Groups and Dialectical Polarities	131
Table 24 Observation of Local Sermons- Count of Sermons by Groups and Sermon Types	133
Table 25 Observed Sermonic References	134
Table 26 Summary Polarity Counts by Group for Local Sermon Reviews	136
Table 27 Suggested Domains of Dialectical Pairs	138
Table 28 Domain 1 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group	140
Table 29 Sermonic Polarities by Text Type for Local Church and Exemplar Sermons	141
Table 30 Domain 2 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group	142
Table 31 Domain 3 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group	143
Table 32 Domain 4 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group	144
Table 33 Domain 5 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group	145
Table 34 Percentage of Observed Sermons with Polarities and Self-Assessed Polarity Preferences	146
Table 35 Description of Sources of the Exemplar Sermons	158
Table 36 Impact of Removing Unvetted Preachers and Sermons	160
Table 37 Categorization of Sermons in Preaching with Sacred Fire	161

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Distribution of Sermonic Characteristics by Church Support for Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	94
Figure 2 H ₀ Decisions for ANOVA and Pairwise t-Test for Means of Frequency of Sermonic References by Group	115
Figure 3 H ₀ Decisions based on ANOVA and Pairwise t-Tests of Frequency of Sermonic References by Dialectical Polarities and Aggregated Column A and Column B Counts	117
Figure 4 Comparison of Sample and Intra-Group Pairwise t-Test H ₀ Decisions	123
Figure 5 ANOVA and Pairwise t-Test Decisions for H ₀ by Sermon Categories and Groups	126
Figure 6 H ₀ Decisions for Prioritization of Sermons by Dialectical Polarities	127

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Two loves animate this research. First, I love preaching. The call to exhort is a theme in two of my most definitive experiences with the Divine. In the first case, I was on a six-month deployment to the Mediterranean serving as an Officer of Marines. I was only supposed to do one six-month deployment before my dream assignment as an instructor in Quantico, VA. However, perhaps knowing how much I desired my next assignment, my supervisors kept insisting that they really wanted me to stay on for another six-month deployment. Now, on this initial deployment I was involved in a lay-laid ministry. As part of this ministry each of the leaders, of which I was one, had provided an exhortation during the deployment—except me. Early in the deployment I was scheduled for an exhortation but a serious disagreement with the lead of the ministry resulted in a decision that I should not share at that time. Weeks of delays became months and after four months of delays we had but two weeks before the end of the deployment and I had not preached. I was frustrated and had decided in my heart that I did not care. It was at this moment that I had my first encounter with the Divine. On the Saturday before the second to last Sunday of the deployment, I heard--“If you do not preach next Sunday, you are going on another deployment.” I am sure it was in my head, but it sounded like it was announced over the ship’s intercom system. I was shook. I knew that next Sunday was going to be our last service and that opportunity to preach would be reserved for one of the seasoned preachers. The next day at the conclusion of the service, the leader with whom I had the previous disagreement announced, without conferring with me, that next Sunday I would be delivering the exhortation.

My next encounter with the Divine was my call. After attending the inaugural sermon of a friend, who was probably the closest approximation of an older brother figure I had had in my life at the time, I was asleep in my bed next to my wife. The Divine came to me in my dream and

Chapter 1

asked me just one question, “Are you going to preach my Gospel?” I answered yes and immediately woke up, shook. I got out of bed, went to the bathroom and prayed, and when I returned to bed my wife ask- “Where you just called?”

I want to be an excellent preacher. By excellent preacher I mean one that impacts the lives of listeners so that they might live into my adaption of 1 Thes 3:11-13, May our God and Father and our Lord Jesus direct your paths and may the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all people, and the Holy Spirit establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. It is difficult to convey that in my version of this adapted charge, as in the Greek, there is an emphasis on the collective rather than the individual. For my DMin I wanted to investigate effective preaching so that I might be a more effective preacher. As suggested by Olin Moyd, “Those who will be effective preachers . . . must study the methods of the masters.”¹ I also want to help others to be more effective preachers in general, but especially to more effectively exhort people of faith to pursue social justice collectively.

My second love is the church, the black church in particular. While the whole of the Apostle’s Creed resonates with me, the declaration that excites me most is the affirmation of “the holy catholic church.” I believe that the church is sanctified and has been set apart for a mission by God to change this world. My belief in the church did not begin with scripture but with a particular history, both lived in vicarious. That history is the history of the black church. I came to my belief in the black church on the pews of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Arlington, VA. There, I witnessed my grandmother and her peers doing both charity work and social work.

¹ Olin P Moyd, *The Sacred Art: Preaching & Theology in the African American Tradition* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995), 44-45.

Chapter 1

There, I observed the synergy of pulled resources and perceived the power of community. My faith in the black church was deepened by my theological education. First, in the study of the history of the black church at Howard University School of Divinity. Studying the history of the black church was to me like reading scripture, reflections on the triumphs and failures of a people of faith that informed my understanding of the ways God has moved in history and guides my living more faithfully each day. Second, in the study of scripture, from which there is only one reasonable conclusion—this is a faith for the marginalized and oppressed who have partnered with the Divine to transform the hostile natural world into one that affirms life. My study of scripture informs my understanding of the role of the church in general and the black church in particular. The church is to be an agent of change that makes space for the marginalized and oppressed so that life can be affirmed for the least of these among us.

I contend that the primary work of the church is not to save souls for eternity, but to save this world for those here now and those to come. We do not do this because we love the world or the things of this world, we do this because God loves this world and by doing the good works necessary to save it, we create the opportunity for others to see God's love and to glorify God's name. However, saving the world by pursuing social justice has not been the primary work of the church in general, and is far from being a primary activity of the black church. This is the antithesis that drives this research. The lack of social activism on the part of black churches and the sense that the pursuit of social justice is an elective aspect of the mission of the church are an anathema. It is reflected in the ministries of the churches and the preaching. Many have decried the silence of the vaunted prophetic voice from black pulpits. There is a relationship between the prophetic voice and prophetic works. If we can recover our prophetic voice, we will be inspired to do the work. Conversely, if we just start doing the work again, the prophetic voice will return

Chapter 1

to strengthen our hands. The thesis of this research is that there are sermonic characteristics of churches that embrace or reject the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. By identifying those sermonic characteristics that support social justice as an aspect of ministry, I hope to inform my own practice to keep alive a social justice consciousness in the local faith community I am called to serve and to help others do the same. I will use this research to imbue my sermons, Social Activism sermons and otherwise, with the elements that foster a social justice ethos. I will use this research to assiduously avoid sermonic characteristics, such as confirming ruling class ideologies, that undermine discontent with the status quo and quenches the Spirit's call to transform the chaos that suffocates life. The ultimate objective is to inspire the church to do the work assigned to the church-to take care of the least of these.

Since 2020 I have been a member of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Northern Virginia and Vicinity (BMNVA). I joined the BMNVA to gain a better understanding of the function of the conference and how to enlist the BMNVA, its members, and their congregations in the social justice work of the NAACP. At the time I was the chair of the Religious Affairs Committee (RAC) for both the Prince William County NAACP and the Virginia State Conference (VSC) of the NAACP. The Religious Affairs Committee is specifically charged with engaging faith-based organizations in the work of the NAACP and to enlist those same organizations for both financial and membership support. I had been unable to get many churches in the Prince William County area to either directly participate as members of the PWC NAACP RAC or to directly support the NAACP's Game Changers for the 21st Century, which includes advocacy in the areas of economic development, education, environmental and climate justice, criminal justice, health, housing, and voter representation. At the state level, I found that I was unable to build an effective relationship with either the Baptist General Convention of

Chapter 1

Virginia (BGCVA) or the Virginia State Baptist Convention (VSBC), the two largest state-wide black Baptist organizations, even though the state office of the VSC NAACP was collocated with the headquarters for the BGCVA.

Based on previous research I conducted, I understood that faith-based organizations and communities are more receptive to receiving and sharing information from other faith-based organizations than from non-religious or secular civic organizations. Therefore, in 2020 I begin my missionary work, I sent myself, to the BMNVA. I joined the Civic and Social Action Committee of the BMNVA in 2020 and was asked to chair the committee in 2021. I hoped that by working from within a faith-based organization I would be able to more effectively engage communities of faith, black Baptist churches in particular, to support the social justice work of organizations like the NAACP. Since that time, I have attempted to engage the BMNVA, its clergy members, and their congregations in several initiatives to address various social justice concerns. Some of these initiatives include: (1) getting the BMNVA to define concerns, objectives, actions, and advocacy targets for criminal justice, economic development, education, environmental and climate justice, health, housing, and voter representation; (2) supporting a weekly Black Lives Matter Vigil sponsored by an interracial coalition of religious and civic organizations in Fauquier County, Virginia; (3) advocating for the passage of the 2022 Virginia General Assembly Senate Joint Resolution 1, which would have placed a referendum to the repeal of the felony conviction disenfranchisement on the ballot in 2022; (4) promoting COVID-19 vaccinations within their congregations and participating in an outreach to communities of color to reduce vaccine hesitancy; and (5) promoting the use of the Virginia Black Business Directory.

Chapter 1

It would be hyperbole to suggest any progress was made on any of those initiatives. The BMNVA monthly meetings begin in September and end in May, there are no meetings in June, July, or August. At the May meeting the President provides a summary of the year, offering the list of accomplishments for the conference and each of the committees. In 2022 the President had no accomplishments to cite for the Civic and Social Action Committee for the 2021-2022 term. She lauded the efforts, acknowledged the commitment; but could not point to a single accomplishment—no social justice effort by the BMNVA, its members or their congregations based on the efforts of the Civic and Social Action Committee. We did not give up. We tried again. The leadership of the BMNVA established several action-oriented objectives for the Civic and Social Action Committee for the 2022-2023 session. These action-oriented objectives included: (1) advocating for partner sponsored legislation during the 2023 Virginia General Assembly, (2) sponsoring two social justice initiatives, and (3) conducting NAACP Days before the end of July 2023. However, at the end of 2022-2023 session I could only point to minimal accomplishments.

My experience with attempting to get these local churches engaged in works related to social justice is consistent with observations I made concerning local preaching practices. In 2016, as President of the local NAACP, I observed 12 sermons from 12 different historically black congregations across Prince William County (PWC) over an eight-week period. Not one of the sermons I observed during that eight-week period addressed an issue related to social justice. In short, my anecdotal observations indicated that social justice was not a significant focus of preaching within my local area. If the churches are not preaching about social justice, then there can be little hope that they are engaged in social justice work.

Chapter 1

While my experiences as chair of the RAC at the local and state level, and chair of the Civic and Social Action Committee for the BMNVA are consistent with my observations concerning preaching within the region, they do not comport with the function of the NAACP, black denominational or ecumenical faith-based organizations, or the mythology of the black church. In the first case, the core of support for local NAACP units were local black congregations. The historic and current relationship between the National NAACP and the national offices of the various black denominations can be described as episodic at best or more accurately as nonexistent. Conversely, at the local unit level, the historic relationship between the NAACP and local black churches would be best described as *sine qua non*, if no support from the black church then no NAACP. The local NAACP depended on local black churches for meeting locations, funding, membership, leadership, access to the churches' networks, and just as important the NAACP was grounded in the black church culture. The obvious benefits and necessity of the macro resources—facilities, funding, membership, and leadership—do not require explanation; these are essential to any viable organization. However, the criticality of the local black churches serving as conduits for the NAACP message and access to the micro resource of black church culture were just as important to the NAACP seeking social change and a social movement at the national and local level.² My experience with the BNMVA runs counter to Aldon Morris' description of the purpose and mission of black denominational associations and conferences. One of the functions of black denominational associations and conferences during the Civil Rights Movement was to serve as or sponsor local movement centers that took up the tasks of organizing black communities.³ According to Morris, social

² My concept of macro and micro resources are based on Frederick C. Harris, *Something within Religion in African American Political Activism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³ Aldon M Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

Chapter 1

movements led by dominated communities were successful when local movement centers developed, disseminated, and deployed tactical innovations that challenged power structures.⁴ Even if a local church did not directly support civil rights work, through a church's affiliation with various associations or conventions, the members of the church could be activated to participate in the struggle. This is even more important for churches with a non-connectional polity, like Baptists, that function with complete local autonomy.⁵ Therefore, a function of the BMNVA would be to provide a place for the clergy associated with the diverse congregations of the conference "to debate and confer on issues important to the black community."⁶ This could reduce the impact of church demographics, such as the size of the congregation or educational attainment of the pastor, on the exposure to and perspectives on social justice issues for the participating clergy. I have not observed this dynamic in my work with the BMNVA.

Black Church and Social Justice Work- History and Mythology

The mythology of the black church is as the prophetic voice in America, the voice that calls for America to live up to its ideals of freedom and equal justice under the law. This mythology has its roots in the origin of the black church, coming out of the white church, which was marred by white supremacy, either explicitly supporting race-based slavery and white superiority or implicitly assuming the subordination of people not of European descent in general, but most relevantly those of African descent. "The origins of most of the major black denominations were rooted in the fact of racial discrimination and the desire of independence."⁷

⁴ Morris, 284.

⁵ Aldon M. Morris, and Shayne Lee, "The National Baptist Convention: Traditions and Contemporary Challenges," in *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times*, ed. J. R. Nieman D. A. Roozen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 4.

⁶ Morris, 11.

⁷ C. Eric Lincoln, and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 202.

Chapter 1

Wherever and whenever a black church was founded, from the hush harbors in the South to successions of the black Methodists, there was an explicit rejection of white supremacy and the affirmation of the full humanity of black people before God and other people.⁸ According to Peter Paris, the founding of black churches was the first black independence movement, so that “...the black church independence movement began as a religious, moral, and political thrust for independence, freedom, and justice in the sanctuary of God, in the inner life of the individual, and in the society at large.”⁹ This last point cannot be overemphasized. Changing society has always been an objective of the black church. Changing society is an elementary function of the church.

The modern version of the mythology of the black church is based on the curated depiction of the activities of the black church during the Modern Civil Rights Movement. According to that depiction, black churches were the gathering places, sources of power (moral, financial, spiritual), and the fountainhead of the movement. Consider the assessment of James Cone, which is typical, “The decade of the 1960s was a great moment in the history of the black church. The church was the chief support of the civil rights movement.”¹⁰ The civil rights movement of the 1950s-1960s was the precursor of the social justice movement of the present.

Like any mythology, platitudinal description of the black church as the voice of social justice cannot withstand the withering criticism of history. There are too many counter-testimonies concerning the prophetic voice of the black church and its inconsistent pursuit of racial uplift and civil rights in the past, and just as important--the pursuit of social justice in the

⁸ Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety and Public Witness* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 26.

⁹ Peter J Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 17.

¹⁰ James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*, vol. I, *The Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion*, ed. James H. Cone (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), 112.

Chapter 1

present, for the mythology of the black church to go unchallenged. The most biting and enduring criticism of the black church is evident in the earliest sociological reviews of the church by W.E.B. DuBois, E. Franklin Frazier, and Carter G. Woodson.¹¹ For example, while Frazier notes the centrality of the black church as a cornerstone of the black community and the primary example of black political and economic activity, he also notes “The Negro Church could enjoy this freedom so long as it offered no threat to the white man’s dominance in both economic and social relations. And, on the whole, the Negro’s church was not a threat to white domination and aided the Negro to become accommodated to an inferior status.”¹²

Lincoln & Mamiya, as well as Drew Smith, cite reflections by Gary Marx and Adolph Reed, Jr., who are critical of the role of black churches in the pursuit of Civil Rights. Smith notes that Reed “argued effectively against too close association between black churches and civil rights activism.”¹³ Lincoln & Mamiya point out that Adolph Reed, Jr. is critical of “the view that black clergy and churches were in the fore front of civil rights protests.”¹⁴ Gary Marx in Protest & Prejudice showed an inverse relationship between religiosity and militancy in black churches; so that “religious involvement tends to act as an opiate rather than as an inspiration for civil rights militancy.”¹⁵ More recently, Keri Day’s analysis of the history of black church involvement in the civil rights movement and why black clergy weren’t involved is not very

¹¹E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964). Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (IAP, 2010). James Cone is highly critical of the analysis of the Black Church in each of these works. Cone’s criticizes the narrow sociological assessments of the church and lack of insight to the theological understanding of the black church, see Cone, 61.

¹² Frazier, 46.

¹³ R. Drew Smith, "Introduction," in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 13 note 1. Gary Marx, *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community* (Harper Torch-book, 1967); and Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon: The Crisis of Purpose in Afro-American Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

¹⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, 222. Lincoln & Mamiya do not concur with Reed’s assessment. See Lincoln and Mamiya, 198.

¹⁵ Lincoln and Mamiya, 221-22.

Chapter 1

flattering. Day questions the validity of the characterization of the black church as prophetic. She notes, “The assumption that the Black Church has been essentially liberationist in character—a social change agent within the history and memory of black communities—either dismisses or ignores the actual historical and contemporary disagreements that continue to exist about its prophetic identity.”¹⁶ According to Day, “Only a few black churches possessed the moral courage to defy the South’s white racist structures . . . Those few black churches that did . . . also received extreme disapproval from their fellow black pastors, who worried that such radical activism would make all black churches future targets for retaliatory violence.”¹⁷ Smith and Harris echo Day’s perspective, when they noted “when it comes to engaging the public square . . . the tendency among faith-based institutions is for a few prominent churches and church-based organizations to be in the vanguard.”¹⁸ So, from the earliest sociological studies of the black church to very recent assessments of it, there are no shortage of critics who have challenge the mythology of the black church itself.

Day’s criticism of the black church in the 50s and 60s is important because it is the basis of her criticism of the black church today and its failure to meet its mission to the truly disadvantaged in the black community. For Day, the current failure belies the mythology of the black church as prophetic and having a liberationist ethos. Day notes the “Black Church” of the 21st century “has become less clearly tied to its hallmark connection to social justice.”¹⁹ According to Day, now as then, black churches are not engaged in the work of uplift consistent with the mythology of the black church. This perspective is often repeated in conversations with

¹⁶ Keri Day, *Unfinished Business: Black Women, the Black Church, and the Struggle to Thrive in America* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), 17.

¹⁷ Day, 91.

¹⁸ *Black Churches and Local Politics: Clergy Influence, Organizational Partnerships, and Civic Empowerment*, ed. R. Drew Smith; Frederick C. Harris (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 6.

¹⁹ Day, 3.

Chapter 1

members of the BMNVA concerning how we ought to more consistently engage in the work of social justice.

However, the consensus thought on the black justice supports the mythology.²⁰ Drew Smith's top line assessment is that the black church was essential in the pursuit of civil rights.²¹ This perspective is shared by Fredrick Harris, who asserts that black churches are "the only black institutions consistently promoting the collective resistance of African Americans."²² Conflating the black church with black religious leaders, Lincoln & Mamiya note how a history of the struggle for freedom for black people can be read as biographies of black religious leaders.²³ However, even these champions of the essentialness of the black church and black religious leaders in the struggle for full citizenship acknowledge that a review of the black church before the modern civil rights movement is mixed. For example, Morris describes the theology and social teaching of the black churches for the 1st half of the twentieth century as "opiate of the masses, a religion that soothed the pains of economic, political, and social exploitation."²⁴ Harris implicitly impugns the pre-Civil Rights church when he asserts that the idea of black religion as an opiate is no longer the majority opinion, especially in the post-civil rights era, when it transitioned from opiate to stimulant.²⁵

Nonetheless, the Modern Civil Rights Movements serves as an inflection point in the consensus perspective on the black church. Drew Smith postulates, "In both popular and

²⁰ I am not using mythology with any pejorative connotations. I am taking my cue from Richard T Hughes, *Myths America Lives By* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004). Hughes asserts that when myths inspire their believers to an ideal of who they are supposed to be, then the myths are healthy. Myths become dysfunctional when they are divorced from the ethos of the community and become platitudes. (See Hughes, 41.)

²¹ Smith, in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, 1.

²² Harris, 87.

²³ Lincoln and Mamiya, 137, 202.

²⁴ Morris, 97.

²⁵ Harris, 34, 38-39.

Chapter 1

academic understandings of the American Civil Rights Movement, the emphasis has generally been on the heroic activities mobilized from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s against the segregationist juggernaut of the American South,” so much so that “when mentioning civil rights activism and the mid-twentieth century South, one thinks of black churches.”²⁶ This has led some to assert “. . . it is not hyperbole to submit that without the black church, there may not have been a modern Civil Rights Movement.”²⁷

Black Church as Cornerstone of the Black Community and Black Power

The historic centrality of the black Church to the black community might be acknowledged by many but not really understood. The curated and at times stereotyped identification of black people as more religious could undergird the common understanding of the historic importance of the black church. The depiction of blacks as religious and pious was used as a counter testimony to the image of them as savage, lazy, and sub-human. The black slave and later the black freedman dutifully worshiping the white Jesus was an image that could both humanize and disarm whites. The presentation of black folks singing the Spirituals was a powerful weapon against the caricature of blacks in minstrels. Therefore, this image of blacks as very religious was curated by abolitionists and by those who sought greater freedom and recognition of blacks, both black and white. However, the centrality of the black church to the black community was not a function of the religiosity or spirituality of black people, but the singleness of the institution.²⁸

²⁶ Smith, in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, 1.

²⁷ Steve McCutcheon, Judson L. Jeffries, and Omari L. Dyson, "The Black Panther Party and the Black Church," in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, ed. R. Drew Smith, ed. R. Drew Smith (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 128.

²⁸ In *The Negro Church*, what E Franklin Fraizer gets right is the singleness of the institution of the church. Slave trading destroyed the institution of the family, and the church was the means by which Christianity created “solidarity among a people who lack social cohesion and a structured social life”, 4, 6. Fraizer notes the lack of security in familial bonds and the function of the church as a place of faith & fellowship, 16. What Fraizer gets

Chapter 1

Robert Franklin identifies black churches as an anchor institution for black communities.²⁹ Franklin identifies several characteristics of the black church that are essential to the black community; those most relevant to this paper are, the black church as: a hub of civic and social life, the wealthiest and most financially independent institution within the black community, incubator for other institutions and enterprises, and a source of political power.³⁰ As noted by Lincoln & Mamiya, “The Black Church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and it nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development.”³¹ While both Franklin and Lincoln & Mamiya identify both the black church and the black family as essential institutions, the state of the black family is and has been so precarious as to belie its actual, rather than proposed, essentialness to the well-being of the black community. Frazier contends that the black church became the center of the black community because of the instability of the family out of slavery and the merger of the invisible institution with the

wrong is his conclusion that the Spirituals reflected the adoption of a strictly otherworldly view by the enslaved as a result of their acceptance of Christianity, 12. Against Fraizer, Kenyatta Gilbert cites first-hand accounts of Black preachers mixing messages of freedom into their sermons to slaves, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 43. I agree with Kelly Brown Douglas’ assessment “Although there were some slaves who adopted slaveholding Christianity and its notion that the freedom that Jesus offered was attainable only in ‘heaven,’ for the many others who rejected and produced slave religion, the freedom that Jesus offered was a reality to be attained on earth,” *The Black Christ*, vol. IX, IX vols., *The Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion*, ed. James H. Cone (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 25.

²⁹ Robert M Franklin, *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 13. Franklin also identifies the Black Family and Colleges, specifically Black Colleges as the other anchor institutions. I think Franklin’s identification of the Black Family and Colleges as anchor institutions for Black Communities is more prospective than retrospective, based on what is necessary, possible, and hoped for rather than the African American experience. As noted by Orlando Patterson, in what is now the United States of America, the African American family has been in turmoil and dysfunction from jump. (See Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (New York: Basic Civitas, 1998), 1-167, esp. 8, 29, 45-46, 57. As for Black Colleges, they are not sufficient in number, propinquity, or financial resources to function as anchor institutions for black communities. All that remains from Franklin’s model are black churches.

³⁰ Franklin, 107-10.

³¹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 8. They note “. . . no black secular organization has been able to match the membership and resource commitment by black people to their churches.” Lincoln and Mamiya, 232.

Chapter 1

institutional church. This serves to further elevate the historic function of the black church as anchor to the black community. I agree with the assessment of James Cone, “The black church is the single most important institution in the black community.”³² Between the end of the Civil War and to the end of the Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1867-1969, the black church was *sine qua non* for the black community. As late as 1995, Olin Moyd contended “In the black community the church remains the center of life” in all facets “educationally, spiritually, politically, and culturally.”³³

The “institutional centrality is an important starting point for any analysis or discussion of the Black Church and politics.”³⁴ Black churches cannot withdraw from their political and economic roles in the black community because there are no alternatives, unlike in the white community.³⁵ According to Harris, “Social political and civil rights organizations cannot match the organizational resources of African-American churches, which consistently provide black communities with the kinds of social capital needed for political mobilization,” so that, all the black nationally based civil rights and social service organizations need African-American churches to effectively mobilize African Americans directly into action in electoral politics.³⁶ It is not surprising that black churches provided leadership for the black community. Harris and Smith cite the following observation from Morris:

“After all, black churches embodied critical organizational resources for collective action, specifically a ready-made leadership structure, networks for communicating information about political activities, a membership with transferable

³² Cone, 99.

³³ Moyd, ix. See also Moyd, 1.

³⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, 201.

³⁵ Lincoln and Mamiya, 162.

³⁶ Harris, 32.

organizing skills, a physical space to assemble and discuss issues of the day, and a self-generated financial capacity that could generate funds for protest.”³⁷

The obverse of this observation is that an attempt to organize any black community for social change without engaging the black church is futile. A key element of organizing these communities through the churches is what those churches preach. If the preachers are not preaching on the issues related to social justice, then the black church community will not understand the social justice issues as moral issues they are responsible to address. We run the risk of supporting Frazier’s assessment that the black church poses no threat to the existing power structure that has the masses of black people in a state of systemic inequality.

Issues that Need to Be Addressed

Christine Marie Smith avers that we need to remind preachers of the things they need to preach about.³⁸ There are many social justice issues that need to be addressed by churches in general and the black church in particular. For the black church there are the perennial issues of systemic inequality in the areas of health (health care access, outcomes, cost), education (funding, content, quality), economics (employment, housing and homeownership, credit access, equity in public sector contracts), criminal justice (policing, use of force, sentencing, mass incarceration, public safety), and voting rights and voter representation (voter disenfranchisement, racial gerrymandering). These issues are repeatedly identified by scholars, theologians, activist, advocacy groups, and ministers with a prophetic bent.³⁹ These are concerns

³⁷ *Black Churches and Local Politics: Clergy Influence, Organizational Partnerships, and Civic Empowerment*, x. Smith and Harris cite Morris.

³⁸ *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Christine Marie Smith (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 4.

³⁹ See Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *Preaching About Crises in the Community* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 82. Warnock, 187. James Lance Taylor, "Black Churches, Peoples Temple, and Civil Rights Politics in San Francisco," in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Board Terrian of Civil Rights*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 85. Jonathan C. Augustine, *When Prophets Preach: Leadership and the Politics of the Pulpit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), 2. William J. Barber II, "When the Stones Come Together," in *Revive Us Again: Vision and Action in Moral Organizing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 41. Gilbert, 31.

Chapter 1

that disproportionately impact the black community; therefore, the black church should be working to ameliorate them, both by sponsoring programs that mitigate the impact and advocating for public and private sector policies and programs to address the inequalities. It is necessary for the black pulpits to address these issues to keep alive the hope and work of the people to be free and at peace. Concerning the continued relevancy of the black church, the admonishment from Frank Thomas was expressed by many. Thomas, asserts “If the church does not address race and economics, or is not thoughtful and skilled in addressing issues, Millennials will consider the church not relevant to their needs and struggles.”⁴⁰

Then there are social justice issues that might be considered broader than the black community or outside the black community. This is shorthand for social justice issues that have not been historic concerns for the black community’s struggle for full citizenship and civil rights. For example, there is the issue of health care for women; specifically, access to safe abortion options. The social injustice of a lack of access to safe abortions is not limited to the black community and is not one of the obvious vestiges of systemic racism. Nonetheless, the disproportionate impact of abortion restrictions on black women and the black community should make addressing this an issue for the black pulpit.⁴¹ Other areas of social justice that could be categorized as broader than the black community are those of gender equality, climate and environmental justice, and the pursuit of LGBTQ+ rights.⁴² While these issues are broader than the traditional social justice concerns of the black community, they should be addressed by

⁴⁰ Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 9.

⁴¹ Cecilia Lenzen, "Texas Abortion Restrictions," Online, *The Texas Tribune*, June 20, 2022, 2022, <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/06/30/texas-abortion-black-women/>.

⁴² Except for the AME connection, the black denominational bodies at the National level and with local congregations are strongly opposed to supporting LGBTQ+ civil rights issues. Even within the AME denomination, it is not uncommon for leaders at the regional or local levels to have very conservative positions on LGBTQ+ issues, contrary to the stated national guidance.

Chapter 1

black churches because they have a disproportionate impact on their constituencies. Moreover, as suggested by Christine Smith, it might be important for preachers to address some of these issues as part of an honest “critique of their traditions” that “have participated in the oppression of some of their own people,” and to identify what parts of that tradition must be changed.⁴³

In the case of gender equality, the work force participation rate of black women is higher than white women, a greater percentage of black households are headed by single women than households headed by single white women, and pay inequality for women is even greater when race is included as a factor. In short, while the issue of gender inequality is relevant to the broader community, it should be of particular interest to the black pulpit because of the seminal role of black women in the economic vitality of the black community. This is on top of the issue of misogyny in the black community in general and the black church in particular. It is not possible for the black church to offer a full-throated critique of gender inequality and the marginalization of women in the secular world, when it is practiced within the sanctuary. Perhaps, as black churches speak to the need for gender equality in the secular world, their consciousness would be pricked to remove the bean from their own eyes. Womanist theologian Teresa Fry Brown describes the cognitive dissonance of the black church, seeking freedom while oppressing black women.⁴⁴ This is the strongest argument for the black church to reject the ideology of heteronormality, as necessary to breakaway from its misogynistic past and the marginalization of women that has flagged its function as a prophetic community. Gender equality is a topic that needs to be addressed from the pulpits of black churches.

⁴³ *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives*, 4.

⁴⁴ Teresa Fry Brown, "An African American Woman's Perspective: Renovating Sorrow's Kitchen," in *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Christine Marie Smith (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 44.

Chapter 1

Where the white Church was on race in the 1950s, and both white and black churches were on the issue of gender equality in the 70s, the black church is on LGBTQ+ issues today. An oft repeated assessment concerning the church and social justice is that it tends to function like taillights rather than headlights when it comes to social change. This is especially true on the issue of marriage equality. Traci West noted the moral authority of black clergy based on their leadership in the civil rights movements of the 50s and 60s, but the same could not be said for the black Christian leadership on the issue of marriage equality in the later twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century.⁴⁵ The black church has to find its voice that extends its proclamation concerning the parenthood of God and the brotherhood of all people to include members of the LGBTQ+ community. There are people on the sexual margins of society that want to know if there is something that prevents them from being baptized, from being fully recognized as members of the Kingdom of Heaven declared by Jesus.

Climate and environmental justice issues should be emphasized in the black community and addressed from black pulpits for two reasons. First, environmental degradation is most evident in economically marginalized communities, which are disproportionately communities of color. In short, there is an intersectionality between race and economics on the one hand, and economics and environmental inequality on the other hand, so that black communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustice. “In the United States the number-one indicator for the location of a toxic facility, such as a coal-fired power plant, is race.”⁴⁶

Therefore, silence on the part of black churches, the failure raise awareness and advocate for

⁴⁵ Traci C. West, "Civil Rights Rhetoric in Media Coverage of Marriage Equality Debates Massachusetts and Georgia," in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Board Terrian of Civil Rights*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 269-70.

⁴⁶ Karenn Gore, "Rekindle in Us a Fire: William Barber's Moral Call to Climate Action," in *Revive Us Again: Vision and Action in Moral Organizing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 101.

Chapter 1

environmental justice, harms those communities. Second, climate justice, that is policies and programs to reduce the observed impacts of climate change and to reduce practices that result in harmful climate change, would disproportionately benefit the poorest of this county and the world. To begin with, the expectation is that people of the “Global South,” will bear the brunt of the increased instances of adverse weather patterns (high temperature, drought, hurricanes, floods, etc.) from climate change but have the fewest resources to respond. The injustice is heightened by the recognition that these climate problems are the result of practices of wealthy nations. Even in this county, like just about everything, the impact of climate change is disproportionately felt by the economically marginalized. The economically marginalized cannot simply relocate from a flood plain and have fewer resources to adapt to the economic and social disruptions caused by climate change. When a climate driven disaster happens, such as flood or hurricane, and government assistance is provided- the assistance and benefits often result in those who are economically marginalized being worse off than before the disaster. This is less true for the well-heeled. Climate and Environmental issues should be a topic for prophetic discourse from all pulpits, including the pulpits of black churches.

To preach about climate and environmental justice is to speak to the need to change how we live, to repent from our destructive ways, as the moral response to an existential threat. To preach about climate and environmental justice is to raise the consciousness of those more responsible for problem; so that, they take more responsibility to minimize the impact on those who are less responsible. I was once a skeptic of the notion of an environmental theology. I thought it a usurpation of the function of theology and faith for an agenda that is foreign to the bible. It is now evident to me that theology should always speak to the most pressing issue facing a people. If we have nothing to say about the existential threat represented by climate change or

Chapter 1

even the need to care for those who suffer disproportionately because of climate issues, then our theology is irrelevant.

Immigration might be considered a social justice issue that is outside the concern of the black community. The perception could be that the injustice of our immigration policies; especially, the treatment of those entering this county at our southern border, does not directly impact those attending black churches or the broader black community. However, Jonathan Augustine contends that the immigration crisis is a social justice issue the church simply cannot ignore.⁴⁷ I perceive the black community and black churches to be at best ambivalent concerning the treatment of immigrants in this county. Khari Brown notes, “During the 2000s, black church leaders and groups largely have been absent from nationally coordinated marches and conferences that pushed for increased freedom of movement and access to work, social services, and education for immigrants.”⁴⁸ This was also evident in the response of black churches to the treatment of immigrants during the Obama and Trump administrations; especially the latter, which was stepped up and received widespread condemnation, but not from the African-American community or pulpits. Ethnocentric self-interest: including economic and political power, has tended to move the black community to be more antagonistic than ambivalent to immigrant communities from south and central America. This is a damning assessment of the black church. Its silence on the immorality of our immigration practices, like its tacit support of misogyny, weakens the testimony of the black church. The black pulpit should seek social justice for the immigrant community. Unfortunately, and perversely, “African Americans who are members of congregations in which clergy encourage them to take political action tend to have

⁴⁷ Augustine, 82.

⁴⁸ R. Khari Brown, "Black Churches and African American Opinion on Immigration Policy," in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, ed. R. Drew Smith, ed. R. Drew Smith (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 316.

Chapter 1

unfavorable attitudes toward immigration.”⁴⁹ Khari Brown suggests that even when politically engaged preachers speak to their congregations about politics not related to issues on immigration, the members of those congregations tend to be less favorable to immigrant populations.

Brown also notes “clergy cues are likely to inform the immigration attitudes of congregants” and “This body of work largely suggests that clergy have a substantive impact on the ideology and policy attitudes of their congregants,” concerning immigration.⁵⁰ Brown’s insights are very relevant to thesis of this research. Brown’s observation raises the bar on what is said about the immigrants among us, but something must be said specifically about immigration from the pulpits of black churches. Like opposition to LBGTQ+ rights and to a lesser extent abortion access, conservatives use latent ambivalence and opposition to immigration in the black community to shape the political calculus of the religious members of the black community. A tough stance on immigration is used to drive a wedge between black religious voters and liberal politicians that tend to support other social justice policies needed within marginalized black communities. Again, Brown’s observations are germane, “. . . the social and cultural capital of clergy within the life of the congregation translates into a strong ability for influencing the immigration attitudes of congregants.”⁵¹ From the warp and woof of the biblical tradition, there is only one position on immigration that would be consistent with the mandates of justice. As I will discuss later, some were rewarded, and others condemned based on their service to the least of these.

⁴⁹ Brown, in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, 321.

⁵⁰ Brown, in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, 318.

⁵¹ Brown, in *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*, 321.

Chapter 1

All the above need to be addressed from black pulpits. Failure to address all forms of injustice distorts the prophetic voice. Kelly Brown Douglas notes “the Black church community appeared incapable of a prophetic ministry beyond matters of race,” as evidenced by our failure to take prophetic positions on matters involving class, gender, and sexual oppression.⁵² Injustice is insatiable; it will not be satisfied by the oppression of some other. Oppressors oppress and they attempt to oppress everybody. The xenophobic tend to be misogynists, who also support racism, disregard the impacts of climate change, retorted to the cry “Black Lives Matter” with “All Lives Matter, but especially Blue Lives.” It’s the same spirit that opposes healthcare as a human right, encourages the purging of voter rolls, and the perpetual disenfranchisement of returning citizens. Injustice is intersectional; it functions as a superset with overlapping subsets of economic, social, political, educational, environmental, ethic, religious, and gender dynamics. All issues of social injustice must be addressed because no form of social injustice should be tolerated. As noted by Rev. Dr. James Victor, for the prophet “The challenge and the critique of any form of injustice are of paramount importance.”⁵³ Any kind of injustice will pollute the entire enterprise. However, the Good News is the leaven of justice; if unconstrained and applied liberally, it will bring justice in all domains.

A persistent presentation of social justice sermons reflecting on these issues might sound strange to many congregations, especially those who have been, as described by Wilmore, “suckled on the teat of the moralistic and de-radicalized verbiage of nineteenth-century revivalism, shorn of its original affinity for social justice.”⁵⁴ If so, it is the fault of those

⁵² Douglas, 4.

⁵³ James E Victor, “Fire Shut up in My Bones: Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice in African American Preaching” (Wesley Theological Seminary, 2009), 26.

⁵⁴ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 163.

Chapter 1

preaching today. A healthy diet seems strange and distasteful to those who are consistently fed junk food.

The Adaptive Challenge

An adaptive challenge is one that if not addressed will result in an organization becoming ineffective and unable to meet its primary purpose and mission. I believe the black church today is faced with the adaptive challenge of shifting its ministry priorities. Today the dominant ministry in the black church is to the individual believer in the pews and the affirmation of the faith of those individual members that they are saved and destined for eternity while comforting them through the travails of this life. This is reflected in the content of Cultural Survival sermons. The ministry of the black church needs to shift or at least prioritize meeting the needs of the truly disadvantaged within the sphere of influence of the churches. It needs to prioritize meeting the needs of the least of these by recovering its prophetic voice for social justice. This would be reflected in more Social Activism sermons.

The black church may be hobbled by the erstwhile shared legacy or mythology as the center of the black community to recognize the potential for diminished cultural relevancy. However, the numbers belie any assertion of the current cultural dominance of the black church. Shifting from the current dominant form of ministry in the black church today is an adaptive challenge because the current ministry satisfies the needs of the current members. The key to meeting this adaptive challenge is to remind the current members of their true calling as disciples of Jesus Christ—to meet the needs of the least of these in their midst.

Objective

How to get churches more engaged in the pursuit of social justice is not an uncommon subject of doctoral research.⁵⁵ For example, Grady Yeargin is interested in “the struggle for social change and justice in America” becoming “part of the church’s way of life” as “a Christian practice.”⁵⁶ To that end, Yeargin developed a curriculum to increase individual practice of spiritual disciplines, believing as individuals more faithfully engaged in the practice of spiritual disciplines they would “revitalize the African American church” and “move the church toward reclaiming its voice of leadership in the struggle for social change and justice.”⁵⁷ For Yeargin the key is to link personal piety and prophetic action, to deepens one’s individual spirituality so that you are able to both hear and respond to the call for social justice. This paradigm implicitly treats personal piety and the practice of the spiritual disciplines as enabling rather than ultimate objectives. Joel Damon Taylor asserts that several studies have postulated and demonstrated that preaching can impact the social activism of a congregation.⁵⁸ Talyor contends that the sermons he preached as part of his research increased social activism by members of the congregation.⁵⁹ Where other research projects have endeavored to evaluate how effectively a set of sermons inspired members of a particular congregation to engage in social justice, this study is designed

⁵⁵ Grady A. Yeargin Jr., “Reclaiming the Power: Reclaiming the Spirit in the African American Church and Reclaiming Its Voice in the Struggle for Social Change” (Wesley Theological Seminary, 2005), Howard G. Walseman, “Preaching on Contemporary Social Issues: The Task of Prophetic Preaching in the Church Today” (Wesley Theological Seminary, 1980), Victor, Marvin A. McMickle, “Effectiveness in Preaching: A Study of the Preferences in Sermons and the Influence of Sermons Upon a Black Baptist Congregation” (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1983), Calvin Christopher Edmonds, “A Model for Preaching on Contemporary Issues to African Americans in the 25-40 Age Group” (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1994).

⁵⁶ Yeargin Jr., 68.

⁵⁷ Yeargin Jr., 69.

⁵⁸ Joel Damon Taylor, *Prophetic Preaching for a Paralyzed Church: 8 Sermons That Inspire Social Change* (sermontobook.com: sermontobook.com, 2016), 5.

⁵⁹ Taylor, 5, 9. Contra Taylor’s assessment are the findings by Marvin McMickle and research cited by McMickle. McMickle notes that his target audience considered the sermons to be “thought-provoking,” but gave “no indication of any behavioral or attitudinal changes.” McMickle, 96. Citing William Newman and Stewart Wright, “The Effects of Sermons Among Lay Catholics”, *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 22 #1, September 1980, McMickle notes that his finding is consistent with findings from the evaluation of the effectiveness of sermons with Catholic laity.

Chapter 1

to understand sermonic characteristics that are correlated with a church that engages in social justice as an aspect of ministry. What are some sermonic characteristics that activate the micro resources of faith and that make the macro resources, such as communication networks, of faith communities available for the pursuit of social justice?

This research is driven by the belief that what pastors preach is important; therefore, if the preaching more consistently called for the pursuit of social justice, then the church would pursue social justice as an aspect of ministry more consistently. “Preaching influences congregations.”⁶⁰ In short, when pastors speak about social activism in the language of faith, using our history as a rally point, then they will be able appeal to the congregation to use their macro resources towards the end of achieving social justice. Prophetic preaching, social justice preaching, should lead to social justice work. As noted by McMickle, we want our sermons to move people to action—to do something.⁶¹ The congregation, the individual members and the collectively body, should be expected to act on the preached word.⁶² In the words of the renowned professor of homiletics, Miles Jones, we want to move “from utterance to action.”⁶³ Jones’s dictum has been reflected in the ministry of one of his students, Rev. Dr. James Victor, a past President of the BGCVA. Victor contends that prophetic preaching should result in

⁶⁰ Augustine, 29. See also “Preaching matters! More specifically, prophetic preaching, infused with eschatological awareness and urgency, guides the spiritual formation of congregations to adopt specific collective identity that is prophetic in nature and communally responsible in the praxis of ministry.” Victor, 9.

⁶¹ McMickle, 96-97.

⁶² Augustine, 100. Augustine sets the tone for his work in the preface when he asserts “if preaching is only words and does not lead to acts of liberation with and on behalf of the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, the oppressed, and all those made to feel accepted, then preaching is just words with no purpose, talk without action, lip service without love, the sound and fury that signifies nothing”, xii.

⁶³ Miles Jerome Jones, *Preaching Papers: The Hampton & Virginia Union Lectures* (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1985), 47.

Chapter 1

advocacy—“the prophet must become the voice of the voiceless against unjust cultural systems and society.”⁶⁴

Harris suggests “. . . religion might stimulate political action by leading participants to perceive political issues in moral terms.”⁶⁵ The primary means to provide this stimulus and raise the consciousness of the congregation concerning the morality of political issues is from the pulpit in the preaching of the church. I am in concert with Rev. Dr. Rafael Warnock, who contends that the end result should be a “politically engaged piety,”⁶⁶ because it understands “. . . authentic Christian identity requires not only that one refuses to accommodate injustice, but that one is actively engaging in fighting it.”⁶⁷ According to Warnock, justice should be prioritized along with worship and preaching in the focus of the church.⁶⁸ I would, in the words of Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, “Push It,”⁶⁹ and assert with Chapman, “the black church must make the liberation of the oppressed its primary concern.”⁷⁰ In prioritizing social justice work the church will save bodies; when it saves bodies the church enhances its opportunity to save souls. As demonstrated by Jesus, it is easier to proclaim that a soul has been forgiven than to actually save a body, but saving bodies is the proof of the ability to save souls.

⁶⁴ Victor, 30.

⁶⁵ Harris, 8.

⁶⁶ Warnock, 184. See also Taylor, 30, 31, 37.

⁶⁷ Warnock, 151. See also, Augustine who contends the church must do more than preaching social justice, it must do social justice, 12.

⁶⁸ Warnock, 176.

⁶⁹ Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley is the pastor of the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va. Pastor Wesley is highly regarded as a preacher and Alfred Street is so regarded for its social justice work. For this project I reviewed ten sermons by Pastor Wesley as a baseline for sermons from a church that embraced social justice as an aspect of ministry. I added Wesley’s sermons to the Group B data set. He did not complete a consent form or the survey.

⁷⁰ Mark L Chapman, *Christianity on Trial: African-American Religious Thought before and after Black Power* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 84.

Chapter 1

Following the objectives of Lincoln & Mamiya's seminal work, which sought not only to provide a history of the black church but also and more importantly to influence the trajectory of the black church; I would like this research to influence black preaching within the churches of Northern Virginia and abroad. Lincoln & Mamiya did not review the relationship between a black church's characteristics and the church's relationship to pairs of dialectical polarities.⁷¹ For example, Lincoln & Mamiya did not correlate the size of a congregation, the educational level of the pastor, or church locality to the characterization of the church as "otherworldly" or "this-worldly." This study looks at the relative presence of sermonic characteristics (including sermonic expression of a dialectical polarity), and if those characteristics are indicators of the preacher's orientation to social justice as an aspect of the ministry of the church. The hope is that pastors who want to increase the social activism of their congregations would be conscious about including the identified characteristics that are correlated with social activism. Assuming the mythology of the black church reflects the veneration of black churches and black preachers who pursue social justice, I expect that once the characteristics of sermons that are correlated with social justice as an aspect of ministry are identified, they will be more consistently observed. Why is my study important? Olin Moyd asserts, "Practical theology affirms and clarifies mission and ministry in the church and in the world."⁷² Preaching as an expression of practical theology means what is preached reflects what is important. "A study and presentation of practical theology in preaching in the African American community today will raise the consciousness and sensitivity of those who preach in the African American churches to the need for the continuation of practical theology in their preaching."⁷³ The objective of this research is in line

⁷¹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 12.

⁷² Moyd, 7.

⁷³ Moyd, 8.

Chapter 1

with one of Gayraud Wilmore's objectives for African American religious studies; namely, to "facilitate the deployment of African American church as an agency of social, political, and economic change."⁷⁴ In short, I want to impact the preaching within African American churches, so that we develop African American churches that preach and do the work of social justice.

⁷⁴ Wilmore, 16-17.

Chapter 2 - Biblical, Theological, Sociological, and Ideological Foundations

I struggle to parse biblical and theological predications. What meaningful construct could we identify as biblical that is not theological, and what significant theological claim might we assert without biblical support? It is just as challenging, for me, to identify sociological or ideological foundations for the activities of the church without a modicum of biblical or theological grounding. Even patently evil sociological and ideological constructs that have taken root in the church are given biblical and theological moorings. For example, White Supremacy as an ideology, race as a sociological construct, and racism as legal and cultural social controls to disadvantage black people are each buttressed by a biblical hermeneutic and a theological anthropology, albeit aberrant and unchristian. White Supremacy, race, and racism were not derived from a biblical or theological revelation; rather they preceded the biblical interpretations and theological assertions that were subsequently used to justify them. Conversely, it is frequently asserted that Black Theology and its biblical moorings were devised to support an emerging Black Power ideology. According to James Cone Black Theology was a “theological basis for their prior political commitment to liberate the black poor.”⁷⁵ Yet, Cone would not assent to the idea that the liberative thrust of Black Theology was conjured from text and tradition of the faith like the aforementioned demons (White Supremacy, race, and racism). Cone would insist that Black Theology reflects the essence, not the fullness, of God’s revelation.

According to Peter Paris, the mission of the black church to the larger society is “to mediate” the “theologically grounded anthropological principle” of the parenthood of God for all

⁷⁵ James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), 7.

Chapter 2

people and the kinship of all God's children—"with the demands of the racial situation in every period."⁷⁶ Paris' reflection demonstrates the intersectionality of sociology, ideology, and theology in the understanding of the black church in general, and with respect to issues of social justice in particular. How a church embraces or rejects his described sociological function of the black church will be reflected in the biblical and theological expressions of the church in its sermons, ministries, and engagement in the work to bring about social justice.

The purpose of this section is to identify the sociological, ideological, biblical and theological perspectives that both promote and undermine the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry in the black church. Again, the objective of this paper is to get black churches to engage in the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of their ministry and mission. Implicit in this objective is the belief that black churches should engage in the pursuit of social justice. First, I will consider the sociological functions of the black church and the ideological currents in the black community that justify the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. After establishing the relationship between sociological functions and ideological currents of the black church to the pursuit of social justice, I will demonstrate how those relationships are reflected in the content of the preaching. Second, I want to consider the biblical and theological perspectives that are derived from the sociological and ideological dynamics. There exist sociological and ideological perspectives that drive theological and biblical justifications for pursuit or rejection of social justice as an aspect of ministry.

Sociological and Ideological Foundations

The thesis for this paper is that churches that engage in social justice as an aspect of ministry will evince similar characteristics in the content of the preaching by the pastors of those

⁷⁶ Paris, 17.

Chapter 2

churches. Moreover, churches that eschew social justice as an aspect of ministry will similarly share a set of characteristics in the sermons preached. Sociologically, the social justice-oriented black churches will reflect more concretely the historical role of the black church, at least its mythological role, as the cornerstone of the black community and the agent of change of the black condition. These churches will recognize the black church as a singular institution, responsible for black uplift and progress, and as a refuge for black bodies in a racist country. This understanding of the black church's function in the black community and our culture will undergird the desired aspect of their ministry activities. Based on that understanding they will attempt to encourage and promote the church engaging in social justice so that it functions as an agent of change and reformation of the United States. Churches that do not support the engagement in social justice or lack preaching that reflects a concern for social justice are not wed to the historic sociological function of the black church.

Sociological

I want to be attentive to the black church as a social phenomenon and how the focus on social justice is reflected in the black church as a social institution. Here I want to address the sociological origins, meaning, and function of the black church. The origin and function of the black church has already been sufficiently covered.⁷⁷ In summary, the black church historically served as the center of the black community and the springboard for creation of institutions and collective power for an otherwise marginalized constituency. Other perspectives on the sociological function of the black church are in the extreme minority. Even more relevant to the objective of this paper, is the function of the black church in the struggle for black humanity and full citizenship. Morris contends, "In the case of the civil rights struggle, the preexisting black

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1 Black Church as Cornerstone of the Black Community and Black Power

Chapter 2

church provided the early movement with the social resources that made it a dynamic force, in particular leadership, institutionalized charisma, finances, and organized following, and an ideological framework through which passive attitudes were transformed into a collective consciousness supportive of collective action.”⁷⁸ The biblical and theological orientation of the black church undergirded ideological objectives reflected in sociological functions.

For Lincoln & Mamiya the civil rights movement “has produced a lasting positive effect among black churches because many of them, especially rural ones, participated in the struggle.”⁷⁹ The role of the black church in the civil rights movement was a bulwark against the “sociological prophecies of the decline of religion or black religion,” because “black rural and urban folk stood up in their churches to be counted.”⁸⁰ On the one hand, it is asserted that without the black church there would not have been a successful civil rights movement which moved black people closer to full citizenship. On the other hand, it is asserted that the civil rights movement resulted in a new confession concerning the black church in the black community, reaffirming its sociological function as an anchor institution of the black community. This is a lesson to be learned for black churches today. In every epoch, the way the church establishes, renews, or maintains its relevance is by working on behalf of its members and the constituent community, by striving for the uplift and progress of its people. If this had been sustained there would have been a self-reinforcing feedback loop, wherein the church does the work to benefit the community, the work is appreciated by the community, so the community supports the church and enables it to do more work. Sociologically the black church should be engaged in the work of social justice in the self-interest of the church and its constituency.

⁷⁸ Morris, 77.

⁷⁹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 97.

⁸⁰ Lincoln and Mamiya, 97.

Chapter 2

To the extent that the black church had functioned as the center of the black community and existed in communities that were socioeconomically diverse, then it could function as a center of racial uplift that facilitated the mandate to lift as I climb. However, with increased stratification within the African American community and socioeconomic isolation, residential and well as sacerdotal, of the most marginalized there has been a diminished sense of shared destiny. The erstwhile sense of a shared African American experience that resulted in a greater sense of unity, largely forged by oppression, began to dissipate with integration and greater socioeconomic opportunities for some. With this increased differentiation and stratification of black communities the unity has diminished, if not all together vanished. This is manifested in the function of the black church. This shift in function may account for the shift in preaching of the churches.

Reverse

It is also important to be attentive to how the black church functioned in society in a way that would flag its effectiveness in the pursuit of social justice. According to Paris, the ideal vision of black churches “of a racially integrated society militated against most long-term strategies necessary for the race’s full development.”⁸¹ There is a conflict between empowerment that enables autonomy and integration that promotes dependence. The desire for racial integration, even as a manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven without distinction between Jew and Gentile or in this case between white and black, undermines the pursuit of empowerment. Paris contends that the official deeds and practices of black denominations evince a less than full

⁸¹ Paris, 45.

Chapter 2

commitment to the cause of racial up-lift, in favor of “their ideal vision of a racially integrated society.”⁸²

Two other tendencies within the black church increased the likelihood that a black church would reject the pursuit of social justice. First, there is the tendency for the black church to be socially conservative. This is the black church as a conservator of culture and traditions. As such, it is slow in the uptake of social change and reluctant to challenge the status quo. The church as conservator of culture and traditions is a sociological dynamic that works against it being an agent of social justice that challenges the dominant culture. Second, there is the desire, especially evidenced in marginalized and oppressed communities, to adopt the attitudes and practices of the majority as normative and correct. In this case, the black church functioned sociologically as an institution of conformity, prescribing and enforcing mores of the majority culture. One dynamic of this was an attempt by the black religionist to demonstrate the worthiness of blacks for equal rights and privileges by being paragons of virtue. This would serve as a counter testimony to the various stereotypes of blacks as lazy, criminal, and hypersexual. Another dynamic of adoption of the mores of the majority was to cultivate a community without the vices that impeded racial progress. Black churches were more engaged in the adoption of vice laws to curb failures in personal piety than advocacy for changes to racist social policies that impacted blacks. This paradigm seems to persist in the black church today. Sociologists have observed that the more affluent a black church is, the more likely the church to be concerned with promoting the social values of the majority and less concerned with social issues facing black people on the whole.

⁸² Paris, 45.

Chapter 2

Sociological Dialectical Tensions

There are dialectical tensions between the identified sociological dynamics of the black church. There is a tension between the black church as an advocate for the black community and the black church as an institution of cultural assimilation. This is not an either this or that dialectic, but these opposing sociological functions create a tension as they would exist to some degree simultaneously within each community of faith. On the one hand, the mere existence of a church as a black church makes it an advocate for black humanity. On the other hand, as a minoritized community it is nearly impossible to not be impacted by the cultural values of the majority.

These sociological dialectical tensions may be evidenced by dialectical polarities in sermons. The more vociferously a black church advocated for empowerment that would result in racial uplift, the less likely it would also function as an entrée for the majority engagement or champion majority values as normative. This could be reflected in the tendency to include the rejection of or support for ruling class ideologies within the sermons by those in favor of empowerment or integration respectively. It is also expected churches that favor black empowerment over integration would favor the resistance and particularism polarities over the accommodation and universalism polarities associated with integration. In short, the various sermonic characteristics can provide insight to the perspectives of the preachers on the sociological function of their church.

Ideological

There are several ideological streams or aspects of prevailing ideologies that would provide a foundation for the objective of this research. Here I will treat ideology as “a system of ideas that mediates Christian faith in history.” The identified ideologies have shaped the practice

Chapter 2

and understanding of Christianity in the black church. Some of these ideologies have been supportive of the engagement in social activism (or its antecedents) and some have impeded such engagement. Two of the ideological forces are historical and begotten from the struggle against racial oppression; namely, class consciousness and Freedom. The third, Black Power, is an ideological drive relevant to the pursuit of social justice. The concept and drive for Black Power could be construed as the progeny of class consciousness and the quest for Freedom.

Class Consciousness

An ideological foundation for the contention that the black church should be engaged in social justice work is the Marxist notion of class consciousness. Class consciousness is “the self-awareness of the members of a social class as members of that social class, as well as their ability to act [somewhat together] in order to pursue their shared class interests.”⁸³ For much of the history of the black church there was a high degree of class consciousness, which reflected the class consciousness in the black community. Blacks were not members of a class as enumerated by Marxism, but they were members of a racial class, or caste, whose civil rights were always suspect if not outright denied. Historically, within the black church the awareness of their shared oppression was manifested by their identification with the children of Israel, in bondage or exile. While there were divisions, social and economic, within the black community; black people understood to those outside the black community, especially those interested in maintaining white supremacy, blacks were a monolithic and undifferentiated group. This historical class consciousness provided the impetus for a higher degree of social activism and engagement, relative to today, since the effects of racism impacted the entire class. This class consciousness and ubiquity of the oppression which attended the class, centered the black

⁸³ *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, s.v. "Marxism."

Chapter 2

community, making the resolution of racism a first order concern. Therefore, it was necessary for the religion of the oppressed to speak to the issue of oppression.

*Ideology of Freedom*⁸⁴

Freedom can be viewed ideologically, especially as the concept of freedom shapes one's understanding and practice of Christianity. Filtering Christianity through a lens of freedom resulted in a Theology of Freedom or alternatively a Theology of Liberation, making the warp and woof of the Bible the quest for freedom and God's primary function as liberator. This can be applied to the individual, a community, or humanity itself. The ideologizing of freedom comports with Pau's contention that freedom is the telos of the ministry of Jesus Christ (Gal 5:1-2). "In song, word, and deed, freedom has always been the superlative value of the black sacred cosmos,"⁸⁵ and "the mission and message of the black church throughout its history."⁸⁶ Lincoln & Mamiya assert "From the very beginning of the black experience in America, one critical denotation of freedom has remained constant: freedom has always meant the absence of any restraint which might compromise one's responsibility to God."⁸⁷ I disagree with the assessment that the drive for freedom was based on a drive to serve God. I do not believe the desire to serve God was or is at the heart of the desire to be free. However, the desire to be free was placed in theological language. The desire to be free birthed an ideology of freedom, which elevated the pursuit of freedom as a biblical mandate reflecting God's ultimate end. Freedom was an

⁸⁴ Concerning the inclusion of Equality as an ideological construct, consider "...the main substantive contribution the black churches have made to Christian belief and practice is the fundamental commitment to the anthropological principle of the equality of all persons under God." Paris, 43.

⁸⁵ Lincoln and Mamiya, 5.

⁸⁶ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 70.

⁸⁷ Lincoln and Mamiya, 4. See also Lincoln and Mamiya "A major aspect of Black Christian belief is found in the symbolic importance given to the word 'freedom.' Throughout black history the term 'freedom' has found a deep religious resonance in the lives and hopes of African Americans", 4.

Chapter 2

existential and ultimate concern; therefore, it became a theological mandate and the prerogative of the ultimate reality.

Ideologizing freedom was not unique to African Americans. The sacralization was freedom is evidenced in the Declaration of Independence- “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Lincoln & Mamiya contend that the meaning of freedom was different for whites and blacks in the United States, noting “For whites, freedom has bolstered the value of American individualism: to be free to pursue one’s destiny without political or bureaucratic interference or restraint. But for African Americans freedom has always been communal in nature.”⁸⁸ According to Lincoln & Mamiya, the communal nature of freedom in the African American community is based on an African perspective of tribe or community and shared destiny.⁸⁹ I agree, the concept of freedom in the African American community was expressed with a greater degree of social and communal emphasis. I would not attribute this to a philosophical orientation imprinted on the African psyche, but to the shared communal experience of oppression based on their non-white skin, which ultimately yoked blacks as a minoritized people. While individual freedom was and is desired in the African American dynamic, freedom could not really be experienced by the individual when the black masses were held captive- literally during slavery, or in pervasive social, political, or economic subjugation. It was always possible that individuals might escape the plantation or the ghetto, but the opportunities of the individual were always constrained by the oppression that held the masses. Therefore, the only certain solution for the individual was to

⁸⁸ Lincoln and Mamiya, 5.

⁸⁹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 5.

Chapter 2

solve the problem for the whole community. This orientation to freedom was the drive behind how freedom was preached in the black church. Shifts in the perspectives of the black community and the black church on the issue of freedom, with greater emphasis on individual liberty are reflected in the sermons that are preached as well, with an emphasis on personal freedom over communal freedom.¹

Black Power

As an ideological construct Black Power is “the complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary.”⁹⁰ Everything, including religious commitments, becomes subservient to the objective of throwing off the yoke of white oppression of black people. Black Power can be seen as the outcome of both the successful pursuit of freedom and the failure of integration during the Civil Rights Movement. Chapman contends that “two ideological forces—integration and black nationalism—collided in 1965 when the cry ‘Black Power’ was heard above the ‘Freedom Now’ slogan of the mainline civil rights movement.”⁹¹

On the one hand, the success of the Freedom movement, by the exercise of collective action and power, undergirded an incipient black nationalism. On the other hand, the ineffectiveness of integration to provide blacks with a sense of equity and access to the apparatus of power elevated the call for Black Power over the pursuit of integration. The determination was made that integration created dependence rather than interdependence; therefore, Black Power was necessary for the black community to deal with white supremacy from a position of strength. As Chapman notes, the shift to Black Power as a political ideology “caused a shift in religious

⁹⁰ James H. Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2018), 5.

⁹¹ Chapman, 5.

Chapter 2

thought.”⁹² The shift in religious thought was the codification of Black Theology, as a religious justification of Black Power ideology and the embrace of the sociological function of the black church that prioritized racial uplift and empowerment to achieve freedom. Black Theology itself was not a *de novo* theological construction, but an expression of extant black religious thought. According to Cone, “Black theology . . . was created out of the sermonic imagination of black preachers as they fought to establish the freedom for their people that white Americans had denied but that God has foretold and promised.”⁹³ Thus Black Theology is a theology of black liberation.⁹⁴

The “shared commitment to black liberation is the most basic common denominator between African-American religious thought before and after Black Power.”⁹⁵ This is evident in the work of pre-Black Power ministry of Benjamin Mays, Howard Thurman, and Martin Luther Kings, Jr. Chapman notes, “Mays emphasized the importance of constructive criticism of the black church and its ministers, and the need for a socially relevant theology that addressed the plight of the Negro community.”⁹⁶

Reverse Ideologies and Ideological Dialectical Tensions

Class consciousness, freedom, and Black Power are historical ideological streams that provide a foundation for the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry within the black church and concomitant characteristics in the preaching of the churches that embraced such a pursuit. To the extent that black churches embrace these ideological constructs they might be expected to embrace the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. What are some

⁹² Chapman, 5.

⁹³ Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*, 74.

⁹⁴ Chapman, 82.

⁹⁵ Chapman, 102.

⁹⁶ Chapman, 20.

Chapter 2

countervailing ideological streams that could undermine the pursuit of social justice within the black church? I cannot conceive of an ideological counter to freedom that would be embraced or evident in the black church. It is possible that an aberrant otherworldly theological orientation could obviate any concern for freedom as part of a realized eschatology; so that, a pursuit of social justice in this age would not be a priority. However, as noted above, freedom is a cornerstone of the black church. Since freedom in history is a foundational concept in the black church, then an utterly otherworldly orientation and a salvific hope that strictly reflects a future eschatology would be divorced from the historical perspective of the black church.

There are perhaps a few ideological constructs that could buttress opposition to the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry in the black church. For example, Chapman identifies the “ideology of integration” as “the political expression of Christian teaching on the interrelatedness of human life.”⁹⁷ If integration and Black Power are placed on an ideological continuum, with churches pursuing aspects of one or the other, then this could be reflected in the preaching of the churches as well. However, among the integrationists of the 1950s and 60s were religious leaders like Mays, Thurman, and King, each of which were social activists and proponents of the engagement of the church in social activism. For this reason, I suspect there would be qualitative ideological differences between the proponents of integration from the 1950s and 60s and those who favor an integrationist paradigm today. I suspect the integrationist of today would be more accommodationist and less likely to pursue social justice than the proponents of black empowerment.

⁹⁷ Chapman, 28.

Chapter 2

I would consider American Individualism or meritocracy as examples of ruling class ideologies that challenge the adoption of class consciousness; therefore, reducing the drive of blacks to see themselves as having a shared interest and destiny. I would expect churches that exhibited a higher degree of class consciousness would have sermons that point out communal beliefs or salvation, allegorize texts for the community, or use social issues as examples to understand the main points of the sermon. However, if the ideologies of individualism or meritocracy shaped the thinking of the church or the preacher, then a different set of dialectical elements might be prevalent in the sermons.

Biblical and Theological Analysis

In this theological section I will provide the biblical and theological justification for the ultimate objective for this paper. The ultimate objective of this paper is to get every church, especially every black church, to embrace the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. At the conclusion of this section, the ineluctability of the social justice work will be established. If one is concerned about salvation, then doing the work of social justice is more important than the Great Commission.

The Ineluctability of Social Justice Work

Theologically and biblically, social justice work is not optional but required. Serving the least of these is both the mission of the Church and the basis for the assessment of the community of believers concerning their faithfulness. This is evident in both the inaugural and final teaching by Jesus in Matthew. The introduction to the ministry of Jesus occurs in Mt 4:23, which recounts Jesus teaching “them, in the synagogues, and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing all sicknesses and weaknesses of the people.” Each of the commentaries reviewed for this research assert that Mt 4:23-25 functions as both a coda of Jesus’ Galilean

Chapter 2

ministry and as an introduction for the ministry for Jesus between Matthew 7-9.⁹⁸ Matthew 7-9 includes the first major teaching discourse of Jesus, which is then followed by his healing ministry. The second major teaching discourse begins in Matthew 10. This is relevant because as noted by several commentaries, Mt 4:23-25 and Mt 9:35 are almost identical. Therefore, Jesus' initial teaching, preaching, and healing ministry is introduced and summarized by very similar passages. These verses do not reflect on Jesus' teaching about saving souls by dying for their sins, but Jesus' teaching and preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, which is manifested by his saving their bodies based on his compassion for them. In Mt 4:23ff and Mt 9:35 that summarizes the ministry of Jesus, we see the fulfillment of his understanding of his calling expressed in Lk 4:18-19. Therefore, the inaugural teaching discourse for the disciples of Jesus is about the Kingdom of Heaven and the quintessential component of that teaching is the work done for the least of these.

In this inaugural teaching to his disciples, Jesus begins with the Beatitudes and describes the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven in terms of the favor towards those with specific kingdom attributes. Betz and France point out the dialectical tension in the Beatitudes having eschatological and this-worldly implications.⁹⁹ I contend that the Beatitudes only express a future eschatology inasmuch as the hearers delay their embrace of the promises. Today, peacemakers can be called the children of God. Today, as we allow the Holy Spirit to renew in us a pure heart,

⁹⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 149. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary of the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. I. Howard; Hagner Marshall, David A. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 171. David A Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, vol. 33a, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard Bruce M. Metzger, Glenn W. Barker (Nashville: Zondervan, 1993), 81.

⁹⁹ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995), 96. France, 164, Betz, 96, France.

Chapter 2

we can see God. Unfortunately, too many put off until tomorrow the blessings they can experience today. Nolland's translation of vv. 3-10 all begin with "Good fortune now to . . .," which emphasizes the present reality of the Beatitudes that need only to be embraced.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Hagner's translation of v3 is insightful, "Happy are the oppressed, because to them belongs the kingdom of heaven."¹⁰¹ Inasmuch as the church does the work necessary to bring relief to the oppressed, then the oppressed have an advocate that can change their lived reality. This verse does not suggest that in the announced new kingdom reality the oppressed live with some cognitive dissonance of joy despite their oppression. This verse announces that with the arrival of the kingdom the oppressed now have a place where their oppression is relieved. Verse six declares that those who need justice to survive, who are starving for justice, will be satisfied with the arrival of the kingdom.¹⁰² When the church does not do the work of social justice, then the promises of the Beatitudes lose all dialectical tension and become purely otherworldly hopes with no grounding in our lived reality. The church must do the work of social justice to fulfill the promises of the Beatitudes. It is the calling of the disciples.

In Mt 5:11 Jesus applies a Beatitude to the disciples with a second person plural address and likens the disciples to the prophets that came before them. France notes, "This address is in the second-person plural not only because more than one person is being addressed, but because it is the corporate impact of the disciple community. . . the collective light of a whole community which draws the attention of the whole world."¹⁰³ Perhaps we should change the words of the

¹⁰⁰ Nolland, 193.

¹⁰¹ Hagner, 87.

¹⁰² J Andrew Overman could not be more wrong in his interpretation of Mt 5:6. Overman asserts "Here righteousness refers to the desire and effort of those members to live in a manner to which Matthew feels they were called." *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 93.

¹⁰³ France, 171.

Chapter 2

song from “This little light of mine,” to reflect the shared light and work of the church rather than our individual efforts. The work of the prophets was the work of social justice, proclaiming to those in power and authority what God demands in justice for the people, but especially the orphan, the widow, and the stranger in the land—the least of these, the most marginalized and unprotected. France posits “Jesus’ disciples are now the prophetic voice on earth.”¹⁰⁴ Prophets are responsible for speaking truth to power on behalf of the voiceless.

In the black church there is an over emphasis on the hope of individual salvation, the assurance of a heavenly reward. That heaven is our home is reflected on as our ultimate purpose and objective, the purpose of the faith relationship itself. However, Mt 5:11-12 provides the theological key to understanding the enabling, rather than ultimate, function of the promises of heavenly reward. The work of a disciple is costly, this was especially true in the early church, that exposed the disciples to persecution and hardship. Even in the comfort of Western Christianity, being a disciple requires personal sacrifice, frequently referred to as the burden of the cross. It is a weak practice of the faith that celebrates what Jesus did on the cross but that does not pick up the cross. However, the purpose of being a disciple is not and never was to receive a reward. The purpose of the work was the love of the people and the love of God. However, if you do not do the work of the office, then you cannot expect to receive the reward. In these verses, there is no dialectical tension. The promises here are purely otherworldly promises of individual rewards for faithful service. These are enabling promises, giving the disciples the encouragement to fulfill their purpose here on earth. This should inform how otherworldly, future eschatology, and individual salvation polarities are used and emphasized in sermons. Ultimately, personal piety is not important because it makes me holy before God or

¹⁰⁴ France, 173.

Chapter 2

worthy of God's grace. If personal piety did that, then I would not need God's grace and Jesus died unnecessarily (Gal 2:21). The enabling function of personal piety is to declutter my mind, spirit, and life so that I am more available to see God, hear God, and obey God, and so that I am less encumbered when called to serve others. Personal piety helps prevent the weeds that choke the good seed, which the Sower is trying to sow into my life. In short, personal piety is not the ultimate objective. The ultimate objective is to be more fruitful and personal piety enables me to be more fruitful. Likewise, the otherworldly, future eschatology, and individual salvation polarities, oft expressed as promises, are enabling rather than ultimate. If our sermons and worship only get members to embrace an enabling objective, and they do not embrace the ultimate purpose, then we have missed the mark. This understanding should inform our preaching.

The second person plural address to the disciples continues in v13-16, with the use of the salt and lamp metaphors for the disciples. For our purposes two things are presented in these verses. First, if the disciples cease to be what they are called to be, then they are of no value. Second, when the disciples do what they are called to do, God is glorified. Here the good works are not described. Modeling the works of Jesus in Mt 4:23-25 and Mt 9:35 would require healing and whatnot. If the standard were those works of Jesus, then the modern disciple might be at a grave disadvantage. Certainly, charity and helps would qualify as good works that would cause the recipients to have hope and glorify God. However, I believe that the real standard is found in a modern application of Jesus' final teaching in Mt 25:31-46.

The Final Measure

In Mt 25:31-46 we have the last lesson of the last teaching discourse in Matthew. This text, which depicts the final judgement, begins with a simile of a shepherd separating sheep from

Chapter 2

goats. For my purposes, several critical issues have to be resolved. First, how we should understand “πάντα τὰ ἔθνη” (all the nations) and if the judgment is communal or individual. Second, are the required acts descriptive or exhaustive. Third, the meaning of this Matthean text for the church today.

πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (all the nations)

In this vision of the Parousia, Jesus returns with his angels and they gather πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,¹⁰⁵ for what turns out to be the final judgment. The text uses a simile to describe the process by which πάντα τὰ ἔθνη are divided into two groups, as sheep and goats by a shepherd. How does one understand πάντα τὰ ἔθνη? The Greek ἔθνη can be translated as nations or peoples. Nonetheless, all the commentaries reviewed emphasized that it was not the nations that are being judged but the individuals within those nations.¹⁰⁶ Nolland notes that the text literally reads “‘separate them from one another’ should mean separate nations from one another, but the continuation of the present account is clearly focused on individuals and in neither of the other Matthew references to ‘all the nations’ are the people dealt with as a national group. The sense is ‘separate the individuals involved from one another.’”¹⁰⁷ I find this to be true but oversimplified.

Three other Matthean passages use an inflection of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, Mt 24:9; 24:14; and 28:19. In Mt 24:9 the prepositional phrase ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν is best understood as “by all the peoples” not “by all the individuals.” The intent in Mt 24:9 is not that every individual is going to hate and abuse the disciples; rather, no matter where the disciples go, they can expect to

¹⁰⁵ Various translated “all the nations” or “all the people.” πάντα τὰ ἔθνη is in the accusative neuter plural. See footnote 110 below.

¹⁰⁶ France, 961 note 86. David A Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, vol. 33b, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard Bruce M. Metzger, and Glenn W. Barker (Nashville: Zondervan, 1995), 746. Hagner appears to equivocate since he also notes “the antecedents for ‘them’ is the nations, so the nations are being separated rather than the people (See *Matthew 14-28*, 742.).

¹⁰⁷ Nolland, 1024-25.

Chapter 2

find resistance and opposition from every nation or group of people, and that resistance will be expressed by persecution. The prediction does not have in mind individual or personal acts of abuse, but organized resistance from people in power. Nonetheless, the disciples must press on despite the opposition they will face with all the different kinds of people, because the end will come when the Gospel has been shared $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\iota\zeta\ \epsilon\theta\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ (to all the peoples) (Mt 24:14).

In Mt 24:14 $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\iota\zeta\ \epsilon\theta\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ is a dative of recipient that functions as the indirect object of the verbal noun in the prepositional phrase “for a witness,” which expresses the purpose for preaching the Gospel. The disciples will preach . . . to provide a witness to all the peoples. Matthew 24:14 is not understood to mean that the end will come when all “individuals” have heard the Gospel, but when the disciples have shared the Gospel with all the kinds or groups of peoples. Each group of people will have to decide to receive or reject the Gospel, each group of people will have to determine how they will respond to the Gospel and treat the disciples- the ones bring the Gospel. That is what is being emphasized in Mt 25:31-46, the treatment of the disciples by the various peoples of the world. When the Gospel is shared with the various groups of people, those whose believe it and become disciples will be ostracized-socially, politically, economically. That is the cost of discipleship (Mt 5:10-11).¹⁰⁸ According to Mt 25:31-46, it is the treatment of the disciples, the new believers, by their compatriots that determines how the individual compatriots will be judged.

Finally, in Mt 28:19 Jesus provides the scope of the Great Commission with $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \epsilon\theta\nu\eta$. This passage provides the best opportunity to understand $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \epsilon\theta\nu\eta$ in Mt 25:32. First, unlike the other passages, Mt. 28:19 has the same case, accusative, as Mt 25:32. The governing

¹⁰⁸ France, 964. Notes the “oppositional hazard faced by those who traveled and incurred opposition as preachers of the gospel.”

Chapter 2

verb μαθητεω can be transitive or intransitive. In this verse, μαθητεω is inflected for the imperative mood. The assumption appears to be that the verb here is transitive. If the verb is understood to be transitive, then πάντα τὰ ἔθνη is the direct object.¹⁰⁹ Literally translated- “make disciples all the nations/peoples” or a better English translation – “make all the nations/peoples disciples.” This would have the Great Commission to be one that requires peoples or nations to become disciples, rather than individuals. Although this became the objective of imperialistic nation-state practices of “Christianity,” I do not think Jesus envisioned the conversion of nations or peoples to the narrow path of the way required to be disciples. Concerning Mt 28:20, Hagner notes, “The reference to ‘all nations’ here, of course, cannot be understood as the collective conversion of national groups,” and the use of αὐτοὺς (accusative masculine plural) instead of αὐτά (accusative neuter plural) singles that “the nations” are not the object of the verbs to make disciples, baptize or teach.¹¹⁰ The “of” added by several translations might seem to be an attempt to forestall the understanding of a nation-state conversion process, but it really signals that the verb is in fact intransitive.¹¹¹

When used intransitively, μαθητεω is usually translated as a stative- to be a disciple. Here I suggest that in this case the imperative is being used intransitively but should be translated “make disciples”¹¹² without a direct object. πάντα τὰ ἔθνη functions not as the direct object but is an adverbial accusative of space. The realm of the disciple making activities is “all nations” or “all peoples.” This compliments the imperatival use of the participle πορευθέντες, from πορεύομαι -to go, that is translated not as “Going” but as “Go.” The extent of the “Go and make

¹⁰⁹ Maximilian Zerwick identifies this as a case of an intransitive verb being used transitively. See §66 of *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, trans. Joseph Smith S.J. (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 23

¹¹⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 887.

¹¹¹ Perhaps it would be better to classify μαθητεω as ambitransitive.

¹¹² “Be disciples” would be an imperative intransitive as a stative.

Chapter 2

disciples” command is all (of) the nations. I would translate v 19 as “Go and make disciples from all of the nations.” Matthew 28:19 also informs our understanding of Mt 25:32 because in both verses there is a mismatch between πάντα τὰ ἔθνη and a following pronoun that has no explicit antecedent. In Mt 25:19, like in Mt 25:32, we have αὐτοὺς, which is accusative masculine plural, as the object of a verb with no corresponding antecedent. For the Mt 25:32 instance, Hagner contends “Despite the disagreement in gender of αὐτοὺς, ‘them,’ the antecedent remains τὰ ἔθνη, ‘the nations.’”¹¹³ Hagner wants τὰ ἔθνη to be the antecedent of αὐτοὺς in Mt 25:19, despite the incongruity in the case, so that it is the nations that are being divided. However, Hagner is not consistent this this type of analysis. Noted above, Hagner posits that if Matthew intended for the nations to be baptized then αὐτά would have been used rather than αὐτοὺς. The solution is that in both Mt 25:32 and 28:19 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη is not the object of the verb, but an adverbial accusative of space for gathering and discipling respectively, with αὐτοὺς as the direct objection sans an explicit antecedent.¹¹⁴ According to the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, “Very often *autos* is used rather laxly, where the subject or the object to which it must be referred is not expressly indicated, but must be gathered especially from some preceding name of a province or city, or from the context.” Matthew 13:54 is illustrative is this point.

Matthew 13:54 reads “He (Jesus, implied by the context) came to his hometown and was teaching them (αὐτοὺς) in their (αὐτῶν) synagogue, so that they (αὐτοὺς)¹¹⁵ were amazed. . .”

The pronouns αὐτοὺς and αὐτῶν have no explicit antecedent. France translates αὐτοὺς as “the

¹¹³ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 742.

¹¹⁴ There are 48 instances of αὐτοὺς in Matthew. In five of the instances, Mt. 13:54x2, 25:32, and 28:19,20 the pronoun lacks an explicit antecedent that matches in gender and number. For Mt. 25:32; 28:19, 20 the commentaries and other works posit αὐτοὺς refers to τὰ ἔθνη, despite gender mismatch. See footnote 113. For Mt 28:20, which would apply just as well to Mt 28:19, “αὐτοὺς masc. though ref. ἔθνη, with in mind the persons composing the nations” see Maximilian Zerwick S.J, and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the New Testament*, 5th ed. (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2007), 99, 548.

¹¹⁵ This pronoun is in the accusative because the verb is in the infinitive.

Chapter 2

people” with no explanation.¹¹⁶ None of the other commentaries specifically address the use of αὐτοῦς in Mt 13:54. The implied antecedent for both αὐτοῦς and αὐτῶν are the inhabitants of the previous named space, “his hometown.” Likewise, the implicit antecedent of αὐτοῦς in both Mt 28:19, 20 and Mt 25:32, is not “all the nations” but “the people from all the nations.” That is who will be gathered and judged, not the nations, but the people from all the nations. This resolves the oversimplification by Nolland that I noted earlier. The question remains whether the people are judged individually or collectively based on the criteria. Alas, I concede that in Mt 25:31-46 the evangelist established for the Matthean community a revelation concerning the individual assessments and judgement of believers and non-believers. In this “apocalyptic revelation discourse,”¹¹⁷ the evangelist uses a simile of a shepherd looking at each Caprinae, each sheep or goat, to describes how Jesus will look at the work of each person to determine if they are righteous or unrighteous.

Finally, it should be noted that πάντα τὰ ἔθνη should be understood broadly and inclusively. It includes the gathering of Jews and Gentiles, believers and non-believers.¹¹⁸ Therefore, this vision was both a comfort and warning for the target audience, the Matthean community. As a word of comfort, this vision affirmed that the suffering and neglect that the disciples experienced from others would not go unrequited. More importantly, as much as πάντα τὰ ἔθνη included the believers, then this affirmed earlier promises to the believers of the reward for loving one another. France notes the relationship between Mt 25:31-46 and Mt 5:3, 10, and 12; the ones that have done good to others have lived according to the will of God and are

¹¹⁶ France, 548.

¹¹⁷ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 740. France, citing the work of G.N. Stanton, notes the “genre is closer to the majestic visions of divine judgment in the Book of Revelation to the Synoptic parables” France, 960, note 80.

¹¹⁸ France, 961. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 742, 46.

Chapter 2

worthy of the promised reward in heaven.¹¹⁹ As a word of warning, the believers would be subject to the same judgment as non-believers if they failed to render the aid described.¹²⁰

Exhaustive or Paradigmatic

The consensus from the commentaries is that the list of acts of kindness was not intended to be exhaustive but paradigmatic.¹²¹ In the first case, it would be a mistake to take the list literally, that they had to do each of these things, or they failed everything. It would be an equally grave mistake to think you only had to do one of these things or did not have to do anything that was not on this list. This list is paradigmatic, reflecting common experiences of need faced by those “in a society less materially favored than the modern Western world,” but especially by a marginalized or oppressed group.¹²² France notes that the criteria is based on the response of all the various peoples to the needs of the disciple, rather than the “response to human need in general.”¹²³ In the original context this revelation was not about care and concern for the least of these inclusive, but exclusively the least of these as disciples. There are other acts of humanity that are not in the list, but this list is particularly relevant to the material deprivation or persecution that might have been experienced by early Christians, in competition with their Jewish compatriots in Palestine and abroad. However, part of the power of this list is also the universality of the needs. Nolland notes “the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* 125 displays a striking agreement with Matthew’s first, second, and fourth items.”¹²⁴ Much in the same way that the

¹¹⁹ France, 959, 62-63. See also Nolland, 1028. *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, ed. Brian K. Blount (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 91, 114.

¹²⁰ Apocalyptic visions are never really for the who are going to be judged and punished. Apocalyptic visions are always for those who are suffering and going to be rewarded for their faithfulness, while at the same time promising a reversal of fortune and suffering for their oppressors. That is why no matter how horrific an apocalyptic vision, it is always welcomed by its true audience. A vision where the oppressed are simply restored and made whole but those responsible for their suffering go unpunished would fail to satisfy.

¹²¹ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 744. Nolland, 1028.

¹²² France, 963-64.

¹²³ France, 958.

¹²⁴ Nolland, 1029.

Chapter 2

Beatitudes have a near universal appeal as right and the way things should be, with no ethnic or cultural patents; the demands in Mt 25:31-46 appear as objectively righteous measures of humanity, set apart from any particular creed or confession that determines compliance with the will of God.

Meaning for the Church Today

For the Matthean community this final teaching by Jesus set the ultimate standard for judgment; in the literary context for all of humanity, but specifically for the Matthean community—the disciples of Jesus. J. Andrew Overman notes “The import of one’s actions is emphasized” in Mt 25:31ff, so that in “Matthew judgment presupposes the possession of *dikaiosynê* for entry into the kingdom.”¹²⁵ This passage is not presented as a parable, but as a revelation of what is going to happen. Theologically, it cannot be ignored that this vision presents the possibility that our entry into the Kingdom of God at the Parousia depends not on our confession or God’s grace, but on our obedience to the commandment to love in action.¹²⁶ In this text the love in action is expressed as meeting the needs of the least of the these, understood to be the disciples of Jesus.¹²⁷

I imagine this vision hits different for believers today than it did for the original Matthean audience, especially for western communities of faith. I imagine there is more trepidation, among the current disciples (or at least confessors that are not actually disciples) of Jesus, concerning the dynamics of this final judgment process. In the first case, Christians, at least in the West, are no longer subject to the kind of systemic socio-economic persecution that resulted in the needs depicted in this text. Therefore, the modern western believer would be enthusiastic about the

¹²⁵ Overman, 92, 92 note 65.

¹²⁶ France, 961.

¹²⁷ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 745.

Chapter 2

described reckoning based on the abuse or lack of care for the least of these; especially one that does not include a carveout for those that have confessed Jesus as Lord. This is compounded by the modern reading of this passage that does not limit the least of these to the disciples of Jesus but identifies Jesus with anyone in need. This modern reading holds everyone accountable for meeting the needs of those that are suffering, especially because of oppression. To the extent that the description of the works is paradigmatic rather than exhaustive, the Church has a high bar to meet.

The next challenge for the Church is to not see those that are helped as representatives of Christ, but to see them as worthy of help because they are people. This is the defining characteristic of those declared to be righteous. People are always looking for the cheat code—the box to be checked to get the reward. A person with the right character, a character shaped and open to the work of the Holy Spirit, does not need a cheat code. Would-be goats, having read this parable might now make sure they provide the identified services. However, they would still be goats if the only reason they were providing these enumerated services was to check a box. What is necessary is to adopt an ethos of service for others, especially for the least of these, because they need help. In our modern context, especially in the western practice, with the influence and power that the church has, even the black church, the responsibility to the least of these must be more than charity but include the work of reshaping society to be more just. That is the work and ministry of social justice.

Individual or Communal Judgment

I have already acknowledged that Mt 25:31-46 represents a revelation of judgment and the patients of the judgment, those subject to the judgment, in this text are individuals. That model was great for the early church as an exhortation for disciples to remain faithful by loving

Chapter 2

one another. The promise of individual reward or the specter of eternal punishment functioned to buttress adherence to the love ethic of Jesus. It might be enough to remind modern believers of this revelation to inspire more consistent acts of charity by individual believers. However, we are in a different epoch, the church in the United States of America is different in kind than the church of 1st century Palestine. It has a different level of power and influence, and by extension culpability for and responsibility to shape the socio-economic policies and practices of the nation. The church is not just responsible for helping the least of these to survive if not thrive in a hostile environment, but to reshape the environment to be more life affirming for the least of these. A communal reading of this text would allow for the people from the nations to be allegorized for individual faith communities and the faith communities to be separated as sheep and goats, based on the work that the faith communities did on behalf of the truly disadvantaged among them. No church would have to do all the advocacy, but the churches that were sheep would recognize and do the work for social justice necessary for the truly disadvantaged in their midst, because they simply valued the truly disadvantaged and recognized they are deserving. The critical question that should be asked by every church member—if your church were judged as a body based on the way it served the least of these among you, would you stay a member of that church?

Chapter 3 - What is Black Preaching? An Examination of Black Preaching from some Masters

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I reviewed both the prevailing reflections on the centrality of the black church to the black community and its liberation, as well as the perspectives of the black church's detractors. For black church apologists, like me, the important stuff in Black History is synonymous with black church history. We have come this far by faith and the black church has been the central institution through which that faith has operated to organize, encourage, and supply black communities for social change. An indispensable tool in the quiver of black religionists seeking to move the black race forward has been prophetic black preaching. Prophetic black preaching has been used to raise the consciousness of those in the struggle and to prick the consciousness of those that we must struggle against.

For the black church's detractors, among who are black believers, the black church is an institution that at best has failed to live up to its promise and potential, but at its worst has been complicit in the ongoing systematic socio-political-economic marginalization of black people. For some detractors a primary example of the complicity of the black church is its preaching. Sometimes the critics of black preaching identify concerns with purely performative elements, such as the overemphasis on emotion and gimmicks to achieve contrived responses. However, there are criticisms of black preaching based strictly on its theological content or the lack thereof. These critics point to preaching that makes black people complacent with their oppression and marginalized status or that blames the victims rather than the powers and principalities that manifest themselves as systems perpetuating systemic inequality.

Chapter 3

So black preaching, as a synecdoche for black religion, can be both a curse and a blessing in the quest for liberation. There are sermons that can, in the spirit of Isaiah 40, provide the people with a warning order to get ready to participate in the change for their good. There are also sermons that function as an opiate, keeping black believers in a religious stupor. In my quest to hone my own practice of preaching, I attempted to define essential topics of black preaching necessary for it to be a tool of liberation.

In Chapter 2 I reviewed the sociological, ideological, and theological underpinnings for the project objective and their relevance to the project thesis. For several of the sociological, ideological, and theological concepts I identified perspectives that could be expressed in sermons that would support or undermine the project objective. The intent is to review sermons for the presence of those concepts or related sermonic characteristics that reflect an orientation to social justice as an aspect of ministry.

Now I will argue for the defining character of black preaching, which is not the same as sermons preached by black preachers or before black congregations. The defining character of black preaching is informed by scholarly literature and exemplar sermons. The exemplar sermons are essential to this process. Again, referring to Moyd's dictum, "Those who will be effective preachers . . . must study the methods of the masters."¹²⁸ Most of the exemplar sermons are from the masters, paragon black preachers according to subject matter experts. The intent was to use the exemplar sermons as benchmarks for the review of the sermons by the pastors of the target population. Since the exemplar sermons were all written, rather than audio or video, the performative characteristics were not of interest. Rather, I was interested in the content of the

¹²⁸ Moyd, 44-45.

Chapter 3

sermons, sermonic references, and the prevalence of dialectical polarities, based on the types of sermons. This permitted me to develop expectations, with caveats, for the sermons from the target population. The caveats include that the exemplar sermons were not restricted to Sunday morning exhortations or necessarily addressing the daily lived experience of the members in pastoral care.

What is Black Preaching?

There is a diversity of thought concerning the existence of a distinctive style of black preaching. It is interesting that some of those deemed exemplars of black preaching eschewed their categorization as black preachers, reflecting a particular style.¹²⁹ Giants of preaching in the black community, to include Samuel DeWitt Proctor, Gardner Taylor, and James E. Massey, contended there is no definitive style of black preaching.¹³⁰ According to Thomas “there is no litmus test of orthodoxy for theoreticians and practitioners of black preaching.”¹³¹ The principal ways homiletic theorists have attempted to describe black preaching are based on performance, style, affect, hermeneutical application, content, or a combination of the these elements. For example, based on the work of LaRue and Mitchell and analysis by Gilbert and Thomas, black preaching is characterized by tendencies with respect to style or rhetoric; performance, especially celebration; theological emphasis, both God’s power and God’s concern for the marginalized and oppressed; and emphasis on the black lived experience.¹³² Yet concerning style and performance, LaRue notes “none of these traits is the exclusive property of black preachers. All of them can be

¹²⁹ Thomas, 98. Specifically Proctor and Gardner dismissed the notion of distinctive style of black preaching. See also LaRue who notes “The difficulty in grasping what is at the heart of black preaching is equally voiced by those who are considered to have achieved some mastery and adeptness in the field.” *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons*, ed. Cleophus J. LaRue (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1.

¹³⁰ Thomas, 34.

¹³¹ Thomas, 34.

¹³² Thomas, 89.

Chapter 3

found to some degree outside the African American preaching tradition, and none of them fully accounts for the extraordinary character of black preaching.”¹³³ There are no style or performance elements that are mandatory for black preaching. Both sermons that crescendo into celebration and sermons that cause listeners to tear their shirts in lament can be exemplars of black preaching. Sermons peppered with the vaunted whoop can be examples of black preaching; likewise, sermons that cause a congregation to listen with silent reflection. There are no definitive stylistic elements that are evident in all sermons preached in a black church setting or by black preachers.

What makes a sermon a black sermon and an example of black preaching is the content of the sermon. Following LaRue, “To preach black, then, is to preach out of an awareness of the issues and concerns of life with which blacks struggle and contend daily.”¹³⁴ A sermon is representative of black preaching if the sermon addresses the needs of the black community in general and a black congregation in particular. Black preaching is preaching that is “shaped by faithful responses to centuries of racial, sexual, social, cultural, political, economic, and gender oppression, and as a result is uniquely able to minister to all people, and especially hurting and oppressed people, in America and all over the globe.”¹³⁵ According to LaRue, the “black lived experience . . . and a shared history of subjugation” were identified as two of the threads that sustained the black preaching experience and are the essence of the “black historical journey.”¹³⁶

Preaching that speaks to or more importantly from the black historical journey is black preaching. Preaching that ignores it is not. This does not mean that an African American sermon

¹³³ Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 1.

¹³⁴ Cleophus J. LaRue, *Rethinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 6.

¹³⁵ Thomas, 85.

¹³⁶ *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons*, 1.

Chapter 3

must address the African American experience directly, but it must be informed by that experience in the interpretation of scripture, to hear the voice of the oppressed and marginalized and appreciate the hope for a future based on a promise. This also means that it is necessary for a preacher in this tradition to be conversant with both the history of African American people and the current realities of the people. A preacher that is unaware of the issues of life facing the people of God, both individually and collectively, will not be able to preach comfort and hope to them in their struggle.

The expectation should be that the sermons preached in a particular context would reflect that context. Not every sermon preached in a black church needs to be a “black sermon,” but the expectation should be that the sermons preached in a context should reflect that context. Effective black preaching is preaching that makes a difference to the black community, emphasizes theological themes relevant to the black community and are reflective of or on the black lived experience. LaRue posits that expressions concerning the black historical experience are “simply part of who they are as a people of faith and what they are becoming in response to their lived situation in America.”¹³⁷ To the extent that we omit the black historical journey from our sermons we ignore our faith and adopt the faith of others. As noted by Mitchell, in rather gender biased language, “No contemporary Black preacher can be said to descend from the Black Fathers who, for whatever reason, theological or otherwise, ignores or withdraws from the struggle with which the ministry of the Black Fathers is forever identified.”¹³⁸ A fundamental question that one should be able to answer at the conclusion of a sermon preached in a black church is “What was the black in that sermon?”

¹³⁷ *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons*, 1.

¹³⁸ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 56.

Let me proleptically refute the objection that the lived experience of black Americans in 2024 is not the experience of black Americans in the 1960s, let alone during Jim Crow, post-Reconstruction, or the antebellum period. Indeed, since the end of slavery and through the years of progress to address the history of racism and discrimination, there has been an increased diversity in the lived experience of individual and groups of black people. Yet, by every measure of inequality- healthcare, wealth, criminal justice, employment, voter representation, housing, education—African Americans are a marginalized class in these United States. There is no measure of inequality for which African Americans are not last or next to last. Moreover, the downward intergenerational mobility of African Americans makes our gains from one generation to the next ephemeral.¹³⁹ African Americans should heed the admonition from James Weldon Johnson- to remember where we met God. Just as importantly, black sermons should use our shared lived experience to reflect on the faith as well. The black historical experience should provide an interpretive lens for what we say about God, this faith, and the church, even if our individual or group experiences are divergent.

Categories of Sermons

Martha Simmons and Frank Thomas provide four categories of black sermons—“social activist preaching, black identity preaching, cultural survival preaching, and empowerment preaching.”¹⁴⁰ They assert “all black preaching falls within at least one of these classifications; some overlaps into one or more categories.”¹⁴¹ Simmons and Thomas are not suggesting that any sermon that addresses any one of these elements is an example of black preaching, but that all

¹³⁹ B. Mazumber, "Intergenerational Mobility in the United States: What We Have Learned from the Psid," *Ann Am Acad Pol Soc Sci* 680, a (2018): See Racial difference in intergenerational mobility., <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6820674/>.

¹⁴⁰ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Martha Simmons; Frank A. Thomas (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 9-12, 254.

¹⁴¹ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

Chapter 3

black preaching can be placed in one or more of these groups. For example, prosperity preaching, as a subcategory under empowerment preaching, is not a uniquely or predominantly black type of preaching. However, I would expect that sermons identified as “black identity” would be uncommon outside of a black context. It would have been helpful if Simmons and Thomas had offered a categorization of each of the sermons in their anthology. I find the categorization process to be more art than science. Of the 30 exemplar sermons I reviewed from *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, Simmons and Thomas provided a categorization based of their taxonomy for ten. My categorization fully matched theirs for seven and partially matched for two.¹⁴² The only sermon for which the categorization provided by Simmons and Thomas was completely different than mine was Katie Cannon’s “Prophets for a New Day.” For that sermon Simmons and Thomas identified elements of empowerment, black identity, and cultural survival preaching.¹⁴³ I did not find elements for those categories in Cannon’s sermon, but I did find elements for social activism preaching not identified by Simmons and Thomas.¹⁴⁴

LaRue notes five domains of experience that are of special interest to black life and preaching— (1) personal piety; (2) care of the soul; (3) social justice; (4) corporate concerns (of the race); and (5) maintenance of the church. Although each of these might be informed by the black experience, only corporate concerns of the race, when it is specifically focused on African Americans, would be uniquely black. Significantly, LaRue notes, while “Black preaching addresses concerns that center on personal piety, care of the soul, and matters pertaining to the

¹⁴² This includes a sermon identified by Simmons and Thomas as prophetic that I assumed would be categorized by them as a Social Activism sermon. The partial matches occur when there is not an exact match. See Appendix B- Categorization of Sermons from *Preaching with Sacred Fire* Table 37

¹⁴³ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 622.

¹⁴⁴ I was intentional about reading the perspectives on sermons after I had conducted my first review. I reviewed the sermon again and could not find the elements identified by Simmons and Thomas.

Chapter 3

inner workings of the institutional church,”¹⁴⁵ it is essential for black preaching to also speak “to God’s active involvement in matters of social justice and racial corporate concerns.”¹⁴⁶ Failure to address social justice and racial corporate concerns results in the loss of black preaching dialect. What separates the black preaching dialect from all other preaching is the emphasis on particular expressions in the domains of social justice and racial corporate concerns. The other domains are present, but they are not what makes preaching black preaching.

Table 1 provides a mapping between LaRue’s preaching domains and Simmons and Thomas’ categorization of black sermons. The descriptions of the emphasis for each of the domains are from LaRue’s work. LaRue did not offer a domain of experience that would accommodate a sermon categorized by Simmons and Thomas as prosperity preaching. Likewise, Simmons and Thomas did not have a sermon category that would cover the elements in the Maintenance of the Church domain. This suggests that neither LaRue’s domains nor Simmons and Thomas’ categories are exhaustive.¹⁴⁷

Table 1 Mapping of Sermon Simmons and Thomas' Categories of Black Sermons and LaRue's Preaching Domains

LaRue- Five Domains of Experience		Simmons and Thomas- Categories of Sermons
Domains	Emphasis	
Personal Piety	Morality, Faith / Salvation, Relationship with God	Cultural Survival
Care of the Soul	Welling being of Individuals, Comfort, Changes and Challenges Common to Life	Cultural Survival Empowerment (individual)
Social Justice	Racism, sexism, ageism, other forms of discrimination	Social Activism
Corporate Care for the Race	Group self-help, uplift, racial solidarity and unity, Racial Concerns	Black Identity Empowerment (group/Black Power)
Maintenance of the Church	Work of the people, teachings of the faith, decorum	n/a
n/a		Empowerment (prosperity)- Individual wealth and achievement

¹⁴⁵ LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 6.

¹⁴⁶ LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ I have proposed an additional sermon type Affirmation of Faith. This sermon type would cover some of the identified for LaRue’s Maintenance of the Church domain.

Social Activism Preaching

Social activism sermons are the types of sermons I am most interested in hearing more frequently. Social activism sermons are the sermons that seek to make a change in this world. Frank Thomas notes the “homiletical epiphany” concerning African American preaching that emerged with the Civil Rights Movement, was that preaching had the ability “to move people and change society.”¹⁴⁸ These sermons might also be called prophetic sermons, but their essential elements include- identifying a social problem, presenting a biblically grounded perspective and solution for the problem, and activating the faithful to do something; hopefully, to do something together. According to McMickle, “Prophetic preaching is designed to motivate people to move beyond lifting up holy hands and begin to extend helping hands to those who Jesus describes in Matthew 25 as ‘the least of these.’”¹⁴⁹ James Victor contends that “prophetic preaching is at the core of the Black preaching idiom.”¹⁵⁰ Again, when we stop preaching prophetically, when we stop preaching social justice, we are no longer engaged in black preaching.

According to Simmons and Thomas the objective of the social activist preacher is “to induce social activism by providing the spiritual, political, and cultural underpinnings for liberation struggles,” and to critique society, the black community, and the black church.¹⁵¹ A sermon might be preached from the social justice domain, based on a social justice concern with a sensitivity to the issues; however, if it does not charge the congregation with being an agent for the change that needs to happen, then it is not fulfilling the prophetic mandate. The preaching agenda for the social activist preacher would include “poverty alleviation, racial and gender

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Marvin A. McMickle, *Where Have All the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 85.

¹⁵⁰ Victor, 11.

¹⁵¹ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

Chapter 3

equality, and all peace, justice, and economic struggles,”¹⁵² as well as concerns with the environment, gender identity, and immigration. McMickle identifies this agenda as “the justice agenda of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-44.”¹⁵³ The justice agenda of Jesus is the biblical and theological warrant for this project.

There is no reason to contend that social activist preaching is uniquely black; indeed, it would be shameful if that was the case. So, it is necessary to have black social activist pulpits as well as others to address these social activist concerns, both the issues that have been of core concern to the black community and those with a broader scope. The core issues addressed in black social activist preaching are related to racial equality in economics, politics, health, education, housing, and criminal justice—historic areas of racial inequality and discrimination. The function of social justice preaching in the black church has been primarily towards addressing racial injustice, discrimination, and prejudice.¹⁵⁴ Historically, the church has had a blind spot to other elements of social justice (e.g. environmental & climate, immigration) and an aversion to gender equality and gender identity issues. As noted earlier, black social activism is needed beyond the provincial issues, to include gender equality, environmental justice, immigration, and LGBTQ+ rights.

The literature suggests that there has been a decline in prophetic preaching in the African American church. According to Victor, the African American church seems “to be losing its prophetic edge to a more prosperity-oriented form of preaching.”¹⁵⁵ McMickle concurs with Victor. McMickle asserts the prophetic tradition in the African American church has declined

¹⁵² *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

¹⁵³ McMickle, *Where Have All the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, 62.

¹⁵⁴ LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 23.

¹⁵⁵ Victor, 4.

Chapter 3

over the last twenty-five years, and that prosperity preaching is a factor in the decline of prophetic preaching.¹⁵⁶ McMickle also notes a narrow definition of morality, the emergence of patriot pastors, and the dominance of praise as the modality of worship all contribute to the demise of prophetic preaching.¹⁵⁷ Less than 20% of the more than 800 sermons submitted to *The African American Pulpit* between 1997-2009 “would be considered as belonging to the historic prophetic preaching tradition of the African American church.”¹⁵⁸ My review of sermons in both the literature and observations of local churches comport with the general assessment of the lack of preaching that engenders social justice. However, against both Victor and McMickle, I did not find prosperity preaching to be so prevalent as to crowd out the opportunity for prophetic preaching.

Black Identity Preaching

“Preaching for black identity is preaching to construct and reconstruct humanity and dignity, and to enhance the self-esteem of blacks.”¹⁵⁹ When I consider the African American religious experience in this country, black identity preaching would seem to be the oldest and the only uniquely black preaching category. When the griot in the slave quarter proclaimed the universal parentage of God, he was working to affirm the humanity of his enslaved listeners in spite of their deprivation. Mitchell posits “. . . Black preaching has been a way to conferring being . . . and stimulating the assertion of selfhood,”¹⁶⁰ and that “all Black religion has . . . been concerned with the affirmation and support of Black selfhood.”¹⁶¹ The most distinguishing

¹⁵⁶ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 36.

¹⁵⁷ McMickle, *Where Have All the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, vii. McMickle’s observations are not limited to black churches, but an assessment of preaching in general.

¹⁵⁸ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 594 note 8.

¹⁵⁹ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

¹⁶⁰ Mitchell, 37.

¹⁶¹ Mitchell, 36.

Chapter 3

feature of black identity preaching is the focus on matters facing the race and the responsibility of the church to address those matters.

A critical difference between black identity preaching and social activist preaching is that the former “usually does not feature (a) political program.”¹⁶² Rather black identity preaching, would look at problems facing black communities and focus on the changes black communities and individuals need to make to improve their collective and individual circumstances. For example, a black identity sermon that addresses an issue of criminal sentencing because of prior offenses would emphasize the need to keep convicted felons from repeatedly committing crimes rather than ending mandatory minimums based on prior offenses and three strike rules. When it comes to black identity issues and problems in the black community, these sermons tend to focus on black community dysfunction, which has a propensity to blame the victim rather than fix the problem. For example, a black identity sermon, or a sermon preached from the corporate care for the race domain, concerning black academic underachievement would not identify the underachievement as a function of inequitable funding, that is funding based on needs to overcome identified environmental challenges. Instead, the sermon might focus on parental choices and priorities. In this case, the problem with the black identity preaching is that the solution requires both the critique of parental guidance and equitable funding.

Cultural Survival

Simmons and Thomas note cultural survival is the dominant type of sermon in the contemporary African American church.¹⁶³ LaRue makes a similar assertion for the personal piety domain of black religion,¹⁶⁴ which I have mapped to the cultural survival sermon type. The

¹⁶² *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

¹⁶³ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

¹⁶⁴ LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 21, 22.

Chapter 3

review of sermons from vetted sources and from local congregations confirm these assessments.

There is nothing inherently “black” about the personal piety domain of religious experience.

Simmons and Thomas describe cultural survival preaching as “preaching for the construction and maintenance of black culture that helps blacks endure in their average, day-to-day, week-to-week living,” despite “the highs and lows of life.”¹⁶⁵ If one maintains the racial component of the

definition of the cultural survival sermon, then it will lose its preeminence as the dominant type of sermon, since the vast majority of sermons have no emphasis on the black experience. In

short, not all cultural survival sermons are black sermons, because they are not related to the

black experience or do not reflect on the challenges through a uniquely black hermeneutic. The

issues that cultural survival preaching addresses are not unique to African Americans.¹⁶⁶ For this

research a cultural survival sermon directs the listeners on how to live their faith more faithfully

by the practices of the faith traditions, spiritual disciplines, and adhering to the teachings.¹⁶⁷

Another factor that makes cultural survival so prevalent in the black church is its overlap with

the care for the soul domain. This domain is concerned with encouraging the listeners through

the challenges of life. In this case the cultural survival sermon instructs the believer on how “to

go on just a little while longer to see what the end will be.” Cultural survival sermons reflect

black preaching when the challenges emanate from the reality of being black or the response to

the challenges are grounded in the traditions of the black church.

Cultural survival sermons, in either the personal piety or care for the soul domains, can be focused on the individual or the community. Although not described by LaRue, there is a

¹⁶⁵ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

¹⁶⁶ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ As I write this it occurs to me that reframing social activism as a Christian duty and necessary for faithful living could allow social activism to be integrated with the more popular and prevalent cultural survival preaching activities.

Chapter 3

sermon that focuses on the morality of a community. The prophets spoke almost exclusively against the immorality of nations or people rather than the immorality of individuals. Likewise, cultural survival sermons that address issues in the care of the soul domain can be focused on a church, a community, or nation. Unfortunately, the description of both personal piety and care for the soul domains puts an emphasis on the individual. This is interesting since the black experience is not an individual but corporate experience.

Empowerment Preaching

Empowerment preaching focuses on the ability of an agent, an individual or community, to shape its destiny and to solve, or at least mitigate, its problems apart from any other agents, save the cooperation with the Divine. Black empowerment envisions the uplift of black people without social programs or outside intervention as the primary tools for change. A sermon which encourages members of a black church to create or support black owned businesses to grow the black economy would be an example of black empowerment preaching. This would be an example of empowerment preaching that impacted the agency of individuals to change their community. If the sermon not only encouraged the members to support black owned businesses but set forth a vision for a church budget that dedicated a percentage to black owned businesses, this would be an example of communal black empowerment preaching.

According to Simmons and Thomas, “Empowerment preaching provides an unequivocal message of black power, a belief of entrepreneurship, wealth, and success where individuals primarily find liberation through changing their consciousness and through hard work, and less through social reform movements . . . Being empowered to control one’s destiny is the overriding concern of empowerment preaching.”¹⁶⁸ I have some concerns with their description

¹⁶⁸ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 11.

Chapter 3

of empowerment preaching. To begin with, although both of my examples above reflected on empowerment manifested through economic pursuits, the areas in which individuals and communities can affect their circumstances are broader than economic measures. The emphasis on economics, wealth, and entrepreneurialism reflects a sacralization of the economy or limiting the concept of *oikonovia*¹⁶⁹ to our ability to successfully manage issues of money. We can experience empowerment in areas outside the economic domain and empowerment in other domains can compensate for our relative economic weakness. Moreover, with respect to the emphasis on economic and wealth concerns within the empowerment category, I would separate prosperity preaching from empowerment preaching. Simmons and Thomas note how prosperity preaching became a subarea of empowerment preaching, wherein individual prosperity was the expected outcome and the manifestation of correct living.¹⁷⁰ Prosperity preaching was the most widely criticized form of preaching in the literature and frequently identified as one of the chief reasons for the demise of prophetic preaching. The emphasis on the faults of prosperity preaching were not aligned with my observations of it in the local congregational sermons.

I am also concerned with the exclusive emphasis on the individual rather than a shared emphasis on the individual and communal empowerment, if not a preference for communal empowerment. The western mentality focuses on the individual, what the individual can do and accomplish. We should focus on communal empowerment expressed in the African proverb “If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.” Black power is not manifested or experienced individually but collectively. Black power can only be experienced when the collective consciousness is raised, and individuals act as a group. Few of the achievements of the

¹⁶⁹ *Oikonomia*- the management of a household or family. A metonymy for life. The English words economy and economics are derived from this Greek word, but the Greek term is much broader.

¹⁷⁰ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 11, 592.

Chapter 3

Civil Rights Movement were realized as the result of individual empowerment, rather they achievements were the result of communal empowerment. Finally, based on the sermons reviewed, the emphasis on “black” in their description of empowerment unnecessarily limits the applicability of this category of sermon. When an empowerment sermon is dealing with an issue in the care of the soul domain for an individual, it is not a manifestation of black power.

What I most appreciate about Simmons and Thomas’ description of empowerment preaching is the implicit relationship between black empowerment and each of the other types of sermons. First, black empowerment sees the condition of black folks as antithetical to the will of God and their value as a people, which is an affirmation of black identity. This preaching raises the consciousness of the listeners to both the reality and the desired state of their existence and affirms the ability of the community to achieve the desired state. Second, while black empowerment preaching provides agency to a marginalized group, it leaves room for the group to demand and pursue its ends through social activism. I take the “. . . less through social reforms,” qualification of the means of change to permit changes that are pursued through both empowerment and social policy. When issues in LaRue’s corporate care domain are addressed exclusively from an empowerment perspective, we can be left perpetually treating the symptoms of systemic inequality and not engage in the social activism required to end that inequality. Third, empowerment also reinforces cultural survival. When an empowerment sermon emphasizes the ability of the individual or community to overcome its circumstances as a means of fulfilling God’s purpose and living faithfully, it is by definition cultural survival.

While I gave explicit attention to the intersectionality of empowerment with the other categories of sermons, this should not be construed as empowerment as having links with each of the other categories but a mesh between each of the categories. A sermon might focus on one of

Chapter 3

the categories, yet the objective of that category can be supported by a call to other categories. For example, a cultural survival sermon that seeks to comfort a community after gun violence from gang activity could also tap empowerment elements to challenge the community to get involved by forming neighborhood patrols, and social activism elements to encourage advocacy for neighborhood policing. All the elements may not be evident in one sermon but a series of sermons. A reasonable sequence of the sermons might be cultural survival, to address the hardship; then empowerment, to stress that this does not have to be the norm in our community; then black identity, to affirm that Black Lives Matter so stop the killing; and finally, the need for social policy reform in a social activism sermon.

Review of Exemplars of Black Preaching

Table 2 provides a summary of the categorization of sermons reviewed from 18 publications with sermons from 59 African American preachers.¹⁷¹ With a few exceptions, the sermons or preachers were identified as exemplars of excellence in black preaching. Some of the sermons were from authors of books or studies on preaching, without a validation from some other recognized authority on black preaching.

Table 2 Categorization of Sermons Reviewed from Sermon Anthologies

Number of Sermons Reviewed	No Category Selected	Social Activism	Black Identity	Empowerment (Communal / Individual / Prosperity)	Cultural Survival (Hardship / Emphasis on African American Hardships)
117 ¹⁷²	18	12	8	22 (3 / 21 / 1)	70 (19* / 4)
*n=78					

¹⁷¹ One of the sources was from a DMin. project by a Caucasian preacher. He was added because the topic of his dissertation was *Preaching on Contemporary Social Issues* and included four sermons. See Appendix A-Description of Exemplar Sermon Sources

¹⁷² I reviewed a total of 122 sermons; however, I reviewed five of the sermons using an earlier version of the data collection tool that did not include the categories of sermons.

Chapter 3

Several observations become evident from the data in Table 2. First, and least significantly, prosperity preaching is not the cause for the lack of prophetic preaching. I identified just one prosperity gospel sermon in the 122 sermons reviewed. This sermon was included in *Preaching with Sacred Fire* as an example of prosperity preaching within the black preaching idiom. Second, a little more than fifteen percent of the sermons did not fit into one of the four categories identified by Simmons and Thomas. This begs the question if their categories are sufficient and calls for an examination of the uncategorized sermons to determine if there are characteristics to support the identification of one or more other categories or subcategories.

Third, as noted by Simmons and Thomas, the cultural survival category dominates all others. However, these sermons were not focused on issues related to the challenges of being African American or even the challenges in life in general. If I had maintained Simmons and Thomas' emphasis on "black culture" as an element of cultural survival sermons, then the number of sermons assigned to this category would have decreased significantly, since only four of the sermons reflected specifically on African American hardships. The cultural survival category serves as a catch all for sermons that are not definitively in one of the other categories; therefore, it is the best place to begin the development of some subcategorizations or new categories. I attempted this when I begin looking for reflections on dealing with hardships in general and African American hardships in particular.

Fourth, some sermons were linked to multiple categories, but the vast majority were only linked to one category. A closer examination of the underlying data indicates that 87 of the sermons were categorized as just one of the types, 11 sermons were categorized with two of the types, one sermon with three of the types, and no sermons were categorized as reflecting all four types. This suggests that there is a lack of intersectionality in the preaching. The sermons that

Chapter 3

championed social activism did not attempt to raise the consciousness of the audience by affirming their black identity as a basis for the call to advocate for others. Likewise, the sermons that sought to bring about change through empowerment did not reflect on augmenting empowerment actions with changes to social policy.

Fifth, the disparity between the number of issues related to individuals rather than issues related to a community. Within both the empowerment and cultural survival categories I included subcategories for communal and individual emphasis. For the cultural survival-hardship subcategory, this was generally linked to individual hardships, such sickness or financial challenges. The disparity between the number of sermons that reflect hardships in general (19), which were individual concerns, and hardships related to being African American (4), which was generally a group concern, is even more significant when I consider that the sample size for the “hardships related to being African American” was 117, but the sample size for the “hardship in general” was only 78. To better assess the dynamic between individual or communal hardships additional data will be collected for the sermons from local congregations. The dominance of individual vs communal scope of reflection is also evident in the data collected concerning empowerment. Twenty-one of the 22 sermons categorized as empowerment focused on the empowerment of individuals and only one focused on the empowerment of the community. This is an overemphasis on the “I can do all things . . .” faith and a neglect of the “When two or three are gathered together in unity. . .” faith. As noted above, black power is only exercised in community and shared consciousness. The dominance of sermons that reflect individual concerns, examples, or interpretations of text is not surprising. The sermon that focuses on me will have a greater impact on me. This is a challenge for social justice preaching, since social justice is more concerned about “we” than “me,” the communal more than the privatistic. So, if

Chapter 3

the sermons do not speak to the collective in the interpretation of the scripture or the examples used to elucidate the thesis of the sermon, then it will be harder for the congregation to embrace a communal application.

Sixth and most significantly, among the exemplar sermons there is a paucity of sermons categorized as social activist or black identity. From the outset of the data collection, I evaluated three characteristics of the sermons. The first characteristic was if the sermon related the biblical text to the black experience, directly or indirectly. Did the preacher explicitly note the relationship between the text and the struggle of being black in America? Relating the text to the black experience might be used to signal to the congregation why this text and its interpretation are relevant to them. I also noted if the sermon addressed social or racial issues; problems or challenges in society that need to be addressed. In my review, the acknowledgement of social or racial issues could be a passing reference without any development. I just wanted to know if the sermon contained any consciousness that there are social and racial issues. By version nine of the sermon evaluation form I started to formally document if the preacher mentioned racism, White Supremacy, or the challenges of being black in America to illustrate a sermonic point.¹⁷³ The intent of these data points was to measure the degree to which the black social, political, or economic experience was evident in the sermon. Table 3 provides a count for these four data points of interest.

Table 3 Sermon Characteristics: Sermons the Black Experience, Racial Issues, and Social Issues

a. Sermon Related Text to Black Experience	b. Sermon Referenced Social Issue	c. Sermon Referenced Racial Issue	d. Sermon Used the Black Experience to make a Point
12 (n=122)	26 (n=122)	14 (n=122)	14 (n=49)

¹⁷³ See Appendix C- Sermon Evaluation Form.

Chapter 3

Only 33 of the 122 sermons related the biblical text to or referenced the black experience (a., c., or d. from Table 3 above). If a sermon can be preached in context that would not be characterized as black, say a predominantly white Baptist church in Pittsburgh or Asian Methodist church in San Francisco, without any hermeneutical modifications, changes to theological emphasis, or application to the listeners—then it is not a black sermon. This does not mean that the sermon is not edifying to the listeners or the community, to include an African American community. A sermon does not have to be black to be edifying. At the same time, I will assert that such a sermon lacks the particularity to be of greatest value. The sermons that have the greatest value to me are the sermons that relate to me and my life situation. The sermons that will have the greatest impact on my community are the sermons that are most relevant to my community. Just because a sermon is preached in a black context does not make it a black sermon. To be a black sermon, an example of black preaching, it must reflect on or be related to the black experience.

Six of the eight exemplar sermons were categorized as black identity by hitting one or more of the metrics dealing with the black experience. Upon review, the two categorized as black identity while not marked as reflecting on the black experience were womanist or proto-womanist reflections. A black woman reflecting on the challenges of being a woman is in fact a reflection on the challenge of being black and a woman; therefore, should have been properly included. This provides an interesting contrast for the social activist sermons. Only two of the twelve sermons categorized as social activism included a reflection on the black experience. This suggests that we are not systemically using the legacy and mythology of the black church as a prophetic voice for social justice to support a call for social activism within the black church. Can you hear the Divine reminding Israel why they should not work their slaves on the Sabbath,

Chapter 3

because they remember (vicariously) having to work on the Sabbath when they were enslaved? Then we can understand the import of at least supporting the call to social activism by members of the black church with a reflection on the black experience, if only to raise the consciousness of those that have gained access to the places of privilege that there was a time when you were on the outside looking in.

Additional Category of Sermons: Affirmation of Faith

To the categories identified by Simmons and Thomas I would add a fifth category of sermons, affirmation of faith. The primary purpose and objective of an affirmation of faith sermon is to predicate some theological truth. For example, a sermon recites an element of The Apostle's Creed but does not pivot to a therefore related to one of the other categories of sermons, is an affirmation of faith sermon. If there are no consequences of the proclaimed truth, then what is the point of the proclamation? I believe that the proper order is for a theological truth to serve as a major premise for the sermonic thesis, with the conclusion being one or more of the objectives of Simmons and Thomas' sermon types. However, sermons that express a theological truth without a therefore should be categorized as an affirmation of faith sermon. Moreover, if the main point of a sermon is to affirm a theological truth, but it includes reflections related to other sermonic categories, it is still an affirmation of faith sermon.

One of the sermons that I did not categorize as one of the Simmons and Thomas' sermon types is Marvin McMickle's "Under God Is a Good Place to Be," which he included in this book *Where Have All the Prophets Gone?* The predication made by McMickle was that we are all under God. McMickle is affirming God's sovereignty. The sermon evinces awareness of racial and social issues and the black experience, so I would concede it is an example of black preaching. McMickle reflected on how being under God inspired the struggle for Civil Rights,

Chapter 3

but he does not pivot to encouraging social activism. McMickle checked neither the empowerment nor the black identity categories because he neither identified how being under God enabled believers “to do” nor affirmed black humanity. McMickle did offer the way in which being under God provided him with (a) comfort when he was suffering, (b) personal accountability, and (c) perspective when dealing with the powers of this world. In retrospect, these reflections in the sermon would have qualified the categorization of the sermon as cultural survival, with the subcategory of during hardship. Nonetheless, the warp and woof of his sermon was not to guide the believer in faithful day to day living, especially during periods of hardship, which is the essence of a cultural survival sermon. The theme of the sermon was to affirm the theological proposition that we are, especially believers, under God. The reflections concerning how being under God enabled faithful living was in support of the theological proposition and, most important for this categorization, could be removed without substantively impacting the thesis of the sermon. This example supports the review of other sermons to determine if affirmation of faith is a viable category to be added to Simmons and Thomas’ taxonomy.

This digression was necessary to provide a better understanding of the differences that will be observed in the review of the sermons from the exemplars of black preaching and the sermons reviewed from the target population. Based on the review of McMickle’s sermon, I added a fifth category, affirmation of faith, and additional data collection. The additional data collected includes the theological truth or predication, if it related to another sermonic category, and the nature of the relationship. It is expected that all the sermons will contain theological predications. If one or more predications is the point of the sermon, then the sermon will be categorized as an affirmation of faith. If the predications are used to buttress the objectives of another category of sermon, then that category will be selected.

Chapter 3

We must account for the dearth of social activists preaching in the black church; evidenced by the observations in the reviewed literature and the exemplar sermons for this research. It is not the result of the dominance of prosperity preaching. It is the dominance of cultural survival sermons. There are two dynamics that could be at play with respect to cultural survival sermons; each would work against preaching to promote social activism. First, cultural survival sermons do fulfill a need to provide succor to believers; so that, they might live more faithfully, especially in life situations that are challenging. However, if they only placate the believer during their suffering, especially with an otherworldly appeal as compensation for the hardships of this life, then they would not pivot from comfort to action to change the situation. Second, cultural survival sermons are not exclusively focused on hardships; most of the exemplar sermons were not linked to individual or communal suffering. Some sermons categorized as cultural survival sermons reflected praise and celebration. Praise and celebration are not the seedbeds for prophetic preaching and social activism. Social action is preceded by lament, not praise.

Dialectical Description of the Black Church and Black Preaching

Lincoln & Mamiya contend “The dialectical model of the Black Church is the best way of understanding the political pluralism that exist among black churches.”¹⁷⁴ The dialectical model permits us to better understand that there is no singular description of the black church. Lincoln & Mamiya identify six primary dialectical polarities: Priestly vs. Prophetic, Otherworldly vs. This-Worldly, Universalism vs. Particularism, Communal vs. Privatistic, Charismatic vs. Bureaucratic, and Resistance vs. Accommodation.¹⁷⁵ These dialectical pairs were

¹⁷⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, 235.

¹⁷⁵ Lincoln and Mamiya, 12-14.

Chapter 3

“derived from some of the usual typologies used in the sociology of religion and from past studies of black churches.”¹⁷⁶ While the pairs may present as polar opposites, the expectation is that churches would exist and could be described as located along several continuums represented by dialectical polarities that are in tension with each other. According to Lincoln & Mamiya, churches are not either A or B in a dialectical pair, but both A and B with more of one than the other. I like to imagine these continuums not as parallel to each other, but in different planes such that on various issues the dialectical pairs interact with each other to give a church not just a vector but an orbit and momentum on issues.

My research would have been obviated had Lincoln & Mamiya correlated church responses to their surveys with the various polarities in the dialectical pairs. For example, they questioned churches on the special role of the black church. A church’s response to this question could be used to place the church somewhere on the Universalism vs. Particularism continuum. It would also be interesting to understand to what extent there is a correlation between where churches end up across several of the dialectical pairs. Is there a correlation between a church being classified as prophetic, this-worldly, and communal; or conversely priestly, other-worldly, and privatistic? The thesis of this research expects a correlation between polarities.

I excluded the Charismatic vs Bureaucratic dialectical pair from my data collection effort. I did not think it was relevant to the engagement in social justice as an aspect of ministry. That was a mistake. It would have been difficult to discern from a sermon if a church was governed by charisma or bureaucracy. It might have also been difficult to get an accurate read on this from a survey of church leadership, especially a pastoral survey. However, characterization of a

¹⁷⁶ Lincoln and Mamiya, 12-16, 414 note 36.

Chapter 3

church as governed by bureaucratic processes or charismatic leadership could be determinative for the pursuit of social justice by a church. In the first case, in a church governed by charisma, the prerogative of the pastor with respect to social justice will have an outsized influence on the engagement by the church. However, based on the work of Morris, a church governed by bureaucracy would be less inclined to pursue social justice or to support the kind of organizational flexibility required to function as a movement center leading a social justice effort.

Based on various ideological, sociological, and theological works on social justice and on the black church, I refined the five remaining dialectical pairs from Lincoln & Mamiya and added 12 more. Table 4 describes the aspects of the seventeen dialectical pairs I looked for in sermons. From Peter Paris' *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, I extended the elements of the priestly polarity from Lincoln & Mamiya's emphasis on personal piety, to include the practices of the spiritual disciplines. However, I did not limit the purpose of the practices of the spiritual disciplines to enable resilience in the face of racism, as Paris does.¹⁷⁷ Based on insights from Paris and Jonathan Augustine, I included the Future vs Realized Eschatology dialectic. Paris notes the convergence of these polarities as a distinctive feature of the black church.¹⁷⁸ According to this perspective, in black preaching we should expect to witness these polarities not as tension between hoping for peace in the future or working for change in the present but as complimentary working for change in the present based on the reality of the future. However, Augustine suggests a different dynamic with this dialectic. Namely, those who have given up on the fight for equality will be restricted to a future eschatology, and those who fight for equality

¹⁷⁷ First this is a wonderful insight from Paris. In language I use in other parts of this paper, personal piety is not the ultimate objective but an enabling objective. However, the enabling function of personal piety is rarely presented in sermons.

¹⁷⁸ Paris, 115.

Chapter 3

will be focused on the “kingdom at hand.”¹⁷⁹ I adopted Augustine’s understanding of this dialectical relationship. However, I will review sermons with both perspectives in mind to see which more accurately reflects the dynamic of these elements. From Olin Moyd’s classic work *The Sacred Art: Preaching and Theology in the African American Tradition*, I included both the Orthodoxy vs. Orthopraxis and the Allegory for the Individual vs. Allegory for the Community dialectical pairs. According to Moyd the black preaching has been more concerned with ethics than doctrine,¹⁸⁰ and notes the necessity to apply the Bible to communal as well as personal needs.¹⁸¹

Brad Braxton was second only to Lincoln & Mamiya as a source of dialectical pairs for this study. In *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience*, Braxton speaks to three characteristics of African American biblical interpretation and thought: (1) “in African American (Christian) culture, the importance of community and social experience cannot be overemphasized,”¹⁸² (2) African American appropriation of scripture have never been focused on doctrinal interpretation,¹⁸³ and (3) “African Americans should also attempt to eschew ruling class ideologies.”¹⁸⁴ From these observations I developed the last three dialectical pairs and modified the eleventh. In addition to Braxton, Katie Cannon also calls attention to confirming or rejecting ruling class ideologies dialectical pair. Cannon, citing Schussler Fiorenza’s methodology, argues “the essential task of a womanist hermeneutic consist of analyzing Black sermonic texts with regard to how they ‘participate in creating or sustaining oppressive or liberating theological

¹⁷⁹ Augustine, 3.

¹⁸⁰ Moyd, 35.

¹⁸¹ Moyd, 15.

¹⁸² Brad R. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 13. This dynamic is also observed in the Privatistic vs. Communal dialectical polarities.

¹⁸³ Braxton, 15.

¹⁸⁴ Braxton, 15.

Chapter 3

values and sociopolitical practices.”¹⁸⁵ Challenges to ruling class ideologies are challenges to culture. Religion is often a reinforcer of culture. As noted by Keri Day, “We need to be careful that we do not equate our own cultural habits with the voice of God.”¹⁸⁶ When we ignore Day’s admonition, we run the risk of justifying oppression in sermonic expressions. Another contribution from womanist hermeneutic to the dialectical pairs is the Bible as Authority vs. Experience as Authority dialectic. This is an extension of the challenge to epistemological and axiological hegemony used to maintain control. Making the Bible, with all the ways it sacralizes the marginalization of some, especially women, the final if not single arbiter of truth is to give a divine imprimatur to the status quo and stifle social justice. The womanist hermeneutic requires experience to be a nexus of interpretation of this faith. This is also a truth of Black Theology and should be evident in black preaching. Properly understood, the dynamic in this dialectic is sometimes the Bible and Experience and other times Experience against the Bible. The insights possible from the Bible vs. Experience as Authority dialectical pair was also confirmed by my reading of Scott David Allen’s *Why Social Justice is not Biblical Justice*. From the title of his book, it might be evident that Allen’s perspective is orthogonal to mine if not pulling in the complete opposite direction. Allen asserts that “Biblical Christianity and ideological social justice are distinct and incompatible worldviews.”¹⁸⁷ For Allen and religionist of his ilk, “God’s word” is “the unerring plumb line.”¹⁸⁸

For the Confirming vs. Rejecting Ruling Class Ideologies dialectical pair, I struggled to identify specific thoughts I would recognize as ruling class ideologies and could expect to hear in

¹⁸⁵ Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*, 25th An ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021), 76.

¹⁸⁶ Day, 69.

¹⁸⁷ Scott David Allen, *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice* (Credo House, 2020), See back cover.

¹⁸⁸ Allen, 19.

Chapter 3

a sermon. Initially I thought of meritocracy and survival of the fittest as examples of ruling class ideologies, but they both appear to me to be antithetical to Christian thinking. Almost all the examples of ruling class ideologies I used for this study I pulled from Allen’s *Why Social Justice is not Biblical Justice*. As read his text with some frustration, it occurred to me that many of his theological predications were examples of ruling class ideologies that function to silence the voices of discontent. For example, the notions that “we are all guilty of injustice” and “every lawless act will be account for”¹⁸⁹ are expressions of a ruling class ideology to equalize all wrongs before God. The ruling class likes this idea because it equalizes the disproportionate abuses of the ruling class with the petty theft of the truly disadvantaged.

Table 4 provides the definition used for each of the dialectical polarities. As noted in Chapter 1, the expectation is for churches that support social justice as an aspect of ministry to favor the polarities listed in column B and those do not support social justice as an aspect of ministry to favor the polarities listed in column A.

Table 4 Seventeen Dialectical Polarities- Indicators of Orientation to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry

A Polarities- Neutral or Opposed to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	B Polarities- Supportive of Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry
(a1) Privatistic: Emphasis on the importance of our religious beliefs on the impact on the individual/ Emphasis on the individual rather than the community	(b1) Communal: Emphasis on the importance of our religious beliefs on the impact on the community / The role of the church in the daily lives of the people.
(a2) Universalism: Emphasis on the biblical account on the formation of our understanding of God- There is a universal understanding of God for all of humanity	(b2) Particularism (Black Cosmos) ¹⁹⁰ : Emphasis on the history of African Americans in the formation of our understanding of God. There is a particular understanding of God for African Americans.
(a3) Other-Worldly / Compensatory: Emphasis on the joys and hope for our relationship with God in eternity/ Eschatological and Life Beyond this World ¹⁹¹	(b3) This-Worldly / Political: Emphasis on the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth- with the hope for social, political, and economic justice in history/ Contemporary and Secular Concerns

¹⁸⁹ Allen, 26-27.

¹⁹⁰ Mary R Sawyer, "Black Ecumenical Movements: Proponents of Social Change," *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 2 (1988): 158, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3511352>.

Chapter 3

A Polarities- Neutral or Opposed to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	B Polarities- Supportive of Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry
(a4) Priestly: Emphasis personal religious practices and spiritual disciplines in the life of the believer / Challenging the individual believers in how they live / Church survival – worship experience ¹⁹¹	(b4) Prophetic: Emphasis on impacting the society and addressing problems that impact the lives of people in the community / Challenging the dominant society in how it operates / Political Involvement
(a5) Accommodation: As a minoritized population, how to survive and advance in this society by taking advantage of the opportunities presented and modeling normative behaviors such as hard work and patriotism./ Church or its members in Survival mode	(b5) Resistance: As a minoritized population, how to carve out a place of security in this society by creating safe spaces and institutions that affirm our culture, traditions, and creating opportunities for advancement./ Church or members in self-determination and independence mode ¹⁹¹
(a6) Future Eschatology: The hope is in what is to come at the end of history	(b6) Realized Eschatology: We are living /can live in the Kingdom of Heaven now. The collapse of the eschatological hope and the reform of this world
(a7) Worship: Our purpose is to worship God, worship of God is what makes a difference // Worship- praise is the outcome or response	(b7) Service: Our purpose is to serve- God, each other, our community // Service is our duty
(a8) Service in Church: The need to participate in and serve this community of faith	(b8) Service to Community: The need for the church to benefit the community at large
(a9) Closed: Expression of the church as insular, cut off from, or not accommodating other others	(b9) Open: Expression of the church as open and affirming, welcoming of other that do not fit the churches current model
(a10) Conservative: Sermon expresses position on culture war issues that are considered conservative: Pro-Life, Opposed to Marriage Equality,	(b10) Liberal: Sermon expresses positions on culture war issues that are considered liberal: Pro-Choice, Affirming of Gender Identity, Marriage Equality,
(a11) Theological Reflection / Doctrine / Dogma / Orthodoxy: Sermon expounds theological issues: e.g. Sin as the Human Condition or nature of Man, Trinity	(b11) Ethical Reflection / Orthopraxis: Sermon expounds on ethical issues: how we ought to live out this calling
(a12) Allegory of the Individual: Biblical stories, especially reflections on the Israel or the church, are mapped to the reflections on the life of the individual believer	(b12) Allegory for the Community: Biblical stories, especially reflections on the Israel or the church, are mapped to the reflections on the life of the church or communities of faith
(a13) Bible as Authority: The sermon emphasizes that the Bible is the ultimate authority on what we know and how we should live; The Bible as the primary way of knowing the nature of God	(b13) Experience as Authority: The sermon emphasizes the experience with God (inclusive) as the ultimate authority on what we know and how we should live; the indwelling and personal / communal experience with God as the measure
(a14) References to fundamentalist, popular, mainstream, white theologians and scholars	(b14) References to Black / Womanist / Liberation / Feminists theologians and scholars

¹⁹¹ Edmonds, 60-63.

Chapter 3

A Polarities- Neutral or Opposed to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	B Polarities- Supportive of Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry
(a15) Personal Freedom/Salvation: The sermon speaks to the individual joy, hope, and peace of deliverance from sin or being saved from condemnation.	(b15) Communal Salvation: The sermon speaks to the hope of peace and rest of a community or people that is no longer suffering, present or future.
(a16) Confirm Ruling Class Ideologies: The sermon recommends or commends ideologies such as: Meritocracy, Gospel of Wealth; Survival of the Fittest, Capitalism; Trickle Down Economics; Law and Order	(b16) Rejects Ruling Class Ideologies: The sermon rejects or challenges ruling class ideologies and promotes ideologies that are challenge the status quo
(a17) Personal / Individual Issues Emphasized: The sermon uses examples of personal experiences of suffering or victory; individual blessings or hardships	(b17) Communal or Social Issues Emphasized: The sermon uses examples of communal experiences of suffering or victory; community blessings or hardships

For each of the exemplar sermons I noted if a dialectical polarity was evidenced (See Table 5). I did not count the number of instances for each dialectical polarity or attempt to evaluate if the sermon was more A than B with respect to a dialectical pair.

Table 5 Count of Polarities in Exemplar Sermons (n=122)

A Polarities- Neutral or Opposed to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	Count	B Polarities- Supportive of Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	Count
(a1) Privatistic	58	(b1) Communal	18
(a2) Universalism	11	(b2) Particularism (Black Cosmos)	1
(a3) Otherworldly / Compensatory	13	(b3) This-worldly / Political	18
(a4) Priestly	31	(b4) Prophetic	25
(a5) Accommodation	1	(b5) Resistance	4
(a6) Future Eschatology	3	(b6) Realized Eschatology	9
(a7) Worship	7	(b7) Service	11
(a8) Service in Church	0	(b8) Service to Community	8
(a9) Closed	2	(b9) Open	3
(a10) Conservative	11	(b10) Liberal	12
(a11) Theological Reflection / Doctrine / Dogma / Orthodoxy	5	(b11) Ethical Reflection / Orthopraxis	9
(a12) Allegory for the Individual	77	(b12) Allegory for the Community	30
(a13) Bible as Authority	2	(b13) Experience as Authority	6
(a14) References to fundamentalist, popular, mainstream, white theologians and scholars	8	(b14) References to Black / Womanist / Liberation / Feminists theologians and scholars	10
(a15) Personal Freedom/Salvation	12	(b15) Communal Salvation	4
(a16) Confirm Ruling Class Ideologies	8	(b16) Rejects Ruling Class Ideologies	10

Chapter 3

A Polarities- Neutral or Opposed to Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	Count	B Polarities- Supportive of Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry	Count
(a17) Personal / Individual Issues Emphasized	38	(b17) Communal or Social Issues Emphasized	7
Total A Polarities	287	Total B Polarities	185

It is evident from Table 5 that none of the dialectical pairs or polarities were identified in all the sermons. Only the allegory for an individual and the privatistic polarities exceeded or came close to exceeding representation in a majority of the sermons. The A and B column of dialectical polarities are presented as such because they are expected to reinforce one another. For example, sermons that reflect the privatistic polarity might also reflect the priestly polarity, and those that reflect the otherworldly polarity might also reflect the future eschatology polarity. I do not expect sermons to consistently express the resistance polarity and to confirm ruling class ideologies, these are opposed to one another. Likewise, I do not expect a sermon to reflect the conservative polarity and the open polarity. Consider the example from the intersection between the Conservative vs Liberal and the Closed vs. Open dialectical pairs observed in the exemplar sermons (See Table 6).

Table 6 Example of Polarity Reinforcement- Open and Liberal Polarity Reinforcement and Closed and Conservative Polarity Reinforcement

		Conservative	Liberal
	Total Count	11	12
Closed	2	2	0
Open	3	0	2

Expressions of either the closed or open polarities were almost equally rare in the exemplar sermons. However, when a closed or open polarity did occur it happened in sermons that also expressed a conservative or liberal polarity respectively.

These groupings will create a clustering of dialectical polarities for churches that support and reject social justice as an aspect of ministry. Olin Moyd characterizes preachers who are not

Chapter 3

interested in social justice as focused on “personal salvation, spiritualizing, other worldliness, and noninvolvement in the struggle for human rights in this world.”¹⁹² Similarly, LaRue notes that preachers who focus on personal piety “tend to believe that the people of God should live above the cares and concerns of the secular world,” and that “the pulpit is not the place to address social justice or corporate concerns.”¹⁹³ These are evident in the personal freedom / salvation (a15), priestly (a4), and otherworldly (a3) polarities. We can begin to get a glimpse of these relationships in the data from the exemplar sermons. Only one of the 11 sermons with a conservative polarity and none of the sermons with a closed polarity were categorized as social activist. In contrast, three of 12 sermons with a liberal polarity were categorized as social activist. An even stronger relationship seems to exist between the Priestly vs. Prophetic and Otherworldly vs. This-worldly dialectical pairs and social activist preaching. Table 7 indicates a strong affinity between the this-worldly and prophetic polarities. The otherworldly polarity does not seem to have any greater affinity for the priestly polarity than the prophetic polarity.

Table 7 Priest vs Prophetic and Other-Worldly vs. This-Worldly Interaction

		Priestly	Prophetic
	Total Count	31	25
Otherworldly	13	2	3
This-worldly	18	2	9

However, the this-worldly polarity has a significant affinity for the prophetic polarity. Of the 12 instances of sermons categorized as social activist, five included both a this-worldly and prophetic polarity, five included a this-worldly or prophetic polarity (exclusive), and only two included neither polarity. This relationship helps explain Table 8, which shows a significant difference in the mean value of the Column B polarities for social activist sermons when

¹⁹² Moyd, 40.

¹⁹³ LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 25-26.

Chapter 3

compared to the other sermon types. Moreover, when the Column A and B mean values for all the sermons from preachers with at least one social activist sermon are compared to those from the preachers with no social activist sermons, the impact of the preachers with social activist sermons on the Column B values for all of the other types becomes apparent.

Table 8 Mean Dialectical Polarities by Sermon Categorization and by Preacher Type

Sermon Type	Column A Avg	Column B Avg	Total Count
Social Activism	2.25	4.42	12
Black Identity	1.88	2.75	8
Empowerment	2.5	1.27	22
Cultural Survival	2.56	1.16	70
No Categorization	2.17	1.28	18
All	2.35	1.52	122
Preacher Type	Column A Avg	Column B Avg	Total Number of Sermons
Has a Social Activism sermon (n=10)	2.36	3.04	28
Does not have a Social Activism sermon (n=50)	2.35	1.06	94

In summary, the preachers with a social activist sermon tend to be overrepresented with the Column B polarities even in sermons that are not focused on social activism. The expectation for the sermons reviewed from the target population is depicted in Figure 1. The expectation is that the mean occurrence of Column B polarities will be significantly higher for sermons that are social activist sermons and from preachers that are committed to social activism as an aspect of ministry based on survey responses. It is also expected that a few Column A polarities will differentiate preachers or congregations that are averse to social action as an aspect of ministry. Many of the Column A polarities are part of the stock and idiom of the Christian tradition

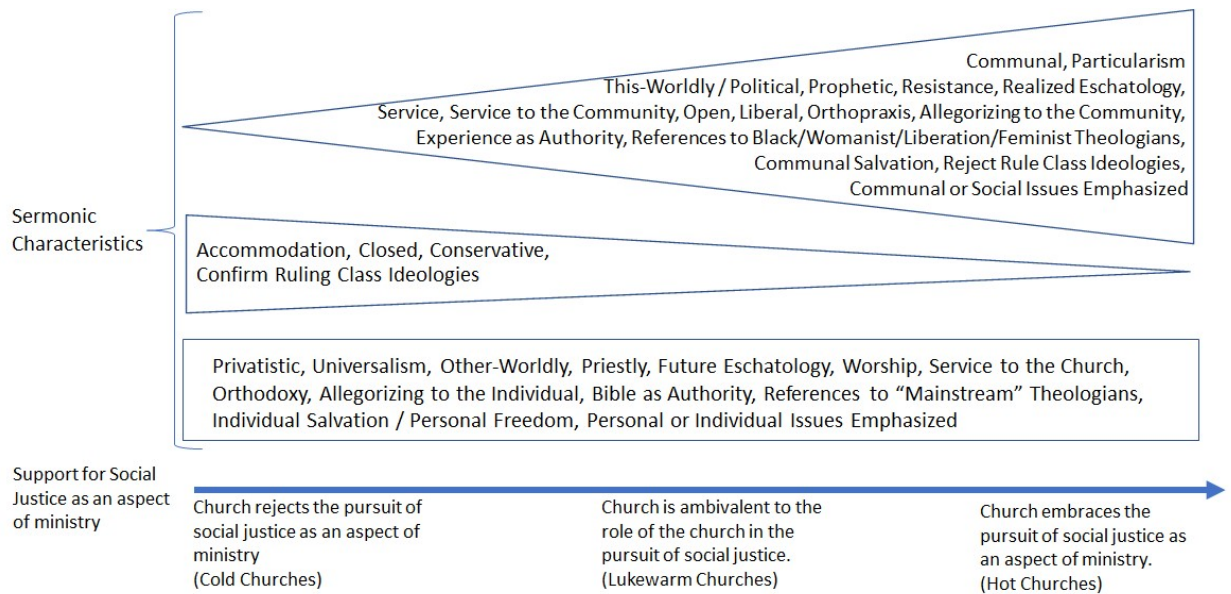


Figure 1. Distribution of Sermonic Characteristics by Church Support for Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry

in general, and the black preaching tradition in particular. Preachers committed to social justice, that have significantly different occurrences of the Column B polarities when compared to preachers not committed to social justice, will not have significantly different occurrences of the many of the Column A polarities. The expected non-differentiating Column A polarities are boxed in Figure 1. The differentiating Column A polarities, those that will mark a preacher as averse to social justice as an aspect of ministry, are accommodation, closed, conservative, and confirming ruling class ideologies.

Based on survey responses, I classified churches from 29 of the 120 churches in the Northern Virginia Baptist Association as hot (Group B), lukewarm (Group C), and cold (Group A) with respect to social justice as an aspect of ministry. I reviewed sermons from some of the churches in each classification. I gathered the same data from these churches as from the exemplar sermons. In the next chapter I will explain the research methodology, data collected for the target churches, and the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4 – The Project and Results

Research Methodology

The project consisted of two data collection activities, a survey and observation of sermons preached by the respondents to the survey. I sent a survey to the pastors of 118 black Baptist churches in Northern Virginia and one in Washington, DC. The target audience comprised of pastors who were members of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Northern Virginia and Vicinity (BMNVA). The vicinity extends membership to ministers in DC and southern Maryland as well as localities as far south as Fredericksburg, VA and as far west as Fauquier, VA. This D.C. metropolitan area is commonly referred to as the DMV for D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, with Maryland and Virginia limited to southern Maryland and northern Virginia. I also included pastors of churches affiliated with congregations in the Northern Virginia Baptist Association (NVBA) and a few black Baptist churches that I stumbled across. All respondents were members of the BMNVA or pastors of churches affiliated with the NVBA. I received 31 survey responses: 29 complete, one incomplete, and one decline to participate.¹⁹⁴ The remaining 87 surveys were not acknowledged. This response rate was sufficient to identify characteristics of churches that might embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry and those that might not.

I collected four types of data from the surveys: respondent demographic data, church demographic data, respondents' self-assessment of preaching tendencies, and respondents' perspectives on various sociological, ideological, and theological assertions. No analysis was

¹⁹⁴ I removed all data for the incomplete survey since it was too difficult to consistently track which questions I should expect 30 answers and which I should expect 29 answers. This was especially challenging when analysis of the results included questions this subject answered and ones he did not. However, I did review several sermons from this respondent and the analysis of those sermons was included in the presented result.

Chapter 4

done with the demographics data collected on the respondents. Based on the analysis of the survey data, I identified churches that embraced social justice as an aspect of ministry and those that did not and identified preaching tendencies for those groups based on their self-assessments. Finally, I listened to 68 sermons from nine pastors, seven of which had responded to the survey and two that had not.¹⁹⁵ I compared the data from the sermon observations with the data from the surveys, and the data from the exemplar sermons discussed in Chapter 3.

From the survey data I was able to identify three groups. Churches that did not embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry (Group B), churches that embraced social justice as an aspect of ministry (Group A), and other churches (Group C). In general, Group B expressed a stronger preference for dialectical polarities that are associated with social justice concerns (Column B) than the groups A and C. Group B also reflected those same polarities with greater frequency in their sermons than groups A and C. Group A expressed a stronger preference for the dialectical polarities associated with an aversion to social justice concerns (Column A) and reflected those preferences with a greater frequency in their actual sermons than the other groups. In addition to some significant differences in the expected references to dialectical polarities, I also observed a significant difference in the sermonic references to “The Black Experience” by the groups, with Group B having significantly more references than the other groups to “The Black Experience.” That was the extent of the actual sermonic differences. While the survey data indicated that the groups had significantly different preferences for preaching different types of sermons and for the frequency of other sermonic references, their actual sermons did not exhibit these differences with statistical significance. For the most part, outside

¹⁹⁵ See footnote 194, one of these had submitted an incomplete survey. The other was Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, pastor of the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia. Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley had not completed the survey, but was identified as a pastor engaged in social justice and Alfred Street Baptist Church has a regional and national reputation as a church supporting social justice advocacy.

Chapter 4

of Group B's references to "The Black Experience" none of the groups had any other types of sermonic references of interest (e.g. social justice or race related issues). There were no differences in the actual types of sermons preached by the groups because 87% of the observed sermons were of the Cultural Survival sermon type. If Group B churches are not preaching Social Activism sermons, then what hope do we have? Of the 68 sermons reviewed, there were only three Social Activism sermons. Three. That is less than 5% of the sermons, which makes Social Activism preaching rare. In my assessment rubric, a sermon must include the identification of a social problem that impacts people and articulate a way that the church or even individual members should be actively involved addressing the problem. Praying it could not be the extent of the active involvement.

Identification of Group A, Group B, and Group C Churches

The first task was to identify churches that embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry and those that reject social justice as an aspect of ministry. The survey included three questions concerning ministries and advocacy activities of the congregation. Based on the data in Table 9 a minority of the churches have a social justice ministry. When compared to the other ministries (e.g. youth, young adult, and homeless), social justice ministries are relatively rare.¹⁹⁶ The survey had two questions concerning the existence of a social justice ministry within a church. First, the existence of a social justice ministry was asked along with the existence of youth, young adult, and homeless ministries. The intent of this question was to shape thinking about the existence of a social justice ministry by considering the other ministries. Later in the survey the

¹⁹⁶ Small and rural churches are less likely to have youth and young adult ministries, since they are less likely to have children and young adults as members. There will also be some correlations between the demographic variables of the respondents and the ministries of the church. For example, if the pastor is a member of religious or civic organizations that engages in advocacy, then there is a higher probability that the church will engage in advocacy or social action activities.

Chapter 4

respondents were asked about a social justice ministry as a stand-alone question that included the following description:

Does your church have a "Social Justice" or "Civic and Social Action" ministry? This would include any of the following: a member of the staff, named ministry, or small group that engages in advocacy or organizing direct action to address systemic political, economic, or social inequality. This would not include charitable work- such as supporting food banks or homeless shelters.

Table 9 Number of Congregations with Reported Ministries by Type

		Urban	Suburban	Exurb	Rural
Ministry Types	Count	3	15	5	6
Youth	25	3	15	4	3
Young Adult	19	2	12	2	3
Homeless	18	3	10	4	1
Social Justice	8	1	5	2	0
Church Advocacy	23	3	13	5	2
Existence of Social Justice Ministry	11	1	7	3	0

The responses to these two questions were consistent for the urban and rural localities, but not the exurb and suburban localities. Nonetheless, it is evident that percentage of churches with a social justice ministry is qualitatively different than the existence of churches with the other ministries. Across localities, the youth and young adult ministries are present in at least 50% of the churches. The rural church locality was the only one without at least 60% of the churches having a homeless ministry. The response to the existence of a social justice ministry at these churches stands in sharp contrast. On the basic question concerning the existence of a social justice ministry, only the urban locality reached 50%. The responses were a little higher, surprisingly, with the more specific question that described the parameters of a social justice ministry, with exurb reaching 60%.

The responses concerning church engagement in advocacy were the most interesting. Across localities the positive responses to this question were higher than for both questions concerning the existence of a social justice ministry; moreover, the responses to this question

Chapter 4

were on par with youth and young adult ministries and matched or exceeded responses for homeless ministry. No bar was set for this question, no parameters on the frequency or extent of advocacy. So many churches that lacked a social justice ministry still responded favorably to the church engagement in advocacy question. This question is a differentiator, since the churches that did not report engaging in this type of advocacy appear to be different than the other churches. None of those who responded negatively to this question had a social justice ministry, measured by either question, and none were members of civic or religious social advocacy groups. Based on the responses to these three questions I placed the survey participants into three groups. Group A consists of six participants who responded negatively to the survey question concerning their church's engagement in social justice advocacy. Group B consists of the seven participants that responded positively to both questions concerning their church's having a social justice ministry. Group C consists of the remaining 16 churches that were neither in Group A nor Group B.

Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry and Dialectical Polarity Preferences

Given a choice between the polarities for the five Lincoln & Mamiya dialectical pairs (e.g. Priestly vs. Prophetic, Otherworldly vs. This-worldly etc.), the average selection for the entire sample of Column A polarities was 2.655 and Column B polarities was 2.235. Table 10 suggest groups A and B have different averages for the Column A and Column B polarities than the average mean for the sample, while Group C seems to split the difference. Group C is larger, but also has greater variance and standard deviation which results in a greater "spread" of the values for both Column A and Column B. This suggests an independent variable that defines groups A and B results in a clustering of their affinity for Column A and Column B polarities.

Chapter 4

From Table 10, the Group A and Group B respondents have different averages for the Column A and Column B polarities, both within the groups and between the groups.

Table 10 Column A and Column B Dialectical Polarity Preferences by Church Ministries and Social Justice Advocacy, and Groups

	Column A Polarities			Column B Polarities		
	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation
Church Advocacy (for Social Justice) (No) (Group A Respondents)	3.167	1.367	1.169	1.833	1.367	1.169
Existence of Social Justice Ministry (No)	2.889	2.538	1.593	2.111	2.333	1.528
Social Justice Ministry (No)	2.857	1.729	1.315	2.143	1.729	1.315
Overall	2.655	2.091	1.446	2.345	2.091	1.446
Church Advocacy (for Social Justice) (Yes)	2.522	2.428	1.558	2.478	2.418	1.555
Existence of Social Justice Ministry (Yes)	2.273	1.818	1.348	2.727	1.818	1.348
Social Justice Ministry (Yes)	2.125	3.111	1.764	2.875	3.528	1.878
Existence of Social Justice Ministry (Yes) AND Social Justice Ministry (Yes) (Group B Respondents)	1.714	1.905	1.380	3.286	1.905	1.380
Group C-Neither Group A nor Group B	2.875	2.117	1.455	2.125	2.117	1.455

In short, Group A has a greater mean for Column A than Column B, while Group B has a greater mean for Column B than Column A, and each with a smaller variance and standard deviation than Group C. These differences are significant. Table 11 provides the statistical analysis and decisions that support the thesis of this research. First, there is a significant difference with Group A and Group B for the Column A and Column B polarities. For the overall sample and Group C respondents the difference between the means for the Column A and Column B polarities was not significant. However, for both Group A and Group B, there was also a significant difference between their means for their Column A and Column B polarities within each group. We can reject the null hypothesis, H_0 , that the apparent difference in the mean values for Group A Column A and Group A Column B is not real. Likewise, we can reject the hypothesis that the apparent difference in the mean values for Group B Column A and Group B

Chapter 4

Column B is not real. Second, there is a significant difference between Group A Column A and Group B Column A and between Group A Column B and Group B Column B.

Table 11 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-Test Results for Mean Polarity Preferences within and Between Groups

Hypothesis ¹⁹⁷	Test and Statistics ¹⁹⁸	Decision
H ₀ : Column A = Column B H ₁ : Column A ≠ Column B	t-Test: Two Sample Equal Variance (alpha=.05) t Stat .82 / t Crit one-tail 1.67 P(T≤t) one-tail .21	Not reject H ₀ . Cannot distinguish between the mean values for Column A and Column B polarities in this sample
H ₀ : Group C Column B = Group C Column A H ₁ : Group C Column B ≠ Group C Column A	t-Test: Two Sample Equal Variance (alpha=.05) t Stat 1.458 / t Crit one-tail 1.697 P(T≤t) one-tail .077	Not reject H ₀ . Cannot distinguish between the mean values for Group C Column A and Group C Column B polarities in this sample
H ₀ : Group A Column A = Group A Column B H ₁ : Group A Column A ≠ Group A Column B	t-Test: Two Sample Equal Variance (alpha=.05) t Stat 1.975 / t Crit one-tail 1.812 P(T≤t) one-tail .038	Reject H ₀ . Mean Group A Column A polarities are not the same as the mean Group A Column B polarities.
H ₀ : Group B Column B = Group B Column A H ₁ : Group B Column B ≠ Group B Column A	t-Test: Two Sample Equal Variance (alpha=.05) t Stat 2.130 / t Crit one-tail 1.782 P(T≤t) one-tail .027	Reject H ₀ . Mean Group B Column B polarities are not the same as the mean Group B Column A polarities
H ₀ : Group A Column A = Group B Column A = Group C Column A H ₁ : At least one not equal	ANOVA (alpha=.05) F 2.219 / F crit 3.369 P-value .13 ¹⁹⁹	Not reject H ₀ . Cannot distinguish between Column A polarity means for all three groups without introducing significant Type I errors.
H ₀ : Group A Column A = Group B Column A H ₁ : Group A Column A ≠ Group A Column A	t-Test: Two Sample Unequal Variance (alpha=.05) t Stat 2.054 / t Crit one-tail 1.796 P(T≤t) one-tail .032	Reject H ₀ , if we limit the comparison between means for Group A Column A and Group B Column A, they are significantly different.

¹⁹⁷ Throughout this paper H₀ refers to the null hypothesis of the equality of the means and H₁ is the alternative hypothesis that the means are not equal. The decision is always to either reject or not reject H₀ as representative of the population.

¹⁹⁸ Alpha represents the accepted level of Type 1 error, that the H₀ is incorrectly rejected. Alpha = .05 means that there is a five percent chance that we will mistakenly reject H₀ based on the sample statistic but in the population that the statistic is supposed to represent by H₀ is true and should not be rejected. For t-Test, if the t Stat > t Crit then the H₀ can be rejected. P(T≤t) one-tail identifies the point at which the t Stat > t Crit, but also reflects the likelihood of a Type 1 Error at the point. For an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test, if the F > F crit then the H₀ can be rejected. The P-value indicates the Type 1 error rate when the F > F crit.

¹⁹⁹ These are the same statistics for H₀: Group A Column B = Group B Column B = Group C Column B Polarity Preference, H₁: At least one not equal. Consequently, we should not reject H₀ for Column B polarities.

Chapter 4

Hypothesis ¹⁹⁷	Test and Statistics ¹⁹⁸	Decision
H ₀ : Group A Column B = Group B Column B H ₁ : Group A Column B ≠ Group A Column B	t-Test: Two Sample Unequal Variance (alpha=.05) t Stat 2.259 / t Crit one-tail 1.812 P(T≤t) one-tail .047	Reject H ₀ , if we limit the comparison between means for Group A Column A and Group B Column A, they are significantly different.

An interesting statistical decision from Table 11 is the determination not to reject the H₀: Group A Column A = Group B Column A = Group C Column A, and its corollary for Column B, based on an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. This decision conflicts with the t-Test of the Group A Column A with Group B Column A and Group A Column B with Group B Column B, both are significant and support rejecting H₀. I postulate that Group C is the disrupter, adding sufficient noise to the ANOVA to prevent the rejection of the H₀. This is observed not only in the aggregate for the columns A and B, but also for the individual dialectical polarities.

Table 12 provides the count for each polarity in Lincoln & Mamiya’s five dialectical pairs, their relative percentages, and statistics for the entire sample and for groups A, B, and C. Based on Table 11 there is no significant difference between the Column A and Column B polarity preferences for the entire sample or for Group C, but there are significant differences between for Column A and Column B for groups A and B. Table 12 identifies the polarities for which the overall sample evinces a significant difference between a Column A and Column B polarity preferences, but not between the groups A and B, and sometimes Group C. This is the case for the Privatistic vs Communal and the Universalism vs the Particularism dialectical pairs. For Group A the lack of significance in these statistics is not very interesting. If the sample size increased to include just 14 data points for Group A, then I expect a significant difference would be observed. It is expected that the Group A members would prefer the privatistic and universalism polarities to the communal and particularism polarities. That this was not demonstrated in this survey with only six Group A data points does not diminish that

Chapter 4

Table 12 Dialectical Pair Polarity Counts with Sample and Intra-Group Ho Decisions by Dialectical Pairs

Polarities	All Respondents (n=29)		Group A Respondents (n=6)		Group B Respondents (n=7)		Group C Respondents (n=16)	
Privatistic	18	62%	4	67%	4	57%	10	63%
Communal	11	38%	2	33%	3	43%	6	38%
Delta Privatistic vs. Communal	24%		33%		14%		25%	
Variance	0.244		0.267		0.286		0.250	
Standard Deviation	0.494		0.516		0.535		0.500	
t-Stat	1.890		1.118		0.500		1.414	
t Critical	1.670		1.812		1.782		1.697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.034		0.145		0.313		0.084	
Decision	Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho	
Universalism	19	66%	4	67%	4	57%	11	69%
Particularism	10	34%	2	33%	3	43%	5	31%
Delta Universalism vs. Particularism	31%		33%		14%		38%	
Variance	0.234		0.267		0.286		0.229	
Standard Deviation	0.484		0.516		0.535		0.479	
t-Stat	2.443		1.118		0.500		2.216	
t Critical	1.673		1.812		1.782		1.697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.009		0.145		0.313		0.017	
Decision	Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Reject Ho	
Otherworldly	13	45%	4	67%	1	14%	8	50%
This-worldly	16	55%	2	33%	6	86%	8	50%
Delta Otherworldly vs. This-Worldly	10%		33%		71%		0%	
Variance	0.170		0.267		0.143		0.267	
Standard Deviation	0.506		0.516		0.378		0.516	
t-Stat	0.778		1.118		3.536		0.000	
t Critical	1.673		1.812		1.782		1.697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.220		0.145		0.002		0.500	
Decision	Not Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho	
Priestly	21	72%	5	83%	3	43%	13	81%
Prophetic	8	28%	1	17%	4	57%	3	19%
Delta Priestly vs. Prophetic	45%		67%		14%		63%	
Variance	0.207		0.139		0.286		0.163	
Standard Deviation	0.455		0.408		0.535		0.403	
t-Stat	3.753		3.347		0.500		4.385	
t Critical	1.673		1.782		1.782		1.697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0002		0.003		0.313		0.000	
Decision	Reject Ho		Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Reject Ho	
Accommodation	6	21%	2	33%	0	0%	4	25%
Resistance	23	79%	4	67%	7	100%	12	75%
Delta Accommodation vs. Resistance	59%		33%		100%		50%	
Variance	0.170		0.267		0.000		0.200	
Standard Deviation	0.412		0.516		0.000		0.447	
t-Stat	5.415		1.118		65535		3.162	
t Critical	1.673		1.812		1.782		1.697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000007		0.145		Incalculatable		0.002	
Decision	Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho		Reject Ho		Reject Ho	
Column A	77	53%	19	63%	12	34%	46	58%
Column B	68	47%	11	37%	23	66%	34	43%
Delta Column A vs. Column B	6%		27%		31%		15%	
Variance	2.091		1.367		1.905		2.117	
Standard Deviation	1.446		1.169		1.380		1.455	
t-Stat	0.817		1.975		2.130		1.458	
t Critical	1.673		1.812		1.782		1.697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.209		0.038		0.027		0.078	
Decision	Not Reject Ho		Reject Ho		Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho	

For each dialectical pair and the sum of the pairs, I conducted a t-Test assuming equal variance between the pair's polarities for the entire sample and each group and noted the H_0 decision based on the test statistics.

Chapter 4

expectation. The same logic can be applied to the analysis of the Group A Accommodation vs Resistance dialectical pair, wherein with a slight increase in Group A respondents the Group A decision would match the decision for the rest of the sample, to reject H_0 . This would be interesting for Group A since it would suggest a statistical difference in favor of a Column B polarity and the only Column B polarity that the Group A respondents would favor.²⁰⁰

Group B is more interesting. At the current ratios for the polarities for the Privatistic vs Communal and the Universalism vs. Particularism dialectical pairs, 70 Group B data points would be required to achieve significance and the rejection of H_0 . This is not possible for the target population, based on the current ratio of Group B respondents to the sample and the total population size. What makes this even more interesting is that Group B respondents, who support social justice as an aspect of ministry, cannot be said to favor the communal polarity over the privatistic polarity. While Group B does not favor the privatistic polarity over communal polarity with significant difference, the balance between these polarities for the group that favors the pursuit of social justice suggest that the drive for social justice will be diminished. This same logic could also be applied to statistical analysis of Group B priestly and prophetic dialectical polarities. Again, based on the ratios in the current data set, it would not be possible to demonstrate a statistical significant difference between the Group B priestly and prophetic dialectical polarities for the target population.²⁰¹ Based on this sample data, we would have to

²⁰⁰ I think this warrants additional discussion and research. At the very least a definition of resistance and accommodation should be provided. I suspect that respondents that self-identify as conservative or liberal would have different perspectives on what represents accommodation and what represents resistance. The delta for the Accommodation vs. Resistance is the largest of the five dialectical pairs, and the only one of the five with a significant difference that favors Column B. It is also interesting that for however each respondent interpreted the concepts of accommodation and resistance, that there was an overwhelming rejection of accommodation for the sample and a complete rejection by Group B. I suspect if this polarity was removed that the H_0 for Column A and Column B for Group C and the entire sample would be significant. Of course, that would also result in Group B not having a significant difference for the aggregate of Column A and Column B.

²⁰¹ Of course, it would be possible to collect data from the entire population and bypass the use of statistical analysis to describe the population based on a sample.

Chapter 4

conclude that churches that favor social justice as an aspect of ministry keep the priestly and prophetic concerns in a relatively more equal balance and all other churches not so much.

Ultimately it is not necessary to extrapolate from statistically insignificant findings based on the data from each of the five dialectical polarities. The real value of Table 12 is to demonstrate that in the aggregate groups A and B favor columns A and B polarities respectively, which is not demonstrated for Group C or the entire sample. Another value of Table 12 is to demonstrate that for some dialectical pairs the entire sample demonstrated a significant difference in favor of one polarity over the other. Except for the general preference for resistance over accommodation, all the other significantly different preferences for polarities favored the Column A polarities, which according to the thesis of this paper would tamp the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. The overall sample preference for specific polarities works against social justice preaching that is focused on the black community. The preference for universalism over particularism means that preachers will not focus on an understanding of the scriptures and the faith that prioritizes the black experience. The preference for the priestly over the prophetic means that the preachers will emphasize the necessity of personal piety and individual conduct in faithful living rather than faithful living as communities seeking justice. The individualistic focus of the priestly polarity is amplified by the preference for the privatistic polarity over the communal polarity.

The only dialectical pair for which the overall sample did not have a significantly different statistic between the polarities was the Otherworldly vs. This-worldly pair. This reflects the expectation that the black church continues to hold these perspectives in tension, with a foot in heaven and on earth. At the same time, the data affirms the observation that those adverse to social action neglect the matters of this age and those with an eye for fixing this world are not

Chapter 4

concerned about heaven. The Group A respondents overwhelmingly prefer the otherworldly and the Group B respondents the this-worldly, with Group C split down the middle. The slight but insignificant advantage of the this-worldly polarity for the sample appears to be the result of the statistically significant preference by Group B. From this observation, it appears that it is really the Group B preferences that are standout.

In addition to the intra-group statistical analysis of the dialectical polarities reported in Table 11 and Table 12, I also looked at inter-group statistics. As noted in Table 11, an ANOVA of groups A, B, and C for Column A and Column B polarities yielded no significant findings; even though a t-Test between groups A and B did. Table 13 demonstrated the confounding data

Table 13 Selected Inter-Group t-Test of the Average Dialectical Pair Polarities

	Group A vs. Group B		Group B vs. Group C	Group A vs. Group C
	Universalism / Particularism		Universalism / Particularism	
t-Stat	0.326		0.494	
t Critical	1.796		1.812	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.375		0.316	
Decision	Not Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho	
	This-Worldly / Otherworldly		This-Worldly / Otherworldly	
t-Stat	2.057		1.855	
t Critical	1.833		1.746	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.035		0.041	
Decision	Reject Ho		Reject Ho	
	Priestly / Prophetic		Priestly / Prophetic	
t-Stat	1.545		1.701	
t Critical	1.796		1.833	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.075		0.062	
Decision	Not Reject Ho		Not Reject Ho	
	Accommodation / Resistance		Accommodation / Resistance	Accommodation / Resistance
t-Stat	1.581		2.236	0.349
t Critical	2.015		1.753	1.860
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.087		0.020	0.368
Decision	Not Reject Ho		Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho
	Column A	Column B	Column A / Column B	Column A / Column B
t-Stat	2.054	2.259	1.825	0.486
t Critical	1.796	1.812	1.782	1.796
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.032	0.024	0.046	0.318
Decision	Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho

Chapter 4

from Group C. Using a t-Test, I identified a significant difference between Group A and Group B for both Column A and Column B, so that we can reject H_0 . However, we do not get the same determination when Group C is compared to either Group A and Group B for columns A or B. Based on ANOVA tests, I could not reject H_0 for any of the dialectical pairs across the three groups. However, with a t-Test significant findings are identified when Group B is compared to Group A or Group C for both the this-worldly and otherworldly polarities, and with Group C for the accommodation and resistance polarities.²⁰² For the priestly and the prophetic polarities, significant differences were not ascertained between groups A and B, but my expectation is that with a slightly larger sample a significant difference would be realized. There were few obvious comparisons between Group A and Group C to suss significant differences between dialectical polarities.

The results in Table 12 were anticipated by the results presented in Table 8. To be clear, the results presented in Table 12 and Table 8 are based on the analysis of different kinds of data. The latter presents the percentage of exemplar sermons that exhibited a polarity from the five Lincoln & Mamiya dialectical pairs. The percentages were presented for the entire sample, sermons categorized as social activist, sermons not identified as social activist, sermons preached by a preacher with a social activist sermon in the sample, and sermons preached by a preacher without a social activist sermon in the sample. The data from Table 8 is based on subjective observations from exemplar sermons, subjective in both the identification of a sermon as social activist and the identification of dialectical polarities within a sermon. Table 12 data is based on the stated preferences of the respondents and criteria for classification of the churches as

²⁰² I suspected that Group B priestly and prophetic polarities would eventually have significantly different values than groups A and C. The p-value for both the Group B vs. Group A and the Group B vs. Group C for the priestly/prophetic polarities are so close to the .05 standard that an additional 10 data points consistent with the current data would result in significant findings.

Chapter 4

supporting or rejecting social justice as an aspect of ministry independent of those preferences. The data for Table 8 was larger and analog. For a given dialectical pair a sermon could reflect neither, both, or just one of the polarities. The data for Table 12 is from a much smaller sample size and binary, only one of the dialectical polarities could be selected. However, both Table 12 and Table 8 support three parts of the thesis for this research. One, social activist sermons and churches supportive of social justice as an aspect of ministry tend to exhibit some dialectical polarities and not exhibit others in a manner that distinguishes them from sermons that are not social activist sermons or churches that do not support social activism. Two, the tendencies of a preacher of social activist sermons will be exhibited in non-social activist sermons. Three, there are some polarities that will be exhibited across sermon types or the orientation of the church to social justice as an aspect of ministry. Table 12 and Table 8 affirm several expectations from Chapter 3 Figure 1- Distribution of Sermonic Characteristics by Church Support for Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry. Specifically, (1) some polarities are almost exclusively restricted to the Group A, (2) several Column A polarities will be just as evident across all of the groups (e.g. privatistic and priestly), and (3) some polarities will be disproportionately represented with Group B. These tendencies skew the aggregates for Column A polarities to be larger for Group A than Group B and vice versa for the Column B polarities, in both sermons and the perspective of the preachers.

Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry and Sermonic Characteristics

Sermonic References

The respondents also provided a self-assessment of their frequency of reference to five issues in sermons: (1) Liberation / Black / Womanist / Feminist (LBWF) Theology or theologians; (2) Racism or Race Related Issues, (3) Social Justice or Social Action Issues, (4)

Chapter 4

Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) Issues , and (5) LGBTQ+ Issues.²⁰³ For each issue area, the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency they mention or discuss the identified issues in their sermons (Almost Always or Always (4), Frequently (3), Occasionally (2), Rarely (1), and Almost Never or Never (0)). Their self-assessment for the frequency of reference to these issues were not relative, so a respondent could have offered an Almost Always or Always or an Almost Never or Never for several or all the issues. As presented in Table 14, there are two views to this data. First, there is the relative ranking of the frequency of reference for the five types of issues. This provides insight into the self-assessment of the issues being addressed from the pulpits of the target population. Based on Table 14, the overall frequency of reference from most frequent to least frequent is (1) Racism or Race Related, (2) Social Justice or Social Action issues, (3) LBWF Theology or theologians, (4) ECJ, and (5) LGBTQ+ issues; with the most frequent issues in the occasionally (2) and approaching the frequently (3) range and the least frequent issues in the rarely (1) range. Second, and most relevant to this paper, there is the ranking of the groups based on the frequency of references to these issues. This provides insight into the relative importance of these issues based on the respondent's perspective on social justice as an aspect of ministry. Group B has the highest average aggregate frequency of reference and the highest average frequency for four of the categories. Group A has the lowest average aggregate frequency of reference and lower average frequency for each of the categories.

²⁰³ Based on non-record data, the latter two were added as a baseline, with little expectation for any of the respondents note frequent or even occasional references to issues related to Environmental and Climate Justice or LGBTQ+ concerns.

Chapter 4

Table 14 Average Frequency of Reference to Issues in Sermons by Group

		Liberation / Black / Womanist / Feminist Theology or Theologians	Racism or Race Related Issues	Social Justice or Social Action Issues	Environmental and Climate Justice Issues	LGBTQ+ Issues	Sample and Group Aggregates
All Respondents (n=29)	Average	2.207	2.793	2.621	2.000	1.276	2.185
	Variance	1.527	0.813	0.744	1.000	1.207	1.310
	Standard Deviation	1.236	0.902	0.862	1.000	1.099	1.145
Group A (n=6)	Average	1.333	1.833	1.833	1.333	0.833	1.433
	Variance	1.467	1.367	0.967	1.467	1.767	1.357
	Standard Deviation	1.211	1.169	0.983	1.211	1.329	1.153
Group B (n=7)	Average	2.857	3.286	3.000	1.857	2.143	2.639
	Variance	1.143	0.238	0.667	0.476	0.810	0.866
	Standard Deviation	1.069	0.488	0.816	0.690	0.900	0.931
Group C (n=16)	Average	2.250	2.938	2.750	2.313	1.063	2.263
	Variance	1.400	0.463	0.467	0.896	0.863	1.209
	Standard Deviation	1.183	0.680	0.683	0.946	0.929	1.099

Group B responses have consistently higher averages, which means more frequent sermonic references to the issues, and smaller spreads-smaller variance and standard deviations.

Analysis of Sermonic References (Self-Assessed)

For the sample there are significant differences in the reported frequency of sermonic references to these issues (See Table 14). An ANOVA for the entire sample grouped by the five issues results in an F of 9.7342 with an F Crit of 2.436 and a p-value of 5.628E-07, which is significant and permits the rejection of H_0 for the means of the reported frequencies of sermonic reference. Subsequent pairwise t-Test reveals several significant differences between pairs of issues. Table 15 confirms the results of the ANOVA and the determination to reject H_0 for the means of frequency of sermonic reference by issue type for the sample. Also, from Table 15 it appears that across the sample there is a continuity of statistically insignificant differences in the average frequency for the mention of these issues between issues that are adjacent in their means for frequency or sermonic reference. Table 15 confirms that H_0 can be rejected between Racism or Race Related issues and LBWF Theology and Theologians, but it cannot be rejected for either of those issues and Social Justice or Social Action issues, whose average frequency is between them.

Chapter 4

Table 15 H_0 Determinations based on Pairwise t-Test for Frequency of Sermonic References

		Social Justice or Social Action Issues	LBWF Theology or Theologians	ECJ Issues	LGBTQ+ Issues
	Means	2.6207	2.2069	2.000	1.2759
Racism or Race Related Issues	2.7931	Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0	Reject H_0^*	Reject H_0^*
Social Justice or Social Action Issues	2.6027		Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0	Reject H_0^*
LBWF Theology or Theologians	2.2069			Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0^*
ECJ Issues	2.0000				Reject H_0
*t-Test was not performed. Assumed based on results from t-Test between data with smaller differences in the means. LBWF- Liberation Black Womanist and Feminist ECJ- Environmental and Climate Justice					

The lone exception is the least frequent LGBTQ+ issues and the second least frequent Environmental and Climate Justice issues. I expected to see a significant difference in the frequency of references to ECJ and LGBTQ+ issues when compared to the other categories. This was based primarily on non-record data gathered while listening to sermons from the target population. However, within each group there are different dynamics.

Sermonic References by Group (Self-Assessed)

There are significant differences between the mean frequencies for each of the groups for the frequency of sermonic references. An ANOVA for the entire sample by the three groups results in an F of 10.757 with an F Crit of 3.059 and a p-value of 4E-05, which is significant and permits the rejection of H_0 for the means of the reported frequency of sermonic reference by the three groups. Subsequent pairwise t-Tests reveal significant differences for each permutation of the three groups. From Table 14, Group B has the highest average aggregate frequency with the smallest spread. Group A has the lowest average aggregate frequency with the largest spread. Since addressing or referencing any of these issues would be consistent with a concern for social justice, these findings support the thesis of the paper. From Table 14 it is also interesting to observe the consistency of the ordering of the issues across the three groups. Notwithstanding the

Chapter 4

lack of significant difference between means for average frequency for adjacent issues, based on the summary data in Table 14, the relative order of the frequency of sermonic reference is the same for all three groups first two issues, for two of the three groups on the third issue, and a different two of the three groups on the fourth and fifth issues.

For Group A the ANOVA suggest not rejecting H_0 and based on a pairwise t-Test between Group A Racism or Race Related Issues (mean 1.833) and Group A LGBTQ+ issues (mean 0.833). In short, the self-assessment of the Group A members was that they included these issues at best occasionally, but just as likely rarely or almost never. Based on this statistical analysis we might not expect a Group A sermon to address an issue concerning racism or race related issues any more than we could expect it address an issue related to the environment or LGBTQ+ rights. This supports the thesis of this paper.

For Group B the ANOVA supports rejecting H_0 and the pairwise t-Tests, while supporting the ANOVA decision, shows an even stronger continuity of insignificance between the issues with adjacent mean values noted for the overall sample (See Table 16). While the order for means of the Group B ECJ and LGBTQ+ sample data are reversed from the overall population, for Group B the difference between these mean values is not significant.

Table 16 Group B Pairwise t-Test Decisions for the Means of the Frequency of Sermonic Reference

		Group B-SJSA	Group B-LBWF	Group B-LGBTQ+	Group B-ECJ
	Mean	3.000	2.857	2.143	1.857
Group B-Race Issues	3.286	Not Reject H_0	Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0	Reject H_0 *
Group B-SJSA	3.000		Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0	Reject H_0 *
Group B-LBWF	2.857			Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0
Group B-LGBTQ+	2.143				Not Reject H_0
*t-Test was not performed. Assumed based on results from t-Test between data with smaller differences in the means.					

Chapter 4

The cumulative insight from Table 14 and Table 16 is that Group B respondents self-assessed that they included the identified issues in their sermons with a greater frequency for all five issues and had the smallest spread on four of the five issues and the smallest cumulative spread. This accounts for both the significant difference between Group B frequency of sermonic references to the issues at the extremes and the lack of significant difference in the frequency for all adjacent issues.

With the analysis of the preferences for dialectical polarities, Group C is best described as either agreeing with the other two groups for perspectives that are dominant in the black church (i.e. privatistic over communal, or universalism over particularism), splitting the difference with groups A and B when they are the inverse of each other (i.e. otherworldly over this-worldly), or leaning towards but left of Group A (i.e. priestly over prophetic). A similar pattern is evident with the measure of the self-assessment of frequency of sermonic references. As noted above, when the ANOVA is performed on the entire sample by groups, the results permit the rejection of H_0 .²⁰⁴ Moreover, when pairwise t-Test are performed between each of the groups, the result permits the rejection of H_0 for each test. Based on these statistical indicators, the means for frequency of sermonic references are significantly different for Groups A, B, and C; with Group C consistently between groups A and B with a spread that is between theirs as well. However, unlike statistical tendencies with the preferences for dialectical polarities, for means of the self-assessment of the frequency of sermonic references, Group C is closer to Group B than Group A.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ An ANOVA for the entire sample by the three groups results in an F of 10.757 with an F Crit of 3.059 and a p-value of 4E-05

²⁰⁵ The difference in the means for Group B and Group C is 0.376 with t Stat 1.902 and P(T<=t) one-tail of 0.030 but the means for Group C and Group A is 0.823 with t Stat 3.375 and P(T<=t) one-tail 0.0007. The best

Chapter 4

The ANOVA for Group C by the five issues supports rejecting the H_0 for the means of frequency of sermonic reference. This decision is supported by the pairwise t-Test of issues within Group C. Like groups A and B, the mean frequency of sermonic references for Racism or Race Related issues and Social Justice or Social Activism (SJSA) issues were first and second respectively. Like Group A, and distinct from Group B, Group C self-reported sermonic references to LGBTQ+ as least frequent.

Table 17 Group C Pairwise t-Test Decisions for the Means of the Frequency of Sermonic Reference

		Group C-SJSA	Group C-ECJ	Group C-LBWF	Group C-LGBTQ+
	Means	2.75	2.3125	2.25	1.063
Group C-Race Issues	2.9375	Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0	Reject H_0	Reject H_0 *
Group C-SJSA	2.75		Not Reject H_0	Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0 *
Group C-ECJ	2.3125			Not Reject H_0	Reject H_0 *
Group C-LBWF	2.25				Reject H_0
*t-Test was not performed. Assumed based on results from t-Test between data with smaller differences in the means.					

Finally, for three of the five issues ANOVA tests identified a significant difference in the sample for at least one of the groups and pairwise t-Test identified a significant difference between Group B and Group A for four of the five categories. Figure 2 presents the results of the ANOVA and pairwise t-Test between each of the groups by the five issues. If the test supported rejecting H_0 then it is depicted in green. If the test decision was to not reject H_0 then it is depicted in red. The only issue for which a H_0 could not be rejected by a pairwise t-Test of the groups was the Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) issue; therefore, we must assume that mean frequency of sermonic references to ECJ are the same for each of the groups. The only issue for which the pairwise t- Test rejected H_0 between groups B and C was for the mean frequency of

interpretation of these statistics is that probability that the Group A and Group C means are the same is much smaller than the probability that the Group B and Group C means are the same.

Chapter 4

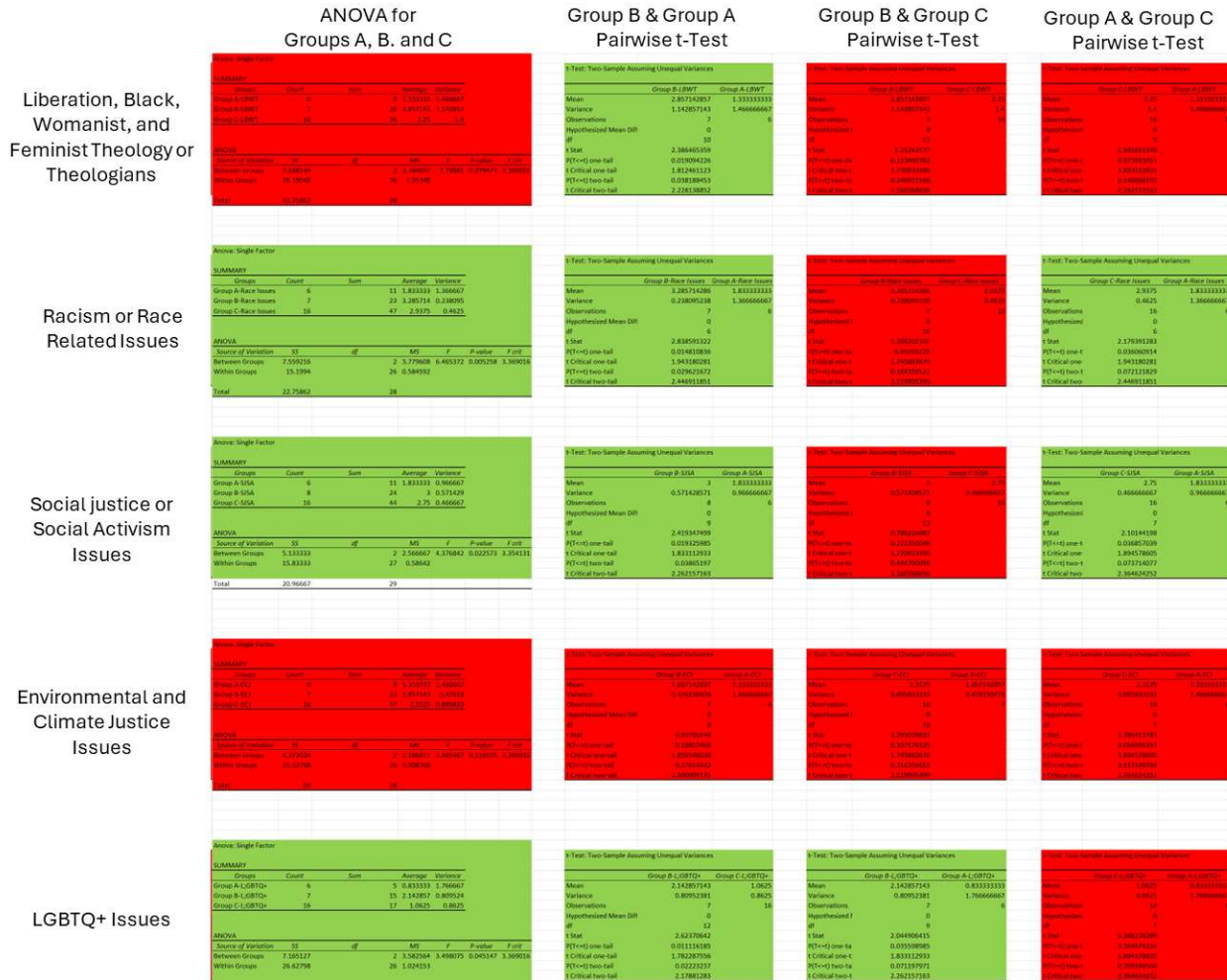


Figure 2 H_0 Decisions for ANOVA and Pairwise t-Test for Means of Frequency of Sermonic References by Group.

sermonic references to LGBTQ+ issues. The same test between groups A and C did not reject the H_0 , and it is only one example of Group C being more aligned with Group A than Group B. I expected both the LGBTQ+ and the ECJ to be standout issues, differentiators, between the churches on the continuum of support for social justice as an aspect of ministry. Not only are the groups A, B, and C respondents qualitatively distinct from each other with respect to their preferences for polarities in the five Lincoln & Mamiya dialectical pairs, their distinction is evident in the self-assessment of sermonic content. In both cases, the distinctions are aligned with the thesis that the Group A respondents would reject social justice as an aspect of ministry and the Group B respondents would favor social justice as an aspect of ministry. Group C,

Chapter 4

neither supporting nor rejecting social justice as an aspect of ministry, ends up being in the middle.

Sermonic References and Dialectical Preferences for Dialectical Polarities

In addition to the tendency for the respondents to have sermonic references to the issues based on their groups, I also reviewed their reported frequency of sermonic references based on their preferences for dialectical polarities. In all cases, the mean for Column B polarity was higher than the mean for its corresponding Column A polarity; however, the differences were significant in only a few of the tests. Figure 3 reports the H_0 decisions based on this review. For two of the five sermonic issues an ANOVA by the ten polarities supported rejecting the H_0 , so that at least one of the polarities had a significantly different mean for the frequency of reference. Once again, the impact of the aggregation of Column B polarities is evident. In four of the five cases, the mean for the aggregated column A and B polarities were significantly different, with the Column B polarities having a higher mean and thus more frequent sermonic references. I contend that references to these issues evince an interest or concern for social justice issues. Four additional observations from Figure 3 are in order.

First, none of the tests supported rejecting H_0 for the Environmental and Client Justice issue. The same results were observed for the Environmental and Client Justice ANOVA and pairwise t-tests by groups (See Figure 2). Second, comparing Figure 2 and Figure 3 suggests that these dialectical polarities are not exhaustive and supports an earlier observation that the selected method to categorize the respondents (into groups A, B, C) might mask more determinative characteristics that better predict these dependent variables. I suspect other preferences between other dialectical polarities (e.g. Conservative vs. Liberal, Open vs. Closed) might show significant differences for some of these issues that are not evident with the Lincoln & Mamiya

Chapter 4

pairs. Third, critical social justice issues are not being discussed in black churches, regardless of a church's orientation to social justice or a pastor's preferences for dialectical polarities. None of the churches are discussing Environmental and Climate Justice issues with any regularity.

Environmental and Climate Justice must be framed as a moral imperative. Fourth, the total of the Column A and Column B preferences reflects an orientation of the respondents and differentiates the self-assessed tendencies of the respondents concerning the frequency of sermonic references.

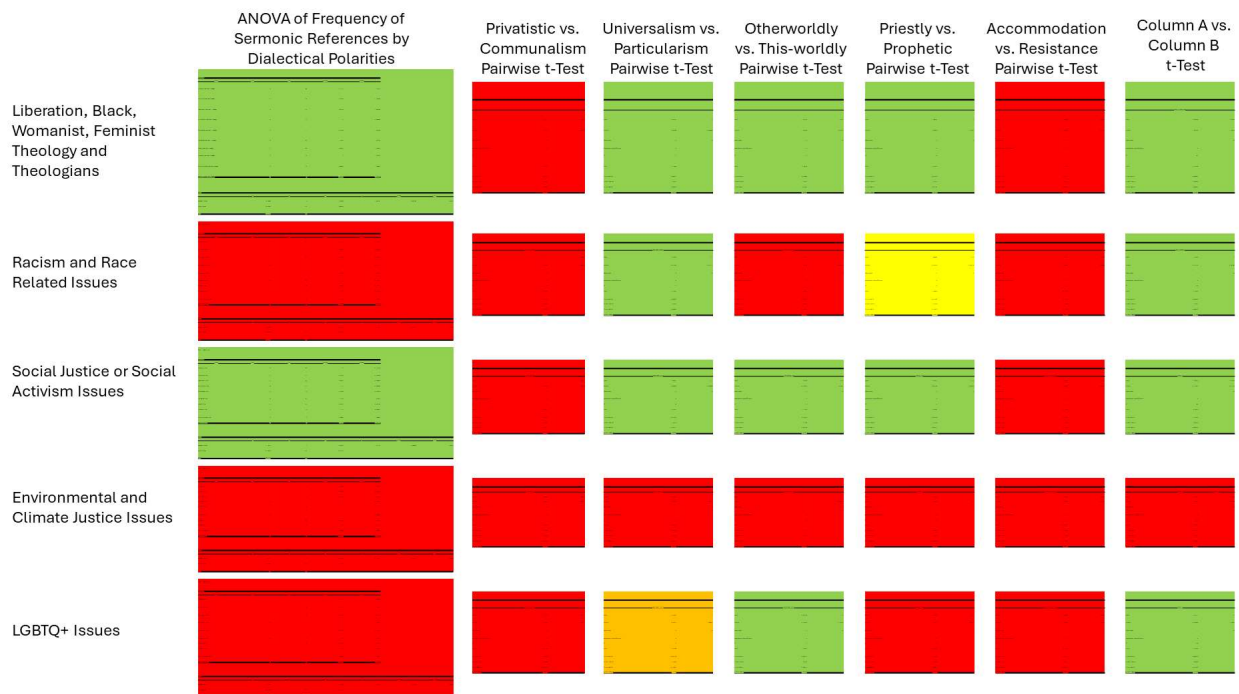


Figure 3 H_0 Decisions based on ANOVA and Pairwise t-Tests of Frequency of Sermonic References by Dialectical Polarities and Aggregated Column A and Column B Counts²⁰⁶

The aggregate Column A and Column B polarities demonstrate a cumulative effect of these preferences on the orientation of the respondents to social justice related issues.

²⁰⁶ Red boxes represent test without significant differences. Green boxes represent tests with significant differences. The yellow and orange boxes did not achieve significant difference. For yellow the P-value was greater that between .05 and .07. For orange, the P-value was between .07 and .08.

Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry and Sermons Preached

The respondents provided insights into their preaching practices and perspectives. With respect to preaching practices, they estimated the number of social activism sermons preached over the past year (See Table 18).²⁰⁷ If we limit the consideration to Sunday worship services, there are a minimum of 52 opportunities. If we also allow for pastoral vacations, the opportunity for other clergy in a congregation to preach, and guest ministers to preach, then we can reasonably reduce the opportunities to 40 times per year. I suspect, but do not have data to

Table 18 Self-Report of Social Activism Sermons Preached over the Last Year by Group

	All Respondents		Group A Respondents		Group B Respondents		Group C Respondents	
More than ten	11	38%	2	33%	3	43%	6	38%
Six to Ten	8	28%	1	17%	3	43%	4	25%
Three to Five	5	17%	1	17%	1	14%	3	19%
One or Two	5	17%	2	33%	0	0%	3	19%
n=	29		6		7		16	

support that most pastors preach more than 40 times per year. What is most interesting about this data is its relationship with the responses concerning frequency of sermonic reference to social justice or social activism. While it is possible to make a reference to social justice or social activism without the sermon being a Social Activism sermon, it is not possible to preach a Social Activism sermon without mentioning social justice or social activism. The respondents appeared to distinguish between sermonic references and sermon types with respect to social justice and social activism. There was only one glaring instance of a respondent with a conflicting self-assessment between the frequency of sermonic references to social justice or social activism and the number of Social Activism sermons preached over the last year.²⁰⁸ While there is a

²⁰⁷ I want to demonstrate some restraint on my use of statistical analysis to squeeze every possible insight from this data; therefore, I will only present this as data without statistical analysis.

²⁰⁸ I deemed it a conflict if the respondent estimated they preached more social justice sermons than their self-assessment of the frequency of sermonic references to social justice or social activism would seem to support. For example, a Group A respondent indicated that he preached more than 10 Social Activism sermons over the last year

Chapter 4

consistency in the self-assessments concerning sermonic references and Social Activism sermons, there were a few that were suspect. More importantly, based on both record and non-record observational data these self-assessments far exceed what I observed over the course of this study.²⁰⁹ I am confident that if I listened to a random sample of the sermons of those that participated in this study, I would have nowhere near number of Social Activism sermons or even sermonic references projected by the respondents' self-assessments.²¹⁰ Other respondent data supports this assessment.

Respondents were also asked to identify the most important preaching domain based on LaRue's taxonomy. Care the for the soul was identified as the most important preaching domain, followed by personal piety, with social justice and corporate concerns (of the race) tied for third, and maintenance of the institution last (See Table 19).²¹¹ The social justice domain received no

Table 19 Most Important Preaching Domain by Group

Domain of Preaching	All Respondents		Group A Respondents		Group B Respondents		Group C Respondents	
Care for the Soul	14	48%	2	33%	4	57%	8	50%
Personal Piety	10	34%	3	50%	1	14%	6	38%
Corporate Concerns	2	7%	1	17%	0	0%	1	6%
Social Justice	2	7%	0	0%	2	29%	0	0%
Maintenance of the Institution	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%
n=	29		6		7		16	

and that he almost never or never references social justice or social activism in his sermons. These responses are incongruous.

²⁰⁹ Non-record data includes a review of 17 sermons that only include if the sermon addresses social concerns. Of those 17 sermons only one mentioned a social concerns. The record data includes a review of 72 sermons that included sermonic references to social justice issues and categorization of sermons. Of the 72 sermons only three were categorized as Social Activism sermons and only four had sermonic references to social justice or social activism. To my chagrin, that data collection for two of the three sermons categorized as Social Activism sermons do not reflect that the sermons included references to social justice or social action. Withstanding this oversight, the assessment of the overestimation of both the frequency of sermonic references to social justice and social activism and the number of Social Activism sermons is still valid.

²¹⁰ Assuming the respondents preached a minimum of 40 times per year, for 29 respondents that would give us 1171 sermons over the last year from the sample. Based on the Table 18 data we would expect a minimum of 178 Social Activism sermons from the respondents, just about 15%. Based on the record data we are closer to 5% of the sermons as Social Activism sermons. Based on the responses included in Table 14, the mean frequency of sermonic reference to social justice or social activism was 2.7, which is between occasionally and frequently. Assuming occasionally to mean roughly 30% of the time, and occasionally (2) being well below the mean value for all respondents, based on the record data we are again closer to 5% for the frequency of sermonic reference to social justice or social action.

²¹¹ Upon review it appears that the description of the Maintenance of the Church domain I provided in the survey did not include all of the elements of this domain as described by LaRue in *The Heart of Black Preaching*.

Chapter 4

support outside Group B, but even within Group B it was a distant second to the care for the soul domain. Given the expected overlap between LaRue's personal piety and care for the soul domains and Simmons and Thomas' Cultural Survival sermon type, the dominance of those domains over the social justice domain is expected, even for the Group B respondents.

Finally, the respondents were provided with a description of six kinds of sermons and asked to rate their relative importance from (1) most important to (6) least important. The six kinds of sermons were: social activism, black identity, cultural survival, and empowerment, which I subdivided into communal, individual, and prosperity. For the entire sample, prosperity sermons were deemed the least important and cultural survival was the most important or tied for most important (See Table 20). For the entire sample, only prosperity sermons were deemed less important than social activism sermons. The relative rank of the categories of sermons for the Group B respondents matched the entire sample, albeit with different mean values. Even for the Group B respondents, social activism preaching was rated as the second least important category of sermons. Therefore, it is not the popularity of prosperity preaching that has caused the perceived reduction in social activism preaching. Perhaps the most interesting insight from Table 20 is the relative importance of prosperity and social activism preaching for Group A, with social activism preaching moving to the least important and prosperity moving into fourth place ahead of black identity preaching.

Several potential tests are evident from the Table 20 summary data. First, there is the very limited spread for the Group C measures. For four of the six categories of sermons, Group C has the smallest spread, the smallest combination of variance and standard deviation values.

Chapter 4

As we will see below, the two categories for which Group C has its largest smallest spread are adjacent to each other and a pairwise t-Test does not support rejecting the H_0 between them.

Table 20 Relative Importance of Sermon Types by Groups

Category of Sermons	All Respondents			Group A Respondents			Group B Respondents			Group C Respondents		
	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation
Cultural Survival	1.966	1.963	1.401	2.667	2.667	1.633	2.714	3.571	1.890	1.375	0.517	0.719
Individual Empowerment	2.931	1.924	1.387	3.167	2.567	1.602	2.714	2.571	1.604	2.938	1.663	1.289
Communal Empowerment	3.034	2.106	1.451	2.833	2.567	1.602	3.143	1.810	1.345	3.063	2.329	1.526
Black Identity	3.655	2.377	1.542	4.000	5.600	2.366	3.286	2.571	1.604	3.688	1.429	1.195
Social Activism	4.345	1.734	1.317	4.667	2.267	1.506	3.714	1.571	1.254	4.500	1.600	1.265
Prosperity	5.069	1.709	1.307	3.667	1.867	1.366	5.429	2.286	1.512	5.438	0.663	0.814
Scale: 1 Most Important, 6 Least Important												
Descriptions												
Social Activism	to induce social activism											
Black Identity	to reconstruct the humanity, dignity, and self-esteem of black people											
Communal Empowerment	to inform the community of faith that they collectively empowered to control the destiny of their community											
Individual Empowerment	to inform individual believers that each of them is empowered to control their individual destiny											
Prosperity	to promote the achievement of financial wealth by individuals											
Cultural Survival	to equip believers, despite the hardships of life, to live faithfully in this world in accordance with our faith tradition											

Second, the relatively high and uniform variance for the Group A averages suggests there will be very little separation between the Group A values. For Group A, the standout sermon types are Prosperity and Black Identity, with variances that are uncharacteristically low and high respectively. This is confirmed by an ANOVA for the Group A means and several pairwise t-Tests. Third, variance and standard deviation for each category across the sample are consistently smaller than at least two of the three of the groups, and the order of the means for the sample matches two of three groups. To my dismay, this suggests the groups are not determining the prioritization of the sermons. If the criteria for group assignment, affirmation or rejection for social justice as an aspect of ministry, determined the prioritization for what kinds of sermons the preachers prioritized, then one would expect greater variation between the three groups. However, the summary data in Table 20 indicates both groups B and C matches the order for the sample, and while Group A has a different order based on this sample data, statistical tests indicate that the different order is not significant. This does not mean that the groups used for this analysis do not provide insight to preaching preferences, but it does suggest that they are not determinative.

Chapter 4

The statistical analysis of the data presented in Table 20 suggest that something other than the relative support for social justice as an aspect of ministry could be controlling the prioritization of the types of sermons preached. An ANOVA for the entire sample and subsequent pairwise t-Tests between the categories of sermons rejects the H_0 ; therefore, we must assume the averages for the preference of sermon types are the same for the target population. For the sample, Cultural Survival sermons have the highest priority followed by Individual Empowerment and Communal Empowerment, which have no significant difference in rank, followed by Black Identity, which almost has a significant difference from Communal Empowerment but is significantly different from Individual Empowerment, followed by Social Activism, and then Prosperity (See Figure 4).²¹² The intra-group pairwise t-Tests reveal a different dynamic. The intra-group pairwise t-Test for Group C mirrors the entire sample, both in the relative ranking of the categories of sermons and the significant differences between the mean values for the prioritization of the sermon types. As noted above, whatever the Group C respondents have in common is reflected in the consistent ranking of the categories of sermons that resulted in the smallest spread for four of the six categories. The statistical analysis of the data for groups A and B suggests the criteria used to assign respondents to these groups does not control the priority of sermons preached by the members of these groups. Group B prioritization of sermon is the same as Group C and the overall sample.

Perhaps, the best interpretation of this summary data and statistical analysis with respect to Group A is to note how the mean prioritization for Social Activism sermons were the lowest priority and statistically significant from three of the other five categories for Group A. This

²¹² The yellow boxes in Figure 4 represent pairwise t-Test with a $P(T \leq t) < .07$. The H_0 was not rejected but very close.

Chapter 4

For the entire sample, which is representative of the target population, there is sufficient data to demonstrate a significant difference and reject Ho for 13 of the 14 pairwise t-Tests between the categories of sermons. While support for social justice as an aspect of ministry or the lack of seems to impact the relative priority for Social Activism and Prosperity sermons for Groups A and B, something else is determining the overall prioritization of sermons preached in this sample from the target population.

All Respondents							Group A						
		Individual Empowerment	Communal Empowerment	Black Identity	Social Activism	Prosperity			Individual Empowerment	Communal Empowerment	Black Identity	Social Activism	Prosperity
		2.931034483	3.034482759	3.655172	4.3448276	5.0689655			3.166666667	2.833333333	4	4.666667	3.6666667
Cultural Survival	1.965517	Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*	Cultural Survival	2.6666667	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho*
Individual Empowerment	2.931034		Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*	Individual Empowerment	3.1666667		Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho*
Communal Empowerment	3.034483			Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Communal Empowerment	3.0344828			Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho*
Black Identity	3.655172				Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Black Identity	3.6551724				Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho*
Social Activism	4.344828					Reject Ho	Social Activism	4.3448276					Not Reject Ho
Group B							Group C						
		Individual Empowerment	Communal Empowerment	Black Identity	Social Activism	Prosperity			Individual Empowerment	Communal Empowerment	Black Identity	Social Activism	Prosperity
		2.714285714	3.142857143	3.285714	3.7142857	5.4285714			2.9375	3.0625	3.6875	4.5	5.4375
Cultural Survival	2.714286	Not Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Cultural Survival	1.375	Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho	Reject Ho*
Individual Empowerment	2.714286		Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Individual Empowerment	2.9375		Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*
Communal Empowerment	3.142857			Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Communal Empowerment	3.0625			Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho*	Reject Ho*
Black Identity	3.285714				Not Reject Ho*	Reject Ho	Black Identity	3.6875				Reject Ho	Reject Ho*
Social Activism	3.714286					Reject Ho	Social Activism	4.5					Reject Ho

Figure 4 Comparison of Sample and Intra-Group Pairwise t-Test Ho Decisions

Chapter 4

Table 21 Group A Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Sermon Category - Ordered by Group A

		Group A				
		Communal Empowerment	Individual Empowerment	Prosperity	Black Identity	Social Activism
		2.833	3.167	3.667	4.000	4.667
Cultural Survival	2.667	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho
Communal Empowerment	2.833		Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho	Reject Ho
Individual Empowerment	3.167			Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho
Prosperity	3.667				Not Reject Ho*	Not Reject Ho
Black Identity	4.000					Not Reject Ho

suggests the Group A characteristic resulted in a different ordering of the priority of sermons from the other groups²¹³ and statistically significant different means for the priority for Social Activism sermons with other categories that are not observed for Group B. What is observed with Group B that is not observed with Group A is a significant difference in the mean prioritization for Prosperity sermons with all other categories. Something about Group B members results in them assigning the highest mean (which translates to the lowest priority) for the Prosperity sermons for all three groups. Perhaps the better understanding is that in this sample Group B respondents prioritized Social Activism sermons such that within Group B the H_0 could not be rejected except for with the Prosperity sermon category. This differentiates Group B from other groups. For Group C, the H_0 between Social Justice could be rejected with all other categories. For Group A, Social Activism was the only category for which H_0 could be rejected. So, for this sample, the orientation or prioritization of Social Activism sermons is unique for Group B when compared to groups A and C, at least with respect to the self-assessment by the respondents.

There is a significant difference between the mean prioritization for Prosperity sermons between these groups. The only other inter-group by sermon category ANOVA that produced

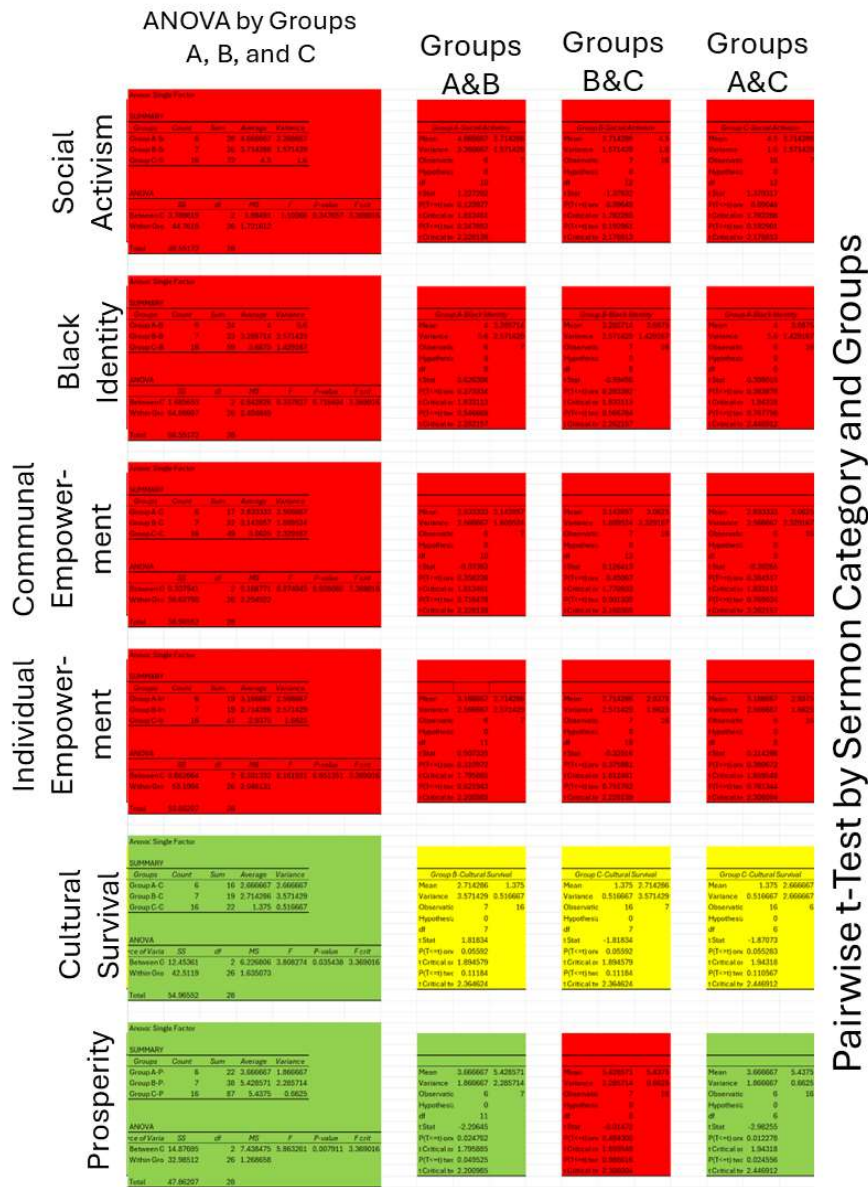
²¹³ This is tempered by the observation that for this sample, there is a lack of significant difference in the mean priority for the categorization of between 12 of the 15 Group A pairwise t-Test. With the data at hand, we have to reject that the averages reflect the real ordering for the categorization of the priority of the sermon types. Alas, I will appeal to principal of just a little more data. If the current data were scaled for the target population, we would observe statistical significance not for several of the pairwise t-Test but all of them.

Chapter 4

statistically significant differences was the Cultural Survival sermon type (See Figure 5). This is anticipated by the Table 20, with the very small spread for the Group C Cultural Survival summary data. Based on the statistical analysis for the remaining four inter-group by category ANOVAs and even pairwise t-Tests between the means with the greatest difference, the H_0 could not be rejected. On the one hand the ANOVA by category of sermons for the entire sample and pairwise t-Tests by each sermon category resulted in significant findings for the ANOVA and 13 of the 15 pairwise t-tests. For the sample there are significant differences in the prioritization of the sermons. On the other hand, only two of the six intra-category by group ANOVA tests supported the rejection of H_0 and only two of the six pairwise t-Test performed within those ANOVA frameworks with statistically significant findings supported rejecting their H_0 (See Figure 5). This suggests that there is something other than the criteria used to assign the respondents to groups A, B, or C that would explain the variation in the prioritization of sermon types for this sample. Nonetheless, this analysis does demonstrate that there are statistical differences in the prioritization of sermon types within the sample and that we would generally expect the Cultural Survival sermons to dominate, followed by Communal or Individual Empowerment, then Black Identity, with Social Activism and Prosperity sermons bring up the rear. This is in line with the analysis of other insights from the survey data. However, when these theoretical expectations based on the self-assessments and estimates from the respondents are compared with observations from a sampling of their sermons, it appears that the practice is to preach Cultural Survival sermons, every Sunday, every church, and all the time.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Of the 68 sermons reviewed as record data for this project, 59 were categorized as Cultural Survival sermons. Three were Social Activism, two were Individual Empowerment, nine could not be assigned to a category, five were assigned to two categories, and none were assigned to more than two categories.

Figure 5 ANOVA and Pairwise t-Test Decisions for H_0 by Sermon Categories and Groups^{215 216}



Based on ANOVA and pairwise t-Test of sermon prioritization by Groups A, B, and C, could not reject H_0 for a difference in sermon prioritization for the Social Activism sermon type between the groups; in particular between groups A and B.

²¹⁵ The yellow boxes represent pairwise t-Tests when $P(T \leq t)$ was $>.05$ but $<.06$.

²¹⁶ Since the dependent variables are competing for assignment of a value from 1-6, no additional insight is gained aggregating for the groups across all of the sermon types-the means for the groups all resolve to the same value 3.5.

Preference for dialectical polarities, even aggregated by Column A and Column B counts, do not provide significant insight to the prioritization of sermons preached based on the respondents' self-assessment.

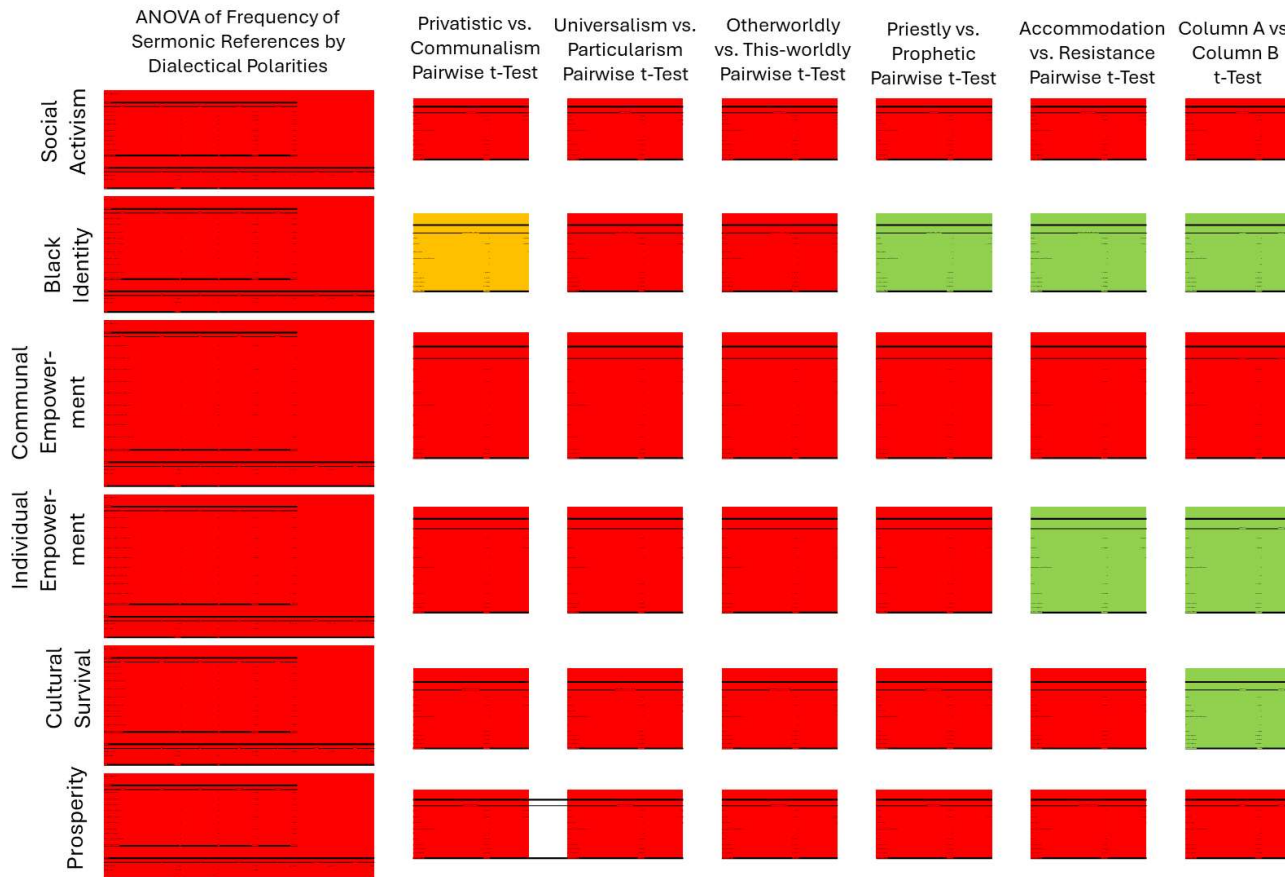


Figure 6 H_0 Decisions for Prioritization of Sermons by Dialectical Polarities

Chapter 4

Prioritization of Sermons (Self-Assessment) and Preferences of Dialectical Polarities

If the preference for dialectical polarities provided a better understanding of the differences in the frequency of sermonic references for the sample than the assignment to the groups based on support for social justice as an aspect of ministry, that was not the case for the mean prioritization of sermons. Again, for the sample, there are significant differences in the mean values for the prioritization of the sermons by the respondents. However, like with the ANOVA and pairwise t-Test for the groups, the tests for the dialectical polarities yielded few significant differences. The lack of significant difference in preference for sermon type in this data might be a function of the limited number of polarities considered.

Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry: Sociological, Ideological, and Theological Indicators

In Chapter 2 I identified several ideological, sociological, and theological perspectives that I believe are relevant to supporting or rejecting social justice as an aspect of ministry, and the potential impact of various dialectical polarities on the ideological, sociological, and theological perspectives. The respondents were asked seven questions to probe their ideological, sociological, and theological perspectives. The questions and summary responses are provided in Table 22. The first impression from the summarized responses is the relative agreement or lack of disagreement in the responses. Between the 29 survey participants and seven questions, there were roughly 203 response opportunities. For these 203 response opportunities 165 responses can be characterized as agreeing with each other with only 29 in disagreement. I asked five questions, one sociological and four theological, with strongly agree (2), agree (1), disagree (-1), and strongly disagree (-2) response options (values). For two of them a supermajority strongly agreed and the rest agreed, there were no disagreements; for another there was one strongly

Chapter 4

disagree, and the rest agreed or strongly agreed;²¹⁷ for one of them the majority strongly agreed and an additional eight agreed, with six expressing some level of disagreement; and for one the plurality strongly disagreed and another ten disagreed, with only five in some level of agreement. Two additional questions were asked, another theological and one ideological. The ideological question did provide some gradient of responses; only one response was negative, but there were variations in the positive responses. The last theological question offered true, false (1), or false (2) as the response options, it provided the most significant variation in responses. To this question, 12 responded true, and 13 selected one of the false options. Nonetheless, very few significant differences were identified.

Table 22 Sociological, Ideological, and Theological Questions and Response Data and Expectations

Category: Question Possible Responses (Number of Responses)	Expectations
Sociological: Individual churches are called to address social justice Strongly Agree (Very positive for social justice) (10) Agree (Positive for social justice) (18) Disagree (Negative for social justice) (0) Strongly Disagree (Very negative for social justice) (1)	Stronger agreement means greater support for social justice as an aspect of ministry; less agreement or disagreement means less support or aversion to social justice as an aspect of ministry. ²¹⁸
Ideological: Characterize Black Power Affirmation of the need for black people to have the ability to achieve objectives necessary for the black community (Positive Response) (22) Necessary to achieve to achieve social justice with respect to racial inequality (Positive Response) (12) An ethical outcome of Black Theology (Positive Response) (10) Another form of racial chauvinism-White Supremacy but in reverse (Negative Response) (1) Antithetical to/Incompatible with Christian belief and practice.(Negative Response) (1) None of the Above (Neutral Response) (1)	Respondents with a more favorable response to the Black Power would have a more favorable disposition to Black Identity and Empowerment, specifically Communal Empowerment, and greater affinity for the particularism and this-worldly dialectical polarities. Respondents with a less favorable response to this question would exhibit a lesser proclivity for Communal Empowerment

²¹⁷ It is my best assessment that the strongly disagree of this one response was a user error in the survey response. All the other characteristics of the user, responses to other questions

²¹⁸ This was the only assessment that where the agreement would indicate support for social justice. In order to gain the power of an increased number of measures, I reversed the values for statistical analysis.

Chapter 4

Category: Question Possible Responses (Number of Responses)	Expectations
Theological 1: According to the Bible, personal sins are just as guilty and deserving of God's judgment as oppressing others. Strongly Agree (15) Agree (8) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (4)	To strongly agree or agree with this statement is to give equal weight or import to personal sins as social sins. The expectation is that those who favor social justice as an aspect of ministry will not agree with this statement as strongly as those with a stronger affinity for the privatistic and priestly polarities.
Theological 2: Injustice within a community cannot be really solved, we just need to ensure until Christ returns. Strongly Agree (1) Agree (4) Disagree (10) Strongly Disagree (14)	I expected an even spread for this assessment, with Group A in the agree to strongly agree, Group C in the agree, and Group B in the disagree to strongly disagree. Stronger disagreement will indicate more support for social justice as an aspect of ministry and have a greater affinity for the this-worldly, prophetic, and resistance polarities.
Theological 3: God is always on the side of the oppressed True without exception (12) False (1) - God is always on the side of his people (7) False (2) - God is always on the side of those who are doing right (6) Other- (4)	Those who select true will support social justice, those who select False (1) or (2) will be less inclined to support social justice, and those selecting False (2) will prefer the priestly and privatistic polarities.
Theological 4: The Church's primary responsibility is to make disciples, followers of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior Strongly Agree (20) Agree (9) Disagree (0) Strongly Disagree (0)	Less agreement will reflect more support for social justice as an aspect of ministry. Group B respondents will not agree with this statement as strongly as Group A respondents. The priestly polarity will be dominant for those that strongly agree with this and the prophetic polarity will be more evident with those that only agree with this assertion.
Theological 5: Addressing social injustice is less important than making disciples of Jesus Christ Strongly Agree (20) Agree (9) Disagree (0) Strongly Disagree (0)	Stronger agreement would indicate less support for social justice as an aspect of ministry, with the prioritization of saving souls over saving bodies. The expectation is there would be a consensus around agreement rather than strong agreement, but that Group B would have a lower mean value than groups A and C.

None of the ANOVA by the groups or by dialectical polarities produced significant differences that supported rejecting the H_0 (See Table 23). Moreover, even the pairwise t-Tests, which have a tendency for higher Type I/False Positive errors whereby the H_0 is incorrectly rejected, were overwhelmingly negative for both inter-group and intra-dialectical pair comparisons. It was only when I aggregated the Column A and Column B polarities that we begin to see the emergence of several significant differences in the comparison means, in this

Chapter 4

case the mean values for Column A and Column B for the sociological and theological questions 2, 3, and 4.

Table 23 H_0 Decisions for Sociological, Ideological, and Theological Assessments by Groups and Dialectical Polarities

	Group Analysis				Analysis of Lincoln & Mamiya Dialectical Pairs						
	ANOVA- All Groups	Pairwise t-Test			ANOVA- All Dialectical Polarities	Pairwise t-Test of Dialectical Polarities					t-Test Column A / Column B Polarities
		Groups A & B	Groups B & C	Groups A & C		Privatistic / Communal Polarities	Universalism / Particularism Polarities	Otherworldly / This-worldly Polarities	Priestly / Prophetic Polarities	Accommodation / Resistance Polarities	
Sociological											
Ideological											
Theological 1											
Theological 2											
Theological 3											
Theological 4											
Theological 5											
All Questions*											

Green squares represent statistical results that support rejecting H_0 . Yellow and orange squares represent statistical results with $P(Tst) < .07$ and $< .08$ respectively, i.e. very near significant difference. Red squares represent statistical results that do not support rejecting H_0 , i.e. the means for the identified groups or polarities do not evince a significant difference that support rejecting H_0 .

* For the Group Analysis the All Questions ANOVA and pairwise t-Test does not include the responses for the Ideological and Theological 3 questions. The responses to those questions had a different structure that would have confounded the analysis.

I did not conduct an analysis of covariance, which would ferret out Type II/False Negative errors, for an interaction between groups and specific dialectical polarities. The preference for particular dialectical polarities are intrinsic to each respondent but the group assignments reflects the orientation of the congregation rather than the respondent. Other independent variables, such as respondent demographic or church demographics, can be evaluated with the primary variables of interests to see if they can explain significant differences in the aggregate and perhaps remove any Type II/False Negative errors in the ANOVAs by group and dialectical polarities.

Based on the responses to these survey questions, most of the respondents had the sociological perspective that would support engaging in social justice as an aspect of ministry. Twenty-eight of the 29 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that individual churches are called to address social justice. Nonetheless, Social Activism preaching was identified as the second least important type of preaching. The disconnect is not the result of prosperity preaching, since it was the consensus least important type of preaching. The disconnect is a function of the

Chapter 4

dominance of Cultural Survival preaching, which was largely focused on bring individuals into a faith relationship with Jesus as savior and how we as individuals live out our faith relationship. This was anticipated by the responses to the theological questions. All 29 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the church's primary responsibility is to make disciples, followers of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. All 29 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that addressing social injustice was less important than making disciples of Jesus Christ. These theological priorities would be reflected in the dominance of the Cultural Survival sermon type and provide insight to the lack Social Activism sermons observed below.

Observations from Sermons Reviewed

The original intent was to review ten or more sermons from several respondents in groups A and B and to collect the same information from those sermons that I gathered from the exemplary sermons. By accident, I have observed 20 sermons from 2 respondents in Group A, 29 sermons from a total of 5 respondents from Group B,²¹⁹ and 9 sermons from 1 respondent in Group C, and nine sermons from a pastor of a ninth church. If the pastor of the ninth church had completed the survey, it would have been added to Group B.

²¹⁹ One of the Group B respondents did not complete all the questions from the initial survey and his data was removed and was not include in previous analysis (See footnote 194).

Observed Distribution of Sermon Types

The collected sermon data was not sufficient to conduct all the desired analysis. The primary shortfall was with the number of respondents for which sermon data was collected, but also the lack of diversity in the information collected. Table 24 demonstrates the lack of diversity for the 68 sermons reviewed from local congregations. In contrast with the exemplar sermons discussed in Chapter 3, which consisted of roughly of 60% Cultural Survival, 10% Social Activism, 4% Black Identity, 19% Empowerment, and 25% as not meeting any of the Simmons and Thomas’ categories;²²⁰ 87% of the 68 observed from the local congregations were Cultural Survival with only 4% as Social Activism, 3% as Empowerment, and 6% not meeting any of the

Table 24 Observation of Local Sermons- Count of Sermons by Groups and Sermon Types

	Number of Respondents	Number of Sermons	None of the Simmons and Thomas Types	Simmons and Thomas Sermon Types								New Karl Brower Sermon Type
				Social Activism	Black Identity	Empowerment			Cultural Survival			
						Communal*	Individual*	Prosperity	Cultural Survival (General)	Hardship* (Generic)	African American Hardship*	
	9	68	8	3	0	0	2	0	59	26	3	13
Group A	2	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	19	8	3	2
Group B	6	39	6	2	0	0	0	0	32	15	0	10
Group C	1	9	1	1	0	0	2	0	8	3	0	1

*These are subcategories of the Simmons and Thomas sermon types. Simmons and Thomas defined Social Activism, Black Identity, Empowerment, and Cultural Survival as the basic four types of sermons, with Prosperity sermons as an subcategory of Empowerment sermons.

Simmons and Thomas’ sermon types. With this paucity of data, it is not possible to offer any meaningful summary statistics let alone statistical analysis of the sermon types, especially with respect to the groups of interest.

There is sufficient data to suggest that the dominance of Cultural Survival sermons anticipated by Table 20, as well as Simmons and Thomas’ estimation of the prevalence of this sermon type, is evident this data set. Cultural Survival sermons were dominant even for Groups A and B which did not express a significant difference in preference for Cultural Survival sermons over any other sermon types except Social Activism sermons for Group A and

²²⁰ These percentages exceed 100% because 7% were categorized as more than one of the Simmons and Thomas’ sermon types.

Chapter 4

Prosperity sermons for Group B (See Figure 4). It appears as if these churches preach Cultural Survival sermons almost every Sunday. In addition to the Cultural Survival sermons, the Affirmation of Faith sermons are also more frequently preached than the other sermon types. Most of the sermons that were categorized as Affirmation of Faith would have been categorized as Cultural Survival based on the Simmons and Thomas taxonomy or previously classified by me as not any of the Simmons and Thomas sermon types. I contend that every sermon should affirm faith, but the affirmation of faith should be a pivot to something else, objectively something that can be categorized as one of the other sermon types. Sermons that affirm the faith without a “therefore” miss the mark of an exhortation. This summary data also provides at least anecdotal evidence of the absence of Social Activism preaching necessary to encourage the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry.

The paucity of data from these 68 sermons was also evidenced in the lack of sermonic reference data. Here I am not concerned with the sermon type, but how the preachers explicitly related the text to the African American experience, note contemporary social justice issues or racial concerns, and makes use of the black experience to illustrate a point in the sermon. In short, I wanted to observe if the churches are preaching to the particularity of their congregations.

Table 25 Observed Sermonic References

	Number of Respondents	Number of Sermons	Sermonic References			
			Related Text to the Black Experience	Social Justice Issue	Racism or Race Related Issue	The Black Experience
	9	68	0	4	1	10
Group A	2	20	0	1	0	0
Group B	6	39	0	2	0	10
Group C	1	9	0	1	1	0

Chapter 4

In comparison with exemplar sermons, the sermons observed from the target audience were qualitatively different with respect to the frequency of sermonic references. Only “The Black Experience” sermonic reference category provides an opportunity for any deeper analysis. Unfortunately, the survey did not capture any data concerning sermonic references to “The Black Experience.” Nonetheless, based on the P-Values of 0.034 and 0.011 respectively for ANOVA tests of the mean for the sermonic references to “The Black Experience” by groups A, B, and C; the H_0 can be rejected. This data supports a significant difference in the mean for references to “The Black Experience” between Group B and groups A and C, thus an observed difference in the preaching for the group that supports social justice as an aspect of ministry. However, the question must be asked- where is the black in this preaching? None of the observed sermons made a connection between the biblical text from which the sermon was preached and the listening black audience. Too few of the sermons made any mention of social justice or race related issues, it is as if there were no social justice issues or challenges faced by black people about which the sermonic texts could provide insight.

In general, the data in Table 25 is grossly inconsistent with the self-assessments for the frequency of sermonic references for both social issues and racism and race related issues. The lone Group C member self-assessed that her sermons referenced social justice issues and race related issues “almost always or always,” but of the nine sermons observed only one referenced a social justice and a race related issue. For the four Group B members,²²¹ whose average frequency for sermonic references to social justice and race related issues was 3.5 and 3.25 respectively, which corresponds to frequently and approaches almost always, there was one

²²¹ Although there are six preachers in the Group B sermon data set, only four of these preachers had completed the survey.

Chapter 4

reference to social issues and no references to race related issues in 19 sermons between them. The only observed consistency between the self-assessment of the frequency of sermonic references and the data in Table 25 was for the two Group A respondents, who self-assessed a frequency of reference of “almost never or never” and had only one reference in 19 sermons. Again, where is the black in this preaching?

Observed Presence of Dialectical Polarities

From the exemplar sermons I established a relationship between the presence of Column B dialectical polarities in Social Activism sermons and then to Column B dialectical polarities and preachers with Social Activism sermons. From the analysis of the survey data from the target population, I confirmed the existence of a statistical difference in the preference for Column B polarities by respondents that embraced social justice as an aspect of ministry and vice versa for Column A polarities by respondents that did not embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry. Those tendencies were generally observed with the local sermons reviewed for this study. Of the 17 dialectical pairs, two sets of polarities were not represented in the sermon data, eight have significant differences in the polarities-all favoring Column A polarities over Column B, two had nearly significant differences-one favoring the Column A polarity and the other favoring the Column B, and for the remaining dialectical pairs the difference between the Column A and Column B polarities were not significant.

As noted in Table 26 the ratio of Column A to Column B polarities was 253 to 44. This ratio is not just quantitatively different but qualitatively different than the polarity counts from

Table 26 Summary Polarity Counts by Group for Local Sermon Reviews

		Total	Group A Counts	Group B Counts	Group C Counts	Polarity ANOVA by Groups Decisions	Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Polarities by Groups and Domains
Total Column A	Counts	253	86	131	36	Reject Ho P-Value 0.02	Reject Ho between Group B and Group A. Not Reject Ho between Group B and Group C, or between Group C and Group A.
	Average / Sermon	3.72	4.3	3.36	4		
Total Column B	Counts	44	3	32	9	Reject Ho P-Value 0.05	Reject Ho between Group B and Group A, and between Group C and Group A; Not Reject Ho between Group B and Group C
	Average / Sermon	0.65	0.15	0.82	1		

Chapter 4

the exemplar sermons, which was 292 to 188. For the exemplar sermons there were on average 2.4 Column A and 1.5 Column B polarities per sermon. For the local church sermons there were 3.7 Column A and .65 Column B polarities per sermon. I believe two factors account for these differences. First is the diversity of preachers. The exemplar data set was from 57 preachers with an average of 2 sermons per preacher. The local church data set was from nine preachers with an average of 7.5 sermons per preacher. Second is the settings for the sermons. The exemplar sermons were curated and not restricted to the Sunday morning worship service. The audience for many of the exemplar sermons were different from the typical pulpit audience. Granted, some of the exemplar sermons were based on Sunday morning exhortations, but many were presented at conferences for preachers with the intent to model preaching for those in attendance. From this summary data it is evident that sampled local churches include many more references to Column A polarities than Column B. There is very little utility in comparing the local church sermon characteristics with the exemplar sermons. What remains is to see is the impact of groups on the frequency of polarities in the sermons.

For the local church sermons, the counts for many of the polarities, especially the Column B polarities, are best characterized as insignificant. It is not necessary to use statistical methods to demonstrate that a significant difference exist between the total Column A and total Column B polarities or with many of the pairs (e.g. Privatistic vs. Communal, Priestly vs. Prophetic, Allegory of the Individual vs. Allegory for the Community, Personal Issues vs Communal Issues). In general, there are a few significant differences in the occurrences of Column A polarities by groups. With so few observations for many of the polarities, a determination of significant difference by group or sermon type would depend on an exclusive or

Chapter 4

nearly exclusive occurrence with just one of the groups or sermon types, especially Group A or Group B, or with Social Activism sermons.

Based on the summary data and test statistics in Table 26, Group A has a significantly different and higher frequency for referencing Column A polarities than Group B and Group B has a significantly different and higher frequency for referencing Column B polarities than Group A. The dialectical polarity preferences based on the survey data were based on a limited set of five polarities defined by Lincoln & Mamiya. For the evaluation of the sermons for the presence of dialectical polarities I used the 17 dialectical pairs discussed in Chapter 3. However, I used the five Lincoln & Mamiya pairs to create five domains (See Table 27). The primary

Table 27 Suggested Domains of Dialectical Pairs

Domain	Description	Dialectical Pairs
1	Individual or Social Focus-Does the sermon focus on, use as examples from, or interpret the text from the standpoint of an individual or a community?	Privatistic vs. Communal
		Allegory to the Individual vs. Allegory to the Community
		Personal Salvation and Freedom vs. Communal Salvation
		Personal Issues Illustrated vs. Communal Issues Illustrated
2	Orientation to Culture- Does the sermon express support or opposition to the dominant culture or power?	Accommodation vs. Resistance
		Conservative vs. Liberal
		Open vs. Closed
3	Sources of Insight- Does the sermon use or emphasize insights unique to black / marginalized experiences or focus on universal / mainline point of view?	Confirming Ruling Class Ideologies vs. Rejecting Universalism vs. Particularism
		Bible vs. Experience as Source of Authority
		Black-Womanist-Liberation-Feminist Theology and Theologians vs. Fundamentalist-Mainline Theologians
4	Does the sermon address the benefits and purpose of ministry for now or later?	Otherworldly vs. This-worldly Future Eschatology vs. Realized Eschatology
5	Is the sermon inwardly or outwardly focused?	Priestly vs Prophetic Theological Reflection vs. Ethical Reflection Worship vs. Service Service to Community vs. Service to Community

Aggregating the polarities into domains permits the identification of both shared controlling themes, such as the emphasis on the individual over the communal, and the significance of a theme when there are few examples of representative polarities.

Chapter 4

advantage of creating the domains was to permit the aggregation of polarity counts that reflect a shared feature across the dialectical pairs.

The primary organizing principle for Domain 1 is the dynamic of focusing on an individual or on a collective. It is evident in the summary data from the for the dialectical pairs in this domain that the overwhelming tendency in the sermons for this study was to emphasize the individual. The dominance of the “individual” polarities was also evident with the exemplar sermons (See Chapter 3) and the results in Table 12 also reflect a preference for the privatistic polarity over the communal polarity by the survey respondents. It is not necessary to perform any statistical tests to affirm a significant difference in the sermonic occurrences of the Column A polarities over the Column B polarities in this domain and for each of the groups. It should be noted that while only two sermons manifested all four of the Column A polarities, more than 33 of the sermons included three of the Column A polarities from this domain. It is the dominance of the individualistic emphasis in the sermons (the allegorizing of the text to individuals, use of personal issues to explicate the text, emphasis on individual faith practices or concerns) that accounts for prevalence of Column A polarities over Column B polarities. The priestly polarity, which I included in Domain 5, also skewed the counts in favor of Column A, interacts with this domain insomuch as priestly concerns were usually expressed with an emphasis on the individual rather than group. From Table 28 there are not many significant differences between the groups in the frequency of identification of these polarities in the sample sermons. The most relevant significant difference for the thesis of this research is that the Group B sermons reflected on personal issues less frequently than groups A and C.

Chapter 4

Table 28 Domain 1 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Polarity ANOVA by Groups Decisions	Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Polarities by Groups and Domains
Domain 1	Count	20	39	9		
Privatistic (a1)	52	17	28	7	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.54	None Tested
Communal (b1)	5	2	2	1	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.72	Not Reject Ho for Groups A and B; Not Reject Ho Groups C and B; Groups A and C not tested
Allegory for Individual (a12)	60	18	35	7	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.59	None Tested
Allegory for Community (b12)	10	1	5	4	Reject Ho P-Value 0.02	Reject Ho for Group C and Group B; Groups A and C not tested
Personal Freedom (a15)	6	1	4	1	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.78	Not Reject Ho for Group A and B
Communal Freedom (b15)	0	0	0	0	Not Tested, no data	Not Tested, no data
Personal Issues (a16)	42	16	19	7	Reject Ho P-Value 0.036	Reject Ho for Group B and Group C; Reject Ho for Group B and Group A; Groups A and C not tested
Communal Issues (b16)	1	0	0	1	Reject Ho P-Value 0.035	None Tested
Domain 1 Column A	160	52	86	22	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.26	None Tested
Domain 1 Column B	16	3	7	6	Reject Ho P-Value 0.05	Near reject Ho for Group C with Group B P(Tst) .07

The paucity of communal references and emphasis are consistent with the observation that our faith is dominated by a focus on the individual rather than the communal. The believer wants to know if his name is written in the book of life, with less concern about other names. As noted earlier, the emphasis on the individual over the communal diminishes the impetus and drive for collective action or social change. This impacts the way texts are interpreted and illustrated. For example, for each sermon I identified if the biblical text was a communal text, individual text, or neither. A communal text is one that was addressed to, focused on, or tells a story about a community or group. Moses giving the Shema to the people in Dt 6:2, The Sermon on the Mount, and Galatians are all examples of communal texts. An individual text is one that focuses on an individual. The Book of Ruth, Moses' call narrative, and Philemon are all individual texts. There are some texts that are neither communal nor individual, such as the Genesis creation narrative. The plurality of the texts used in the 68 sermons were communal, but the vast majority of these communal texts were allegorized for individual experiences or personal experiences were used to illustrate or illuminate them (See Table 29). It is as if we have a diminished capacity to think about and reflect on the collective. What the text means for us-together, rather than each of us-individually, is rarely articulated. This predilection for individual over the communal was also witnessed with the exemplar sermons. Each believer can articulate a

Chapter 4

vision of his or her personal salvation. None of the sermons gave a vision of the communal salvation that is the Kingdom of Heaven. Moreover, I suspect that if a vision for the Kingdom of Heaven had been articulated, it would have been otherworldly.

Table 29 Sermonic Polarities by Text Type for Local Church and Exemplar Sermons

	Local Church Sermon Observations			Exemplar Sermons		
	Communal Text	Individual Text	Neither Communal nor Individual Text	Communal Text	Individual Text	Neither Communal nor Individual Text
Count	30	20	18	36	44	29
Allegory for Community	5	2	3	11	11	7
Allegory for Individual	27	19	14	24	35	17
Communal Polarity	2	1	2	8	6	2
Privatistic Polarity	22	18	12	14	20	16
Communal Issues	0	0	1	4	1	2
Personal Issues	15	15	12	10	19	8
Communal Salvation	0	0	0	2	1	0
Personal Salvation	5	0	0	2	8	2

The second domain focused on the relationship between sermon and the culture. Pivoting from Lincoln & Mamiya's Accommodation and Resistance, which emphasized tension between conforming or rejecting the dominant culture, I added three other dialectical pairs that reflect the relationship between the church and society and its norms. The expectation was that the sermons from churches that embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry would favor the open, liberal, and rejecting ruling class ideology polarities, or at the very least reflect those polarities with greater frequency than the other churches. Table 30 confirms these expectations for the aggregate of the domain as well as with the open and liberal polarities. Also relevant is the lack of significant difference between the groups for the identification of the conservative, closed, and

Chapter 4

Table 30 Domain 2 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Polarity ANOVA by Groups Decisions	Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Polarities by Groups and Domains
Domain 2	Count	20	39	9		
Accommodation ((a5)	0	0	0	0	Not Tested, no data	Not Tested, no data
Resistance (b5)	0	0	0	0	Not Tested, no data	Not Tested, no data
Closed (a9)	2	1	1	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.75	None Tested
Open (b9)	4	0	4	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.21	Reject Ho for Group B and Group A and Group B and Group C
Conservative (a10)	6	3	3	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.40	Not Reject Ho Group B and Group A
Liberal (b10)	6	0	6	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.09	Reject Ho for Group B and Group A; Reject Ho for Group B and Group C
Confirming Ruling Class Ideologies (a16)	3	0	2	1	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.40	None Tested
Rejecting Ruling Class Ideologies (b16)	1	0	1	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.70	None Tested
Domain 2 Column A	11	4	6	1	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.87	None Tested
Domain 2 Column B	11	0	11	0	Reject Ho for P-Value 0.05	None Tested

confirming ruling class ideologies polarities. While pairwise t-Test permit rejection of the H_0 for the Group B closed and open polarities, suggesting that Group B sermons reflected the open polarity more frequently than the closed polarity, the same cannot be said for the liberal and conservative polarities. This observance signals a flag or hinderance to both a sermonic and general theological thrust towards the pursuit of social justice. As previously noted, the sociological function of the church as a conservator of culture and cultural norms has historically impeded its embrace of social change necessary for social justice. While the H_0 for Group B for the Conservative vs. Liberal dialectical pair could not be rejected, that was not the case for Group A. Group A has a statistically significant different and more frequent occurrence of conservative reflections in its sermons that it had liberal reflections. Perhaps the best way to understand these two observations together is that churches that do not embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry will express conservative values more frequently than liberal values and churches that embrace social justice as an aspect of ministry will express liberal values as often as they express conservative values.

Chapter 4

The focus of Domain 3 is the degree to which the black experience serves as a primary epistemological resource for the sermon and the interpretation of the biblical text. If the sermon reveals a consciousness of the black experience, historic and contemporary, and relates it to the biblical texts then a concern for social justice will emerge.²²² The expectation is not for the black experience to trump the revelation of Bible or particularism to the neglect of the appreciating the Black Christ as the Christ for all humanity. Rather for the ethos of the black church to reflect and be informed by the particularity of the black experience, and that to be reflected in the content of the preaching. There must be something else that is black about the black church other than the hue of the people in the pews, the exuberance of the singing, and the performance of the preaching. It is my expectation that preaching that reflects the Column B polarities in this domain will exhibit what has always been the most appreciated elements of black preaching.

Table 31 Domain 3 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Polarity ANOVA by Groups Decisions	Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Polarities by Groups and Domains
Domain 3	Count	20	39	9		
Universalism (a2)	0	0	0	0	Not Tested, no data	Not Tested, no data
Particularism (b2)	0	0	0	0	Not Tested, no data	Not Tested, no data
Bible as Authority (a13)	6	1	5	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.38	None Tested
Experience as Authority (b13)	1	0	1	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.70	None Tested
Fundamentalist Theology and Theologians (a14)	3	0	1	2	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.32	Reject Ho Group B and Group A
Black, Womanist, Liberationist, and Feminist Theology and Theologians (b14)	3	0	3	0	Reject Ho P-Value 0.02	Not Reject any Ho
Domain 3 Column A	9	1	6	2	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.38	Not Reject Ho for Group B and groups A or C.
Domain 3 Column B	4	0	4	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.21	Reject Ho Group B and Group A. Reject Ho Group B and Group C

Table 31 confirms previously presented data from the survey; namely, there is little that is uniquely black in the observed preaching. From Table 31, experience in general and the black experience in particular did not function as an epistemological resource for the sermons, not even to affirm biblical truths or predications. Granted, Group B referenced Black, Womanist, Liberation, Feminist theology or theologians more frequently than groups A and C, but only

²²² I will concede that a less faithful response that concedes this world to the powers and principalities of oppression and opts for otherworldly compensation is also possible.

Chapter 4

three of 39 sermons cited or referenced these resources. These values reflect a practice that is much less frequent than the “almost always” and “frequently” from the surveys.

A believer’s orientation to the Domain 4 polarities is probably the most important theological determinant concerning the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. Those with an utterly otherworldly faith will not concern themselves with the bring about social justice; their hope is restricted to heaven. Conversely, those who embrace the realized eschatology of “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” will seek opportunity to experience that reality in the concomitant changes to the current world order, they will look to satisfy those who hunger and thirst for justice. Based on the content of the sermons, the sampled preachers have an otherworldly orientation, with no differentiation between the groups with respect to these dialectical polarities. Table 32 reflects that there are no significant differences between the groups for any of the polarities in these two dialectical pairs. However, there were several significant differences for Group A and Group B within the dialectical pairs. Both Group A and

Table 32 Domain 4 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Polarity ANOVA by Groups Decisions	Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Polarities by Groups and Domains
Domain 4	Count	20	39	9		
Otherworldly (a3)	8	3	5	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.50	None Tested
This-worldly (b3)	1	0	1	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.70	None Tested
Future Eschatology (a6)	2	1	1	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.75	None Tested
Realized Eschatology (b6)	1	0	1	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.70	None Tested
Domain 4 Column A	10	4	6	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.52	None Tested
Domain 4 Column B	2	0	2	0	Not Reject Ho P-Value 0.49	None Tested

Group B had significant differences between the otherworldly and this-worldly polarities, with a preference for the otherworldly polarity by both groups. Additionally, Group A has a significantly different mean value for the aggregated Column A for this domain. The findings from the sample sermons stand in contrast with the decisions concerning the otherworldly and this-worldly polarities based on the self-assessments (See Table 12 and Table 13). Based on the self-assessments the H₀ for the polarities for the sample or Group A could not be rejected, but

Chapter 4

that we could reject H_0 for Group B with a preference for the this-worldly polarity. However, based on the prevalence for these polarities in the sermons, the exact opposite decisions are made. For the sample, the otherworldly polarity and the Column A polarities for this domain are favored by the respondents and both groups A and B. For Group A these findings are consistent with the trends based on the self-assessments that did not satisfy the tests for significance. For Group B these findings belie the significant differences based on the self-assessments.

The fifth domain included the polarities that reflected the tension between inward and outward manifestations or concerns of the faith. One of the polarities in this domain would capture if a sermon emphasized what you believe or what you do. Consistent with each of the other domains, the Column A polarities were favored by each of the groups, with Group A generally having significantly more references to the domain's Column A polarities than Group B, and Group B with significantly more references to the domain's Column B polarities than Group A (See Table 33). The significant difference between Group A and Group B for the polarities related to outward engagement of the church, which is essential for social justice as an aspect of ministry, would not be discerned without the domain grouping.

Table 33 Domain 5 Sermonic Polarity Counts and Decisions by Group

		Group A	Group B	Group C	Polarity ANOVA by Groups Decisions	Pairwise t-Test Decisions for Polarities by Groups and Domains
Domain 5	Count	20	39	9		
Priestly (a4)	44	18	21	5	Reject H_0 P-Value 0.017	Reject H_0 Group A and B
Prophetic (b4)	3	0	2	1	Not Reject H_0 P-Value 0.40	None Tested
Worship (a7)	15	5	6	4	Not Reject H_0 P-Value 0.033	Reject H_0 Group A and B
Service (b7)	5	0	4	1	Not Reject H_0 P-Value 0.16	Not Reject H_0 Group A and B or Group A and C
Service to Church (a8)	0	0	0	0	Not Tested, no data	Not Tested, no data
Service to Community (b8)	2	0	2	0	Not Reject H_0 P-Value 0.48	None Tested
Theological Reflection (a11)	4	2	0	2	Reject H_0 P-Value 0.04	None Tested
Ethical Reflection (b11)	1	0	0	1	Reject H_0 P-Value 0.02	Not Reject H_0 between in pairwise t-Test.
Domain 5 Column A	63	25	27	11	Reject H_0 P-Value 0.006	Reject H_0 between groups A and B, and groups C and B
Domain 5 Column B	11	0	8	3	Not Reject H_0 P-Value 0.12	Reject H_0 between groups B and A, but not groups B and C or C and A.

The trend observed with the other domains are evident in this domain as well. The dominance of the Column A polarities across the groups, the tendency for Group A to have a

Chapter 4

stronger preference for the Column A polarities than groups B and C, the tendency for Group B to have a stronger preference (usually only in the aggregate) for the Column B polarities than Group A, with Group C usually in the middle. A conclusion from the review of the prevalence of the polarities in the sermons is that all the groups prefer the Column A polarities and the Column B polarities, if they are present, are generally evident for groups B and C only. This supports the general thesis of this research.

For Group A and Group C respondents the preference for sermon types, inclusion of sermonic references, and the occurrence of polarities were consistent with their survey responses. This was not the case for Group B. This disconnect between the Group B survey responses and the data collected from the Group B sermons is best exemplified by Table 34. It will be observed in Table 34 that when the Group A or Group C respondents indicated a preference for a dialectical polarity, singled by the use of **bold** typeface in the table, that the percentage of sermons reflecting that polarity was greater than or equal to the percentage of sermons reflecting

Table 34 Percentage of Observed Sermons with Polarities and Self-Assessed Polarity Preferences

Data ID	Group	Number of Sermons	Percentage of Sermons Reflecting the Dialectical Polarity					
			Privatistic	Communal	Otherworldly	This-Worldly	Priestly	Prophetic
3	B	1	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
51	A	10	100%	20%	20%	0%	100%	0%
65	C	9	78%	11%	0%	0%	56%	11%
70	A	10	70%	0%	10%	0%	80%	0%
125	B	6	67%	17%	17%	17%	50%	17%
126	B	10	90%	10%	10%	0%	70%	0%
427	B	2	50%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%

the other polarity in the dialectical pair. For example, respondent 51 indicated that he preferred the privatistic polarity to the communal polarity, and the privatistic polarity was manifested in 100% of the sermons by respondent 51 and the communal polarity in 20% of the same sermons. This consistency was not evident for any of the Group B respondents for Column B polarities. Consider respondent 126, who preferred the privatistic polarity, a Column A polarity, to the

Chapter 4

communal polarity, and the ten sermons by respondent 126 reflected that Column A polarity preference. However, respondent 126 also favored the this-worldly and prophetic polarities, which are Column B, but those preferences were not manifested in the sermons by the respondent 126. This dynamic for the discontinuity between the self-assessed preference for Column B polarities by Group B members and the sermonic evidence of those preferences was evident for each of the Group B members. Moreover, this is consistent with the discontinuity between self-assessed preferences for sermon-types and frequency of sermonic references. In short, even if the preachers have a social justice mindset, that mindset is not finding its voice in the preaching. Therefore, I want to provide some recommendations to help recover that voice.

Conclusion

The thesis for this research was that there are sermonic predictors of churches that embraced social justice as an aspect of ministry and those that do not. One of the more obvious sermonic characteristics would be the prevalence of various sermon types. For example, it might be expected that churches that embraced social justice as an aspect of ministry would have more Social Activism sermons than churches that do not. I also expected other types of sermons and sermonic references to be more prevalent in churches that favored social justice as an aspect of ministry than churches that do not. However, the prevalence for dialectical polarities was the primary sermonic characteristics I sought to use as a predictor of a church's orientation to social justice as an aspect of ministry. I postulated that some of the polarities would be more prevalent in the sermons of pastors that favored social justice, both in their Social Activism sermons and in other sermon types as well. Conversely, other polarities would be more prevalent in sermons by pastors that did not favor or that rejected social justice as an aspect of ministry. This expectation was supported by the review of sermons from preachers who are considered paragons of black

Chapter 4

preaching. I categorized the sermons according to Simmons and Thomas' four types, with a few additional subcategories. From the review of these exemplar sermons, I found (1) the Social Activism sermons exhibited specific polarities over others, and (2) for the preachers with Social Activism sermons; their other sermons also exhibited specific polarities.

The review of the self-assessments from the sample population bolstered my expectations for sermonic predictors with respect to the dialectical polarities and tempered my expectations with respect to the types of sermons and sermonic references. Based on the survey responses and the categorization of churches as supporting social justice as aspect of ministry (Group B), not supporting social justice as an aspect of ministry (Group A), or other (Group C); I could affirm the expected proclivity of preference for polarities by the groups but also better understood the tension dynamic of the Lincoln & Mamiya's dialectical pairs. Lincoln & Mamiya's dialectical pairs are not binary, but churches exist along a continuum between the polarities. For any congregation or preacher, a polarity might be dominant, but the expression of either polarity is possible depending on ecclesiastical exigencies. Moreover, from the survey responses it became very evident that the sample population was self-aware of their sermonic priorities, albeit some more self-aware than others. Uniformly the survey sample indicated a prioritization of Cultural Survival sermons, but also demonstrated a consensus that Social Activism sermons were a low priority. The survey data debunked the prevalence of prosperity preaching as even a contributing factor in the observed dearth of prophetic preaching. This research has confirmed my anecdotal observations in 2016, social justice preaching is not a priority in this area. However, I do not believe this assessment is limited to the target population.

If the analysis were restricted to a consideration of the polarities, then two dialectical pairs are most significant. These dialectical pairs are significant because of the relationship

Chapter 4

between the survey data and the sermon observations. First the Privatistic vs Communal dialectical pairs. This dialectical pair had significant differences in preferences for the sample but not by group (See Table 12), and no significant differences in the sermon observations for the sample or within each group (See Table 30). In short, the privatistic tendency is dominant in preference and practice. Second, the Priestly vs. Prophetic dialectical pairs, which had significant differences in the preferences for the sample and within Group A and Group C but not Group B (See Table 12), and significant differences for the polarities in the sermon observations for each group (See Table 33). However, it is the dynamic between the groups for the priestly and prophetic polarities that are evident in the sermons. Between the groups, there is the expected observation of the priestly polarity more frequently with Group A, but not the expected observation of the prophetic polarity more frequently with the Group B (See Table 33). The prophetic preference identified for Group B in the surveys is not evident in the sermons.

The ultimate objective of this project was to get churches more engaged in social justice work. Based on the results of the survey, all the churches believe that local churches are required to address social justice. However, there is discontinuity between this perspective and the actual ministry and preaching practices of the churches. Below are my recommendations to close the gap between the sociological perspectives, the ministry of the churches, and the relevant preaching practices.

Fostering Social Justice Preaching and Social Justice as an Aspect of Ministry

Jonathan Augustine commends the development of a social justice and social activism preaching calendar.²²³ Make a commitment to address a social justice issue at least once a quarter. Once you define a social justice initiative for the church (see below), then you should

²²³ Augustine, 107.

Chapter 4

preach to inspire the work of the church towards that initiative at least once a month. There are several Sundays that provide low hanging fruit to incorporate social justice and social activism themes; these include the Sundays around Earth Day, MLK Jr. birthday, Juneteenth, and Bloody Sunday. Black History Month, Women's History Month, Hispanic History Month, and Asian and Pacific Islander History Month are all occasions to call attention to what needs to be done to achieve greater socio-political-economic equity that reflects a love for one another and a concern for the least of these. The month of June is Pride Month. It might be bridge to far for some churches to openly discuss or affirm LGBTQ+ issues in their congregations. However, this issue should not be ignored. Our culture is dealing with this issue and frequently religion is used as a wedge to promote a hateful agenda. It would be best if words of affirmation were shared from black pulpits. At the very least, black pulpits should repudiate policies and perspectives that mark members of the LGBTQ+ community as sinners. Every church should have a Civil Rights Martyrs Sunday, to remember those people—black and otherwise—who committed their lives in the cause of getting this country to live up to the tenants of its creeds. If, as many African American churches do, we can celebrate Memorial Day and Veterans Day in our churches, then we can certainly set aside a Sunday each year to remember those who sacrificed to make this nation better for all people. These services are an opportunity to pivot from remembering the work of those that came before us to encouraging members to do the same kind of work for those that will come after us. A social justice preaching calendar by itself would provide a dozen opportunities to integrate social justice and social activism sermons into your preaching schedule.

In addition to planned social justice preaching based on a calendar, there are local and national exigencies that provide an opportunity to address social justice or social action issues.

Chapter 4

Stop ignoring these events: school shootings, caravans of migrants approaching the southern border, devastation of a community by a 100-year storm every other year, excessive use of force by law enforcement, and many others. Help shape the thinking of people in your church concerning the events and debates of the day, local and national, by reflecting on them theological and using the preaching moment to exhort them to be a part of the change for a better outcome. From the sermons reviewed for this study, the members of the target congregations got little to now insight on the war between Israel and Hamas, the war between Russia and Ukraine, the appeal of Roe vs. Wade, the failure of the 118th Congress to pass immigration reform, the dismantling of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs, etc. etc. etc., in the sermonic presentations.²²⁴ Not one sermon addressed climate change or environmental justice. If our theology has nothing to say about the most import issues facing society, including believers, then it has nothing to say that is important to society, including believers.

Constructed layered sermons. Begin with a Cultural Survival sermon or even an Affirmative of the Faith sermon to address an issue and the impact it has on the community. Pivot from that initial sermon that introduces an issue to an Empowerment or Social Activism sermon that expresses what the church community or individual believers can and should do about the issue. At the very least, begin to embed empowerment and social action into Cultural Survival sermons, as expressions of faithful living in the present age.

Reconsider preaching practices that suppress social justice and social action. First, read and expound on texts more communally and less individually. Simply put, be intentional about checking the box for Column B communal polarities. Attempt to see all texts though communal

²²⁴ I did not listen to the entire service. It is altogether possible that pastoral remarks or prayers could have been used to reflect on these issues.

Chapter 4

lens, allegorize the texts to the community and use communal examples to explicate the texts. Answer the question-what does this text mean for us together. Move beyond answering the question-what does this text mean for each of us individually. Second, there are some Column A polarities that should never or almost never appear in your sermons if you want to foster social justice and social action. To begin with, a sermon should never affirm a ruling class ideology. In this present age, perhaps during any age, if the ruling class affirms a thing it is *ipso facto* going to justify and perpetuate the marginalization of those who are not part of the ruling class. To parrot ruling class ideologies in a sermon is to support the status quo and hierarchy of human existence, which makes the pursuit of change an affront to that preached word. Accommodation is another Column A polarity that should be witnessed very rarely if ever. If a sermon exhorts the members to accommodate others, within the congregation or in society, based on a love mandate then it is a synonym for the Column B polarity open. If, however, the preached word commends accommodation to oppressive or second-class status as a way of keeping the peace and appeasement, then it should be used with extreme caution. It should never be the case that a person of privilege should recommend accommodation to those who are being marginalized. That is self-serving. It is conceivable that a preacher of an oppressed group could commend accommodation to other members of that oppressed group, strategic accommodation, without acceptance or internalization of the marginalized state, to bide time until a hoped-for change or a better opportunity to resist. Finally, the conservative and closed polarities should be used rarely or very rarely. It is very difficult to be a closed community without othering those being locked out; to lock people out of the fellowship and community usually requires them to be dehumanized and once people are dehumanized then their social justice rights become restricted. Moreover, expressions of being closed are usually value signaling, expressing a lack of love or

Chapter 4

respect for some other who is not even present. A few of the sermons from the sample were preached around Mother's Day, and more than once I heard an announcement restricting the celebration of Mother's Day to real women, with an emphasis that others would not be honored. These comments were completely gratuitous, since it is very unlikely that there were any transgender women in attendance. Likewise, conservative expressions are rarely compatible with the pursuit of social justice. Conservative expressions usually favor maintaining the status quo with the attendant inequalities that keep those who are disadvantaged in a disadvantaged state. For example, one cannot affirm traditional gender roles and at the same time advocate for gender equality and inclusion.

If one is challenged to find her sermonic voice for social justice, then she might begin by doing social justice work. If she does the work, then she will find her voice. Start doing the work and you will become familiar with the issues and facts necessary to inform the people as well as the urgency of the work. Start doing the work and you will receive vision that will demand your voice for the work to be done. Here are three steps to doing the work. To do the work, establish a Social Justice ministry within the church, but do not lead the ministry. Preach a sermon or two and then survey members of the congregation to find those who are interested. Until the pursuit of social justice becomes part of the ethos of the church itself, the social justice ministry will serve as the primary interface to bring issues to the attention of the pastoral and congregational leadership and to identify opportunities for the congregation to collectively pursue a social justice objective. Additionally, or even alternatively, based on a survey of the members, input from a social justice ministry, or a particular interest of the leadership—define an annual social justice theme. The annual social justice theme should include the specific issue, the problem it creates and those impacted, how it is an affront to the Kingdom of Heaven, and what the

Chapter 4

congregation wants to do about it. Include a worship service, perhaps one that features laments concerning the social justice issue and expressions of penitence on behalf of the church or community for the failure to address the issue. The worship service might also include testimony from those impacted by the issue itself. Finally, partner with other faith-based organizations, even other local congregations, or secular organizations, such as the NAACP. Developing a social justice ministry or defining and working on an annual social justice theme will provide inspiration for social justice and social action preaching.

With confidence, I aver that there does not exist a highly regarded book on black preaching that exalts an emphasis on conservative, otherworldly, or personal piety as a model or standard for black preaching. Conversely, all the books reviewed for this research did not fail to mention the necessity of black preaching to be relevant to the black experience. Effective preaching that is relevant to the black experience will inevitably lead people of faith to works that address the evils that perpetuate inequality and injustice.

Actions of Ministers' Conferences and Faith-Based Organizations

As I noted in Chapter 1, ministers' conferences and denominational associations have been integral to the effort of organizing black communities for social change. A primary function for these types of faith-based organizations was to coordinate the efforts of independent communities of faith, especially those that were not part of a connectional polity. Based on this research, there are several things the conferences, such as the BMNVA, should consider doing to encourage member pastors or congregations to embrace the pursuit of social justice as an aspect of ministry. In short, the ministers' conferences should model the activities desired of the local congregations. First, they should themselves establish a robust Civic and Social Action Committee and ask each member congregation to provide a representative. Second, they should

Chapter 4

adopt an annual social justice or social advocacy objective. Third, they should include social justice exhortations as part of their periodic meetings or symposiums.

The ministers' conferences and faith-based organizations can provide lectures or panel discussions to help shape the theological perspectives of their members. Specifically, hold discussions on the mission of the church- Saving Bodies or Saving Souls. It seems evident from the inaugural and ultimate teaching of Jesus that the disciples of Jesus are called to save bodies, to minister to the needs of the least of these so that those are suffering in this world might have hope and based on that hope they might bless God. One might demur that the ministering to the needs of others is limited to charity and helps, and that pursuit of social justice is beyond the charge of the church. Curiously, these objections might also come from those that have advocated for the state to ban abortions and to preserve marriage inequality. I would simply retort, that if it is in the power of the church to influence the government on behalf of the least of these and it does not, then the church does not love the least of these and the church does not know God.

Closing Thoughts

Innovations for this Study

To enable this research, I have proposed the most comprehensive list of dialectical polarities and a grouping of those polarities that can be used not just for an analysis of sermonic practices but the characterization of the sociological, ideological, and theological orientation of churches, especially black churches. Additionally, this study provides an impetus to review the prevalence of the types of sermons preached within the black church today. It is clear to me that Simmons and Thomas' taxonomy is not sufficiently comprehensive. I have proposed a new

Chapter 4

sermon type, Affirmation of Faith, that should be considered as a subcategory of the Cultural Survival sermon type, if not its own category.

Future Study Improvements

There are several improvements that can be made for future studies in this area. First, when both polarities from a dialectical pair are evident, indicate which polarity is dominant. This might require two different counts for each dialectical pair. One count for the presence of each polarity, and another count for which polarity is dominant. Second, be more intentional to observe how a polarity is used. Does a polarity support a main point or is it being used as a foil or strawman. Third, rather than construe from survey responses if a church supports or rejects the pursuit of social justice, based on existence of social justice ministry or engagement in social justice advocacy, simply ask the question. In fact, it might be better to shift from if the church supports to does the preacher whose sermons are observed support social justice as an aspect of ministry. Fourth, this study has validated its thesis; however, there remains the question concerning what drives the preaching practices (especially the types of sermons) in black churches. It was repeatedly demonstrated that support or lack of support for social justice did not control for the self-assessed preferences for preaching practices based on sermon types or sermonic content.²²⁵ Fifth, from the collected survey data I was not able to demonstrate a relationship between preferences for a polarity and the self-assessed prioritization of sermon types. Two options are (a) include all the polarities in the survey or (b) randomly include subsets of the polarities. The advantage of option (a) is that a smaller sample size would be required and the same data is collected for all respondents. The advantage for option (b) is a greater

²²⁵ There were no observed differences in the preaching practices except for dialectical polarities and the inclusion of the Black Experience as a content element. However, with respect to selection of sermon types, no differences were observed.

Chapter 4

probability that the respondents will complete the entire survey. Sixth, expand the scope to review not only what is preached but the songs, prayers, and pastoral remarks. The issues of prophetic preaching and social justice in the church will be recurring subjects for doctoral research, both DMin and PhD. It is hoped that the above recommendations will be considered to improve that research.

Appendices

Appendix A- Description of Exemplar Sermon Sources

Table 35 Description of Sources of the Exemplar Sermons

Collection-Source	Number of Sermon Reviewed	Total in Collection	Description
<i>A model for preaching on contemporary issues to African Americans in the 25-40 Age Group</i>	4	4	DMin. Project that includes sermons from the author that are representative of his research.
<i>A Savior Worth Having</i>	5	12	Sermons by Edward Victor Hill. Hill was featured in several preaching anthologies, such as <i>Preaching with Sacred Fire</i> and <i>Let the Legends Preach</i> . Sermons selected in order of presentation in the book.
<i>Chariots Aflame</i>	7	20	Sermons by Gardner C Taylor. Taylor was widely known as the Dean of black preachers. He was featured in several collections, such as <i>Preaching with Sacred Fire</i> and <i>Power in the Pulpit</i> . Sermons selected in order of presentation in the book.
<i>Let the Legends Preach</i>	10	24	Sermons from the featured preachers from the annual E.K. Bailey Preaching Conference from 1996 to 2019. Only male preachers are included in the collection. Sermons were randomly selected.
<i>Effectiveness In Preaching</i>	4	4	DMin. Project that includes sermons from the author that are representative of his research. Marvin McMickle also wrote <i>Where Have All the Prophets Gone?</i> which provided some of the perspectives of the call for prophetic preacher in the black church.
On-Line- Conservative Minister	1		Intentional review of the sermons by Gee Craig Lewis. Lewis is a well-known critic of the ministries of other well-known black preachers engaged in social justice as well ministries that he considers too secular. His sermons were selected to provide outlier data.
<i>Power in the Pulpit</i>	12	12	Reflections and sermons from male and female African American preachers identified by Cleophus LaRue as effective black preachers. The preachers provide their sermon preparation process, reflections on the preaching moment and purpose, and a sermon that reflects those insights.
<i>Preaching Justice Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives</i>	2		Sermons from a multiethnic group of female preachers. Limited my review to the African American preachers included in the collection.
<i>Preaching on Contemporary Social Issues</i>	4	4	DMin. Project that includes sermons from the author that are representative of his research. The author is Caucasian, and the sermons were not presented in a historically black content.

Appendices

Collection-Source	Number of Sermon Reviewed	Total in Collection	Description
<i>Preaching with Sacred Fire</i>	30	34	Anthology of African American sermons from 1750-XXXX featuring prominent African American preachers from various epochs of American History. The sermons selected are all from the XXXX-YYYY. It includes both male and female preachers.
<i>Prophetic Preaching for a Paralyzed Church</i>	8	8	Sermons by the author that are designed to achieve the objective of the text, inspire the church to get involved in the mission of the church to meet the needs of people.
<i>Rethinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching</i>	4		Sermons from various preachers whom LaRue's program to emphasize the black religious experience in content rather than sermonic performance that leads to celebration apart from theological reflection.
<i>Sermons from the Black Pulpit</i>	13	13	Exemplar sermons by the authors, Samuel DeWitt Proctor and William Watley. The latter was featured in <i>Power in the Pulpit</i> . The former, while not included in <i>Power in the Pulpit</i> , was identified by no less than half of the featured preachers as influential to their homiletic development. The school of theology at Virginia Union University is named in honor of Samuel DeWitt Proctor.
<i>The Heart of Black Preaching</i>	6	7	Sermons included in Cleophus LaRue's study of the essence of black preaching. LaRue provides two sets of sermons, from 19th century preachers and contemporary preachers, that he contends reflects the heart of black preaching by reflecting a foundational theological assertion concerning the sovereignty of God, the black socioeconomic context of marginalization, and the five domains of religious experience. My review was limited to the contemporary preachers.
<i>The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching</i>	3	3	Sermons by Kenyatta Gilbert, author of the book, who is professor of homiletics and the current Dean of the Howard University School of Divinity. The sermons reflect Gilbert's emphasis on the voice of the of the priest, prophet, and sage in African American preaching.
<i>The Sacred Art</i>	1	1	A sermon by a giant in the annals of black preaching, Sandy Ray, that reflects the best of the practice of the sacred art of black preaching.
<i>Those Preaching Women vol 4</i>	4		Sermons from a multicultural collection of women. Limited my review to the woman that were identified as African American
<i>Where Have All the Prophets Gone</i>	1	1	A sermon by the author of the book, Marvin McMickle, that models the desired elements in prophetic preaching.

Table 36 reflects the impact of removing the data for the sermons reviewed from *Prophetic Preaching for a Paralyzed Church*, *Preaching on Contemporary Social Issues*, *A model for preaching on contemporary issues to African Americans in the 25-40 Age Group*,

Appendices

Effectiveness in Preaching, and those of Gee Craig Lewis. None of these sources for sermon data were commended from an authoritative source concerning black preaching. As noted in Table 35 three of the sources are sermons from DMin. dissertations and one is a similarly structured book. Although Marvin McMickle is a widely renowned homiletician, when he *Effectiveness in Preaching* was written he had not achieved the stature of a subject matter expert.

Table 36 Impact of Removing Unvetted Preachers and Sermons

Number of Sermons Reviewed [Change]	No Category Selected [Change]	Social Activism [Change]	Black Identity [Change]	Empowerment: (Communal / Individual / Prosperity) [Change]	Cultural Survival: (Individual Hardship / Emphasis on African American Hardships) [Change]
95 [-22]	4 [-14]	8 [-4]	8 [0]	22 [0] (3 / 21 / 1) [0 /0 /0]	70 [-13] (19 / 4) [-2 / -1]

Removing the unvetted sermons from the data set as the most significant impact on the counts for sermons that were not categorized, 77% reduction, and sermons categorized as social activist sermons, 33% reduction. This suggests that sermons from other unvetted sources, those preached in congregations each Sunday, would not fit nicely into Simmons and Thomas' basic four categories, even the catch all cultural survival.

Appendix B- Categorization of Sermons from *Preaching with Sacred Fire*

Table 37 Categorization of Sermons in *Preaching with Sacred Fire*

Preacher	Sermon	Source Categorization	My Categorization	Performance Emphasized	Sermon Structure
Adams, Charles G.	Chaos or Creation	None	Cultural Survival	Yes-	
Booth, Charles E.	An Uneven Hand	None	Cultural Survival		Yes-Proctor Method
Bowman, Thea	Being a Black Catholic	Black Spirituality → Black Identity?	Black Identity	No	No
Cannon, Katie	Prophets for a New Day	Womanist, Empowerment, Black Identity, Cultural Survival	Social Activism	No	No
Clark, Sr. Caesar Athur Walker	The Worms Got Him	None	Cultural Survival	Yes-folk style	
Coleman, Johnnie	Dear Enemy, I Love You	None (would be Affirmation of Faith)	Cultural Survival; Empowerment-Individual		
Copeland, Claudette	Why Are You Here	Empowerment, Black identity	Empowerment-Individual		
Eikenkoetter, Frederick	Curse not the Rich	Prosperity	Prosperity	No	No
Forbes, James	Good News for the Poor ²²⁶	None	Social Activism	No	No
Gomes, Peter	Outer Turmoil, Inner Strength	None	Cultural Survival	No	No
Hall, Prathia	Between the Wilderness and the Cliff	None	Empowerment-Individual	No	No
Harris, Barbara C	A Circle of Concern	Social Activism	Social Activism	No	No
Hill, E.V.	What you have when you have Jesus	None	Cultural Survival	Yes-Folk	No
Jakes, Thomas Dexter (TD)	No title given	None	None	Yes	No
Jones, Miles Jerome	Dealing with Disciples	None	Cultural Survival	No	No

²²⁶ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 668-69. Provides an insightful overview of Forbes' preaching, emphasizing a balance between priestly and prophetic concerns. Categorizes the preacher but not the sermon.

Appendices

Preacher	Sermon	Source Categorization	My Categorization	Performance Emphasized	Sermon Structure
Jones, William Augustus	An Anatomy of Forgiveness ²²⁷	None	Empowerment-Individual	No	No
McKenzie, Vashti Murphy	Keep the Pressure On	Cultural Survival ²²⁸	Social Activism, Cultural Survival	No	No
Mitchell, Ella Murial Pearson	All Flesh is Eligible	None	Empowerment-Individual	No	No
Morton, Sr. Paul S	The Enemy Inside Your Mind	Cultural Survival or Empowerment ²²⁹	Empowerment-Individual	Yes	No
Moss, Jr. Otis	A Prophetic Witness in an Anti-Prophetic Age	Prophetic	Social Activism	No	No
Murray, (Anna) Pauli	Male and Female He Created Them	Black Identity ²³⁰	Black Identity	No	No
Patterson, Gilbert E.	God's Cure for Racism and Loneliness	None ²³¹	Empowerment-Individual	Style-Pentecostal	
Price, Frederick, K.C.	How God Dee Sees the Races	None ²³²	Black Identity	Style-Word Preaching	
Proctor, Samuel DeWitt	Bottom Line	Social Activism ²³³	Social Activism	No	Yes-Proctor Method
Ray, Sandy	The Testimony of a Towel	None	Cultural Survival	No	No
Sampson, II Frederick G	The Death of Hope	None	Cultural Survival; Empowerment-Individual	No	No
Scott, Manuel	Heavenly Grace and Human Response	None	Cultural Survival; Empowerment-Individual	No	No

²²⁷ “Notes the preacher as Afro-centric, empowerment gospel . . . justice for the oppressed.” *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 746-7.

²²⁸ Not explicitly stated as cultural survival, but described as “addressing some of the pressures they have and what they must do to faithfully meet the challenges,” *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 754.

²²⁹ No explicit categorization was provided, but the description of the sermon as assuring “listeners that they could overcome any obstacle,” could be understood as either cultural survival or empowerment *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 767.

²³⁰ Not explicitly, claiming full humanity. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 783.

²³¹ Notes an emphasis on the issue of racism. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 790.

²³² Notes the focus on racism in the sermon. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 797-98.

²³³ Not explicitly labeled as such, but implicitly in the discussion concerning the focus of the sermon. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 801-2.

Appendices

Preacher	Sermon	Source Categorization	My Categorization	Performance Emphasized	Sermon Structure
Taylor, Gardner C.	His Own Clothes	None	Cultural Survival	No	No
Weems, Renita	Not . . . Yet	None	Cultural Survival	No	No
Williams, Jasper	God at the Midnight Ball	None	Cultural Survival	Yes-Folk	No
Wright, Jeremiah	The Day of Jerusalem's Fall	Afrocentric, Prophetic ²³⁴		No	No

²³⁴ *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, 854.

Appendix C- Sermon Evaluation Form

Church ID:	Date:
Preacher ID:	Time/Length
Text Primary:	Text Secondary
Title:	

Individual Text Communal Text Neither Individual nor Communal

General Sermon Feeling: Exceptional Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Does the sermon address- “How the text speaks directly or indirectly to the struggle of being black in America?” Yes No

Sermon addresses issues that reflect

Social Concerns: Yes No; if yes _____

Racial Concerns: Yes No; if yes _____

Mentions Racism/White Supremacy or the Challenges being Black in America to Illustrate a Point of the Sermon

Categorization of the Preaching

Social Activist- Aimed to induce social activism – one of more of the following Poverty, Racial equality, Gender equality, Peace, Justice, Economics, Environment, other _____

Black Identity- to reconstruct blacks’ humanity, dignity, and self-esteem

Empowerment- to inform the hears that they are empowered to control their destiny

Communal Empowerment Individual Empowerment

Prosperity Preaching- emphasis on the achievement of financial wealth by individuals’

Cultural Survival- equip to believers to live faithfully in this world in accordance with our faith tradition; especially in light of the hardships in this life

Communal Hardship/Suffering Individual Hardship/Suffering

With a particular emphasis on doing so as African Americans

Affirmation of the Faith- what we say about Jesus or God; the Bible; Other

Faith Predication	Related to Category

Appendices

--	--

Major Take-Away / Theme of the Sermon

What Could Have Been Added to the Sermon to Promote Social Activism / Communal Perspective

What Should be Taken Out- What tamps down our undermines the engagement in Social Activism or the Collective Work of the Church

Appendices

Dialectical Elements in Sermon

<input type="checkbox"/>	Communal Emphasis on the importance of our religious beliefs on the impact on the community / The role of the church in the daily lives of the people. ¹⁹¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	Privatistic Emphasis on the importance of our religious beliefs on the impact on the individual/ Emphasis on the individual rather than the community ¹⁹¹
<input type="checkbox"/>	Particularism (Black Cosmos): Emphasis on the history of African Americans in the formation our understanding of God. There is a particular understanding of God for African Americans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Universalism: Emphasis on the biblical account on the formation of our understanding of God- There is a universal understanding of God for all of humanity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other-Worldly / Compensatory Emphasis on the joys and hope for our relationship with God in eternity/ Eschatological and Life Beyond this World ¹⁹¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	This-Worldly / Political Emphasis on the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth- with the hope for social, political, and economic justice in history/ Contemporary and Secular Concerns ¹⁹¹
<input type="checkbox"/>	Priestly Emphasis personal religious practices and spiritual disciplines in the life of the believer / Challenging the individual believers in how they live / Church survival – worship experience ²³⁵	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prophetic Emphasis on impacting the society and addressing problems that impact the lives of people in the community / Challenging the dominant society in how it operates / Political Involvement ¹⁹¹
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accommodation As a minoritized population, how to survive and advance in this society by taking advantage of the opportunities presented and modeling normative behaviors such as hard work and patriotism./ Church or its members in Survival mode ¹⁹¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resistance As a minoritized population, how to carve out a place of security in this society by creating safe spaces and institutions that affirm our culture, traditions, and creating opportunities for advancement./ Church or members in self-determination and independence mode ¹⁹¹
<input type="checkbox"/>	Future Eschatology The hope is in what is to come at the end of history	<input type="checkbox"/>	Realized Eschatology We are living in the Kingdom of Heaven now
<input type="checkbox"/>	Worship Our purpose is to worship God, worship of God is what makes a difference // Worship- praise is the outcome or response	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service Our purpose is to serve- God, each other, our community //Service is our duty
<input type="checkbox"/>	Service in Church The need to participate in and serve this community of faith	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service to Community The need for the church to benefit the community at large
<input type="checkbox"/>	Closed Expression of the church as insular, cut off from, or not accommodating other others	<input type="checkbox"/>	Open Expression of the church as open and affirming, welcoming of other that do not fit the churches current model
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conservative Sermon expresses position on culture war issues that are considered conservative: Pro-Life, Opposed to Marriage Equality,	<input type="checkbox"/>	Liberal Sermon expresses positions on culture war issues that are considered liberal: Pro-Choice, Affirming of Gender Identity, Marriage Equality,

²³⁵ Edmonds, 60-63.

Appendices

<input type="checkbox"/>	Theological Reflection / Doctrine / Dogma / Orthodoxy Sermon expounds theological issues: e.g. Sin as the Human Condition or nature of Man, Trinity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethical Reflection / Orthopraxis Sermon expounds on ethical issues: how we ought to live out this calling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Allegory of the Individual Biblical stories, especially reflections on the Israel or the church, are mapped to the reflections on the life of the individual believer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allegory for the Community Biblical stories, especially reflections on the Israel or the church, are mapped to the reflections on the life of the church or communities of faith
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bible As Authority The sermon emphasizes that the Bible is the ultimate authority on what we know and how we should live; The Bible as the primary way of knowing the nature of God	<input type="checkbox"/>	Experience as Authority The sermon emphasizes the experience with God (inclusive) as the ultimate authority on what we know and how we should live; the indwelling and personal/communal experience with God as the measure
<input type="checkbox"/>	References to Black / Womanist / Liberation / Feminists Theology/Theologians	<input type="checkbox"/>	References to fundamentalist, popular, mainstream, white theologians and scholars
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal Freedom/Salvation The sermon speaks to the individual joy, hope, and peace of deliverance from sin or being saved from condemnation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communal Salvation The sermon speaks to the hope of peace and rest of a community or people that is no longer suffering, present or future.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm Ruling Class Ideologies The sermon recommends or commends ideologies such as: Meritocracy, Gospel of Wealth; Survival of the Fittest, Capitalism; Trickle Down Economics; Law and Order	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rejects Ruling Class Ideologies The sermon rejects or challenges ruling class ideologies and promotes ideologies that are challenge the status quo
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal / Individual Issues Emphasized The sermon uses examples of personal experiences of suffering or victory; individual blessings or hardships	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communal or Social Issues Emphasized The sermon uses examples of communal experiences of suffering or victory; community blessings or hardships

Bibliography

Black Churches and Local Politics: Clergy Influence, Organizational Partnerships, and Civic Empowerment. Edited by R. Drew Smith; Frederick C. Harris. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007.

Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons. Edited by Cleophus J. LaRue. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives. Edited by Christine Marie Smith. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1998.

Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present. Edited by Martha Simmons; Frank A. Thomas. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary. Edited by Brian K. Blount. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Allen, Scott David. *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice.* Credo House, 2020.

Augustine, Jonathan C. *When Prophets Preach: Leadership and the Politics of the Pulpit.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023.

Betz, Hans Dieter. *The Sermon on the Mount Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49).* *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Adela Yarbro Collins. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995.

Braxton, Brad R. *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience.* Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002.

Brown, R. Khari. "Black Churches and African American Opinion on Immigration Policy." In *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights.* Edited by R. Drew Smith. edited by R. Drew Smith. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013.

Brown, Teresa Fry. "An African American Woman's Perspective: Renovating Sorrow's Kitchen." In *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives.* Edited by Christine Marie Smith. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1998.

Cannon, Katie Geneva. *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community.* 25th An ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021.

Chapman, Mark L. *Christianity on Trial: African-American Religious Thought before and after Black Power.* Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006.

Cone, James H. *Black Theology & Black Power.* 50th Anniversary ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2018.

- Cone, James H. *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984.
- Cone, James H. *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*. Vol. I. *The Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion*, edited by James H. Cone. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984.
- Day, Keri. *Unfinished Business: Black Women, the Black Church, and the Struggle to Thrive in America*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. *The Black Christ*. Vol. IX. IX vols. *The Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion*, edited by James H. Cone. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Edmonds, Calvin Christopher. "A Model for Preaching on Contemporary Issues to African Americans in the 25-40 Age Group." Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1994.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.
- Franklin, Robert M. *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *The Negro Church in America*. New York: Schocken Books, 1964.
- Gilbert, Kenyatta R. *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Gore, Karena. "Rekindle in Us a Fire: William Barber's Moral Call to Climate Action." In *Revive Us Again: Vision and Action in Moral Organizing*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
- Hagner, David A. *Matthew 1-13*. Vol. 33a. *Word Biblical Commentary*, edited by David A. Hubbard Bruce M. Metzger, Glenn W. Barker. Nashville: Zondervan, 1993.
- Hagner, David A. *Matthew 14-28*. Vol. 33b. *Word Biblical Commentary*, edited by David A. Hubbard Bruce M. Metzger, and Glenn W. Barker. Nashville: Zondervan, 1995.
- Harris, Frederick C. *Something within Religion in African American Political Activism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Hughes, Richard T. *Myths America Lives By*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- Jones, Miles Jerome. *Preaching Papers: The Hampton & Virginia Union Lectures*. New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1985.
- LaRue, Cleophus J. *The Heart of Black Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

- LaRue, Cleophus J. *Rethinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.
- Lenzen, Cecilia. "Texas Abortion Restrictions." *The Texas Tribune*, June 20, 2022, 2022. <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/06/30/texas-abortion-black-women/>.
- Lincoln, C. Eric, and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African-American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Mazumber, B. "Intergenerational Mobility in the United States: What We Have Learned from the Psid." *Ann Am Acad Pol Soc Sci* 680, a (2018): 213-24. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6820674/>.
- McMickle, Marvin A. "Effectiveness in Preaching: A Study of the Preferences in Sermons and the Influence of Sermons Upon a Black Baptist Congregation." Princeton Theological Seminary, 1983.
- McMickle, Marvin A. *Where Have All the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006.
- Mitchell, Henry H. *Black Preaching*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Morris, Aldon M. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
- Morris, Aldon M., and Shayne Lee. "The National Baptist Convention: Traditions and Contemporary Challenges." In *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times*. Edited by J. R. Nieman D. A. Roozen. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005.
- Moyd, Olin P. *The Sacred Art: Preaching & Theology in the African American Tradition*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary of the Greek Text. The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, edited by I. Howard; Hagner Marshall, David A. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.
- Overman, J. Andrew. *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Paris, Peter J. *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- Patterson, Orlando. *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*. New York: Basic Civitas, 1998.
- Proctor, Samuel DeWitt. *Preaching About Crises in the Community*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.
- Roberts, J. Deotis. *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.

- S.J., Maximilian Zerwick, and Mary Grosvenor. *A Grammatical Analysis of the New Testament*. 5th ed. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2007.
- S.J., Maximilian Zerwick. *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*. Translated by Joseph Smith S.J. Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963.
- Sawyer, Mary R. "Black Ecumenical Movements: Proponents of Social Change." *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 2 (1988): 151-61. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3511352>.
- Smith, R. Drew. "Introduction." In *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*. Edited by R. Drew Smith. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013.
- Steve McCutcheon, Judson L. Jeffries, and Omari L. Dyson. "The Black Panther Party and the Black Church." In *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights*. Edited by R. Drew Smith. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013.
- Taylor, James Lance. "Black Churches, Peoples Temple, and Civil Rights Politics in San Francisco." In *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Board Terrian of Civil Rights*. Edited by R. Drew Smith. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013.
- Taylor, Joel Damon. *Prophetic Preaching for a Paralyzed Church: 8 Sermons That Inspire Social Change*. sermontobook.com: sermontobook.com, 2016.
- Thomas, Frank A. *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.
- Victor, James E. "Fire Shut up in My Bones: Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice in African American Preaching." Wesley Theological Seminary, 2009.
- Walseman, Howard G. "Preaching on Contemporary Social Issues: The Task of Prophetic Preaching in the Church Today." Wesley Theological Seminary, 1980.
- Warnock, Raphael G. *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety and Public Witness*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.
- West, Traci C. "Civil Rights Rhetoric in Media Coverage of Marriage Equality Debates Massachusetts and Georgia." In *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Board Terrian of Civil Rights*. Edited by R. Drew Smith. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.
- Woodson, Carter Godwin. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*: IAP, 2010.
- Yeargin Jr., Grady A. "Reclaiming the Power: Reclaiming the Spirit in the African American Church and Reclaiming Its Voice in the Struggle for Social Change." Wesley Theological Seminary, 2005.

