An Historical and Critical Analysis of Leadership Education of African American Protestant Clergy within University-Based Black Church Studies Programs

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AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP EDUCATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PROTESTANT CLERGY WITHIN UNIVERSITY-BASED BLACK CHURCH STUDIES PROGRAMS

By

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(Order No.        )

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Major Professor: Dana Robert, Truman Collins Professor of
World Christianity and History of Mission

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to reflect on African American clergy leadership
education at university-based seminaries in the United States. It examines the history of African
American clergy leadership education and African American theological reflection that informs
such educational programs. Qualitative data gathered from interviews of persons who have
participated in African American clergy leadership education programs serve as a measure of
program effectiveness by offering crucial information to African American clergy who serve
both church and community. The conclusion of the dissertation offers recommendations for the
development of programs for African American clergy leadership education at university-based
seminaries.
CHAPTER ONE
THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The end of the modern civil rights era of the twentieth century presented an occasion for African American scholars to rethink the role of the academy in the education of African American Protestant clergy. Their scholarship during this period caused both African American seminary students and black clergy to seek theological education specifically designed to address their particular theological worldview. The research of African American scholars in theological and religious studies stirred African American clergy to ponder whether seminaries and theological schools might be the venues for scholars to address the unique functions of African American Protestant clergy in their communal context. In particular, scholars and clergy employed theoretical tools and perspectives in the area of leadership education to investigate the multifaceted roles of African American Protestant clergy in church and society. Leadership education programs in the context of seminaries and theological schools resulted from this investigation.

The project seeks to discover the history, status, and future of African American clergy leadership education in the United States. Specifically, this project offers an extensive literature review of the history of models of clergy leadership education programs for African American Protestant clergy in communities, churches, colleges, theology schools, and seminaries. The review reveals the growth of African American clergy leadership education after the Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century and the resulting development of Black Church Studies programs. Three specific Black Church Studies programs are reviewed: the Black Church
Studies Program at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, New York, the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. This study explores the African American theological scholarship that undergirds programmatic and pedagogical curricula of Black Church Studies programs.

Finally, the project seeks to develop an outline for an African American clergy leadership education program at Boston University School of Theology, a university based seminary. I believe this study offers findings that propose further pedagogical and programmatic development of African American clergy leadership projects in the academy and set the stage for additional research on the efforts of other theological institutions to meet the educational needs of not only African Americans, but also diverse ethnic or racial groups.

The Limitations of the Study

The scope of this research endeavor is limited to research on African American clergy leadership education in the United States. That research consists of the historical exploration of African American clergy leadership education, including the history of the first Black Church Studies program in the United States that engaged in African American clergy leadership education. The study includes the historical review of two university-affiliated Protestant theological seminaries at university related seminaries with Black Church Studies programs engaged in African American clergy leadership. Both of these programs offer a Certificate in Black Church Studies. Research on African American clergy leadership education programs at
freestanding seminaries is not included in this study. The research on African American church based clergy leadership education or denominational clergy has not been pursued.

**Definitions of Terms**

In the course of the thesis, I discuss the history and development of selected theological institutions’ responses to the leadership education needs of African American clergy. Definitions of terms used in this discourse are as follows:

**African American clergy** — The African American clergy population discussed in this paper refers to both those individuals of African descent whose ancestors emerged from the slave trade in the United States and those whose ancestors participated in the African diaspora and who identify themselves as African American.

**African American clergy leadership** — African American clergy leadership is leadership style that has at its core the goal of wellbeing of African American Christians, and members of the greater African diaspora. It promotes for African American clergy knowledge and practices of leadership theory, organizational culture, and economic development expertise so that the African American church thrives in the twenty first century. This style of leadership acknowledges the historical and theological legacy of the African American Church, while facing threats that result in hopelessness in people of the African American diaspora and advocates a vision of the global relevancy of the African American religious experience.
African American clergy leadership education – African American clergy leadership education provides curricula that guide African American clergy in the knowledge and practices of leadership theory for the African American church including research on clergy leadership and ethics, management, administration, and business. It is an interdisciplinary field of study that applies research from a variety of fields such as Social Work, Medicine, and Public Health along with research from Theological Studies to the issues of the African American Church to help African American clergy link church and academy in a partnership for the betterment of the African American Church. The study of African American clergy leadership education involves the history of African American clergy leadership in order to exhibit lessons on leadership from past while equipping African American clergy leaders to guide the church in the present in order to envision a future for the African American Church.

African American church — The African American church comprises those Christian churches that grew out of the worship practices and institution building of African Americans who have faced racism and discrimination in the United States. Often created by enslaved African Americans under duress, these churches have historically been a source of hope and strength for African American communities. In 1990, the late professor C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya co-authored the book *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. They describe seven major historic black denominations: the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated

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(NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) as comprising the African American church. For the purpose of this study, the African American clergy of mainline Protestant churches, such as the United Methodist Church, are also included as members of the African American church. Mainline denominations in the United States have historically developed separate African American congregations within their denominational structures. As segregation ended in these denominations in the middle to latter part of the twentieth century, many African Americans retained their membership in these bodies as African American congregations with African American clergy leadership. Lincoln and Mamiya said of the African American church or black church: "Beyond its purely religious function, as critical as that function has been, the black church in its historical role as lyceum, conservatory, forum, social service center, political academy and financial institution, has been and is for black Americans the mother of our culture, the champion of our freedom, the hallmark of our civilization."² Lincoln and Mamiya’s definition of the African American church most clearly informs this project.

African American Christian clergy — African American women and men ordained as pastors, ministers, elders, or leaders of ministries by Christian denominations, who serve African American Protestant congregations and congregations that may have an African American constituency housed in mainline churches.

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African American theological education — According to Peter Paris, “the educational method that places at its core the religious experience of the African diaspora and African Americans for the purpose of educating persons for Christian ministry and the theological academy. It gives special attention to African Americans and their resistance to discrimination using theological methods that explore the human condition, identified as black liberation theology. African American religious scholars have shaped African American theological education by “their uniform condemnation of racism and, increasingly, their similar condemnation of sexism; and…their mining of the African American experience of suffering, resistance, and hope as a reservoir of theological insight and ethical wisdom.”

Black Church Studies — The study of the relationship between black Christian churches and the world. The field is concerned with the evolution of the Black Church in the United States and its religious activities and practices. In Theological Education and Religious Studies, its interdisciplinary aspects unify to examine the Black Church in light of the academic disciplines of Church History and Mission Studies, Biblical Studies, Ethics, Theology, Sociology of Religion, Pastoral Psychology, Preaching, Worship, Evangelism, Religious Education, Spirituality, and Practical Theology. Developed by African American scholars, Black Church Studies explores the Christian Church as it has evolved in communities that have identified themselves using a variety of terms, such as Negro, colored, Afro American, African American, and Black.

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Historical analysis — The methodology of systematically recording and investigating the structures and values structures of institutions. It is also the investigation of the practices of persons for the sake of accumulating data about their experiences in communities and organizations. For the purpose of this thesis, oral history methodology is used to gather data about the experience of persons in Black Church Studies programs.

The Significance of the Study

The African American clergy population discussed in this paper comprises individuals of African descent whose ancestors emerged from the slave system of the United States of America. These clergy are African American persons ordained by Christian denominations to serve African American Protestant congregations as pastors, ministers, elders, or leaders of ministries. African American Protestant denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), resulted from the courageous leadership of African American clergy. For the purposes of this study, African American members and clergy of the United Methodist Church are included in order to account for their historical membership in the segregated unit of the church, called the Central Jurisdiction, from 1939 to 1968.

African American clergy, as pivotal leaders in the distinct religious communities listed above, made the needs of their congregants and community their paramount concern. The lack of access to basic elements of life, such as food, clothing, healthcare, and shelter, traditionally
hampered African American people. The lack of education, entrepreneurial opportunities, and employment limited the economic growth of many African American communities and threatened to snuff out the hope of many people in the community. Often African American clergy were the primary advocates for responding to the needs of those men, women, and children who found that the legacy of disenfranchisement continued to dictate unfortunate circumstances in their lives.

African American Protestant denominations needed to develop African American clergy leadership to respond adequately to the pressing needs of their constituents. To effect this change, African American Protestant denominations promoted training for their clergy. During the postbellum period and the decades of the nadir of racial discrimination, known as the Jim Crow era, when African Americans were persecuted because of their race, educational opportunities for African Americans were sparse. For those aspiring to lead African American congregations, opportunities for clergy training that led to ordination were limited primarily to church-based training programs. Recommended educational objectives and training guidelines for clergy leadership were documented in such church publications as handbooks and pamphlets. Senior clergymen often mentored African American aspirants, helping them to learn the fundamentals of African American church leadership. In these relationships, senior clergymen not only taught younger men the rudiments of theology, preaching, and administration, but also instructed them in local and race politics. These latter lessons would assure the survival of a church and community under the oppressive pressure of racism and discrimination.

During the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods in the United States, educational opportunities for African American clergy became more accessible. African American men might attend preparatory schools, educational institutes, or night schools where
theology was taught, but the academic quality of these courses of study was uneven. In 1867, African Americans could attend classes for the preparation of clergy at the newly founded Augusta Institute in Atlanta, which later became Morehouse College. Other theological training programs, developed by African Americans at Gammon Theological Seminary, Tuskegee Institute, Lincoln University, Wilberforce University, Virginia Union University, Stillman University, Bishop Payne Divinity School, Livingstone College, Talladega College, Shaw University, Paine College, and Biddle University, would emerge later in the nineteenth century. These institutions gained prominence as educational opportunities because mainline seminaries restricted admissions for African Americans due to racism and the practice of segregation.

A few African Americans did gain access to institutions such as Boston University and other mainline seminaries to acquire degrees. However, the majority of African American Protestant clergy would continue to be taught in institutes, colleges, and seminaries developed by African Americans. In spite of the continuing increase in opportunities for clergy education, Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson contended in their book *The Negro’s Church* that, in 1934, “80 percent of the urban pastors were not college trained, and 86.6 percent lacked a bachelor of divinity degree.”

In the mid-twentieth century, due to civil rights activity and legislation that thwarted discrimination, African Americans who wished to enroll in predominantly white colleges and universities found themselves as students in these mainline classrooms. Lincoln and Mamiya believe that “desegregation of public education and other social changes which…occurred in the

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black community since the Depression” contributed to this increase in educational aspiration. With both the increasing visibility of African American Protestant clergy during the latter period of the modern civil rights era (1954–1975) and the removal of racial enrollment restrictions in seminaries, African American clergy pressed for educational models in seminaries that would strengthen them for leadership in African American communities throughout the United States.

In spite of the academic opportunities that emerged with access to higher education and African American church-based programs for theological training for clergy leadership, African Americans lagged in pursuit of theological education. Lincoln and Mamiya note that the low numbers of educated black clergy remained a factor into the 1980s. As a result, theological schools and seminaries that offered programs focusing on short-term leadership education experiences for African American Protestant clergy became important resources.

In an effort to identify and serve the critical needs of this clergy group and the communities they represented, seminaries throughout the United States began collaborative programs in the 1970s. The first efforts by these institutions came in the form of informal dialogue between African American scholars and clergy. These conversations led to workshops, small group meetings, seminars, and course offerings. African American scholars and others began to enter into partnerships with African American Protestant clergy and their congregations. Partnerships with African American clergy in response to their educational and research needs often increased the curricular strengths of the seminaries engaged in the collaboration, an important advantage often overlooked.

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6 Ibid., 129.
7 Ibid.
Specialized academic tracks and certificate programs were created, designed to address the specific needs of African American Protestant clergy. Many African American clergy benefited from participation in such programs. The African American communities at large also profited from the additional skills, knowledge, and information made available to the clergy in these programs. In their research reports, Lincoln and Mamiya indicate “the most creative and innovative forms of ministry are being carried out by the better educated black clergy at large urban churches. They are also more aware of both the internal needs of their congregations [and] the external needs in their surrounding communities.” Based on available data regarding seminary programs for African American clergy and significant scholarly research, the period and context for this study focuses on two university-affiliated leadership education programs for African American clergy in the South established between 1969 and 1990. Focusing the study on these years allows the investigation of a twenty-year development history of leadership education programs for African American Protestant clergy.

Eight seminaries in the United States currently offer leadership education programs for African American clergy: Duke Divinity School, Candler School of Theology, Vanderbilt Divinity School, Brite Divinity School, Colgate Rochester Seminary, Fuller Theological School, Louisville Seminary, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For this study, I selected the programs at Vanderbilt Divinity School at Vanderbilt University and the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Both are university-affiliated seminaries and similar in structure.

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8 African American clergy must be aware of the needs of both their internal communities and external society. Richard B. Freeman, in his *Black Elite: The New Market for Highly Educated Black Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 27–40, used considerable space to argue this point.

9 Lincoln and Mamiya, 399.
to the Boston University School of Theology. Each program offers certificates in Black Church Studies and promotes leadership education programs for African American clergy.

I also chose Vanderbilt Divinity School at Vanderbilt University and Candler School of Theology at Emory University as study subjects because of their location in the southern United States, a critical geographical region in relation to the modern civil rights movement. In addition, over the years these two programs have employed a critical mass of African American scholars who guided the programs at their respective institutions.

My study documents some of the efforts made by the two selected theological institutions to respond to the varied leadership education needs of African American clergy. The information presented here highlights the historical significance of their methodologies, programming efforts, and contributions. In addition, this study is designed to provide a new academic resource specifically targeted at those individuals currently involved in African American clergy leadership education.
CHAPTER TWO

MODELS OF CLERGY LEADERSHIP TRAINING
IN AMERICAN PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS:
AN HISTORICAL REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter explores the history of African American churches and their allies in the development of clergy leadership training and education in the United States. It briefly documents the evolution of clergy leadership training and education in the United States, including the development of seminary education. Finally, it focuses on the efforts of African American Christian denominations that built alliances with others to create opportunities for clergy leadership training and education for African American clergy.

The Quest for Education through Literacy

When African Americans in slavery in the southern United States learned in 1863 that President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation had liberated them, one of the first things they sought to acquire with their newfound freedom was an education. They did not desire just any kind of education; they wanted to be a truly literate people. Prior to emancipation, African Americans (under the restrictions of slavery) were denied opportunities to learn how to read and write and were punished if they did. Any learning that took place was focused on improving manual labor skills to make the slave owner’s household more profitable. Any learning that took place was focused on manual labor that would make the business enterprise of the slave owner profitable. In every state of the South, African Americans were limited in their
ability to access academic knowledge and literacy. Reinforced southern slave codes made it illegal in many states to teach African Americans to read or write. Under southern slave codes, African Americans were systematically punished for attempts to read or write. Only the most rudimentary mental skills, such as basic counting or reading labels, might be permitted in order to carry out a task for an owner—unless, of course, the owner could profit!

Slave owners were also reluctant to educate slaves in light of a few noteworthy slave revolts attempted in the South. They knew of two literate African American men—Demark Vesey and Nat Turner—who used their skills to support slave rebellion. Vesey had some degree of literacy as a carpenter and founded an AME church in Charleston, South Carolina where literacy was esteemed.\(^\text{10}\) Vesey’s planned 1822 revolt was suppressed because another slave revealed his plan to white slave owners.

Nat Turner was taught to read by his parents and read the Bible fervently. Inspired by messages that he believed came from God, Turner led his revolt in August 21, 1831 and helped to kill slave owners and their families. When Turner was incarcerated, Turner engaged in conversations with lawyer Thomas R. Gray about his acquisition of literacy.

The manner in which I learned to read and write, not only had great influence on my own mind, as I acquired it with the most perfect ease, so much so, that I have no recollection whatever of learning the alphabet--but to the astonishment of the family, one day, when a book was shewn me to keep me from crying, I began spelling the names of different objects--this was a source of wonder to all in the neighborhood, particularly the blacks--and this learning was constantly improved at all opportunities …whenever an opportunity occurred of looking at a book, when the school children were getting their lessons, I would find many things that the fertility of my own imagination had depicted to me.\(^\text{11}\)


Thomas R. Gray published the conversations he had with Turner in 1831 under the title *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the leader of the late Insurrection in Southampton, Va.* The publication of the book in 1831 confirmed to slave owners that literacy for slaves led to rebellion, especially if that rebellion was fueled by religious instruction. Laws were passed in the south to prohibit slave gatherings lest there be an opportunity for them to plot an uprising in their gatherings for worship. “South Carolina passed a law aimed at preventing …gathering for the purpose of mental instruction or religious worship between sunset and sunrise.”

There were some exceptions to such restrictions, instigated by sympathetic slave owners or their families. Sometimes, slaves acquired literacy from the children of slave owners who taught them how to read and write for their own amusement. In other cases, “masters’ wives, inspired by evangelical Christianity, took it upon themselves to teach slaves to read.”

Slaves also acquired literacy in more discrete ways. Rudimentary skills often could be acquired in secret meetings held at night, teaching one another the alphabet and some basic biblical texts. Slaves who managed to acquire reading or writing skills were often severely punished when discovered. In other words, slaves sought to acquire literacy even at the cost of their own safety. They pursued literacy because they understood the power of being able to read and write. They could see that contracts, bills of sale, books, and ultimately, the Bible, contained information about how a life could be lived beyond the bonds of slavery.

With emancipation, the acquisition of literacy became a major concern for African American people. Learning to read and write became critically important for several powerful reasons:

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12 Sennett, *African American Religious History*, 89.

Most freed people regarded literacy and schools as a pathway to freedom. Becoming literate proved to be as much a psychological victory for many freed people as it was an intellectual one. Illiteracy was a vestige of slavery, a reminder of the blatant denial of one’s rights to self-advancement; it served as a badge of inferiority and social impotence. African Americans understood that to become literate challenged this status. “

African Americans wanted access to all that had been denied to them.

African Americans also aggressively pursued literacy because they wanted to read the Bible. During the antebellum era, slave owners tightly controlled Bible reading, religion, and theology in order to keep slaves in their place as servants. The theology of the slave church as constructed by slave owners was that of subservience to human masters as a part of subservience to God. Preachers hired by slave owners to preach Christian services for slave populations offered only the texts and teaching of the Bible supporting these claims.

Soon, however, slaves with limited literacy and some exposure to Christian teachings that included texts on freedom, a God of justice, and subservience only to God, found that they themselves had to function as preachers who would willingly preach about liberation from slavery. Even as they were constrained by limited resources, those same early slave preachers became the ministers and leaders that African American people depended upon as they emerged from slavery and began to build the institution that would support their quest for a full and free life for themselves and their children: the African American church.

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African American Clergy and Early Educational Efforts, 1863–1866

African American clergymen became the leaders in the African American church. Because they performed a number of roles in the community, a major investment was made in their education, as African Americans developed their churches. It appears that African American clergy pursued literacy with zeal.

Literacy was, thus, the first step in the religious and theological education of many African Americans. In some ways, this was not unique in Southern experience. For Methodists in the South, basic literacy was the entrance requirement for the denomination’s Course of Study, a carefully selected series of readings that gave a minister a well-rounded education. Southern Baptists were less structured, and the denomination provided fewer informal means of such study.\(^{15}\)

African American clergy who wanted to be literate found support from other African American clergy, barely literate themselves. “Even if the minister had little or no formal schooling, he wanted people to rise higher than he had.” This was critically true of African Americans “who laboriously educated themselves by reading whatever they could acquire—as it was of many self-educated Southern white Baptist and Methodist ministers.”\(^{16}\)

As African American clergy sought education in the post-slavery era, they went into the same classrooms as African American children, women, and men. “They went to the schools and classrooms built in churches. There were several reasons for this. The churches were…crucial as places where schools and Sunday schools could be held.”\(^{17}\) Children who could attend day school often taught ministers who could not attend school. “Carolyn Walker Walton’s family

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\(^{16}\) Miller, *Piety and Profession*, .

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
regularly sent her to read the text from the Bible to the Negro preachers.”\textsuperscript{18} According to Walker Walton, “most of the Negro preachers...didn’t even know how to read. It was my job to help them to read.”\textsuperscript{19} Once preachers memorized their text however, they could preach to their congregations.

The African American church in the South, specifically the African Methodist Episcopal Church, established in Philadelphia in 1787, encouraged its clergy to use church-related education programs in an effort to educate its clergy in the southern context in which education for African Americans was restricted. Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne of the African Methodist Episcopal Church encouraged ministers and adult learners to seek educational opportunities. Payne said, “To the adults we say, enter the Sunday Schools and the Night Schools...In these latter you shall very soon learn to read the precious Word of God.”\textsuperscript{20} Those African Americans who were “anxious to hold onto leadership roles within communities and intent on becoming literate...attended day schools and formed separate night classes, precursors of a sort of theological seminaries to African Americans.”\textsuperscript{21}

Bishop Payne supported the acquisition of college education by clergy who could gain access to such. With a major effort by Payne, the AME Church established Wilberforce College in Ohio. The political climate in Ohio, with its support for the freedom of African Americans through the presence of the Underground Railroad, opened opportunities for the establishment of Wilberforce in 1856 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, North. When the college failed in 1862,

\textsuperscript{18} Williams, \textit{Self-Taught}, 172.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Sernett, \textit{African American Religious History}, 234.
\textsuperscript{21} Williams, \textit{Self-Taught}, 170. See also, American Missionary Association, \textit{The American Missionary} (January–April 1867), 89–90.
Payne negotiated the purchase of the college for the AME Church, which successfully reincorporated the institution in 1863 during the Civil War. Bishop Payne would serve as its first president.

The Missionary Associations and the Education of African Americans

Ministers found opportunities to educate themselves through the many mission societies that moved into the South after the Civil War and the emancipation of African Americans. One of these organizations was the American Missionary Association (AMA).

The American Missionary Association became “an organization dedicated to the removal of caste wherever its sins are found. Its missionaries served both in the United States and abroad, and by 1860, it was the second largest missionary society in the United States.”22 Under the direction of like-minded Christians, the AMA grew in its work as an abolitionist group. Seeing the overwhelming needs of African Americans in the South, AMA missionary teachers moved into the region as early as 1861. By the end of the Civil War, adults and children were taught together in the same classrooms or Sunday school sessions. They provided religious instruction because one of their major texts was the Bible. The U.S. government’s Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands joined them in their educational effort on behalf of African Americans.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands—referred to as the “Freedmen’s Bureau”—provided teachers and rented school buildings in the South to educate freedmen. The instruction and curricula in these schools depended upon northern women and

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men who bravely faced threats from southern whites and the Ku Klux Klan. They often labored without adequate funds for their livelihood or school supplies. Nevertheless, many of these teachers remained faithful to their work with African American people seeking literacy. The work of the Freedmen’s Bureau paralleled with great success the work of the mission societies. “Under the leadership of General Oliver Holmes, an active Congregationalist with ties to the AMA, the bureau established more than three thousand schools by 1869.”

Other mission societies soon joined the AMA in educating newly emancipated African Americans. The American Baptist Home Missionary Union used the foreign mission models of its sister organization, the American Baptist Missionary Union, to educate African Americans in southern regions. These missionaries used the term “native ministry” to refer to their mission model with African Americans, a term used in foreign missions. The foreign missionary model had a foundational premise that the people exposed to its guidance could obtain great educational achievement. In an effort to reach as many African Americans as possible, the organization kept its focus on educating African American ministers, even though a school for preachers in Richmond, Virginia had failed. Not daunted, the American Baptist Home Missionary Union continued administering its existing schools in thirteen southern cities, “since intelligent pastors and evangelists [were] the great need of…colored churches.”

Other mission organizations, such as the Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen, also worked to educate the newly freed slaves.

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23 Ibid., 357.
The Establishment of Colleges for African Americans

African Americans gradually demonstrated that they could acquire learning that took them beyond the various spellers and elementary texts. The educational institutions that were created for African Americans were classified as “normal schools” and colleges. Normal schools were teacher-training institutes that were little more than preparatory schools that taught high school level skills. Colleges usually had stronger curricula that included classical education in the liberal arts. In the post-Reconstruction South, mission societies and churches created normal schools and colleges for African American students staffed by white teachers who labored to bring educational freedom to a people hungry for knowledge.

The need for education outpaced the ability to provide it, however. “African Americans and white missionary leaders both realized that unless significant numbers of African American teachers could be found, most people of color would remain untaught.”25 Churches and mission societies established schools to train African American teachers to work in conjunction with and independently of white counterparts. The AMA founded Tougaloo College, Hampton Institute, and Talladega College as normal schools. In 1867, the AMA launched Straight University with multiple departments, including a law school and an art school. The Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen founded Knoxville College, Slip–on Seminary, and Johnson C. Smith University.26 The American Baptist Home Mission Society founded Benedict College, Bishop College, Morehouse College, Shaw University, Spelman Seminary, and Virginia Union University.27 The Methodist Episcopal Church founded Bennett College, Clark University, Clark University,

26 Ibid., 367.
27 Ibid.
Claflin College, Meharry Medical College, Morgan College, Philander Smith College, Rust College, and Wiley College. As African American churches gained organizational strength, they began to establish colleges as well. They established Paul Quinn College and Allen University in South Carolina in 1881, Morris Brown College in 1884, Edward Waters College in 1888, Shorter College and Kittrell College in 1886, Payne University in 1889, Turner College in 1890, and Lampton College in 1911.

Spelman College, initially called the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, developed from a school in the basement of the Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Morehouse College was first established as the Augusta Institute and was housed in the oldest African American church in Atlanta, the Springfield Baptist Church. Both are examples of how the African American community moved its educational programs out of the churches and into colleges.

As these educational institutions matured over time, they developed stronger curricula. “In the early 1870s and 1880s, they began to develop collegiate departments and to encourage their brighter students to complete the full college course.” The promotion of a classical curriculum that included Latin, Greek, and mathematics was encouraged in these colleges so that they mimicked the curricula of white institutions of the day. Students felt that “without this [type of] education, they would never have the requisite conceptual equipment for their proper role as vanguard of their people.” The desire for this type of education was rooted in the quest to identify with educated white people, who labeled classical education as a mark of elite culture,

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Barry Strauss, “The Black Phalanx: African Americans and the Classics after the Civil War,” Arion 12, no. 3 (Winter 2005), 47
advanced learning, and superior manhood in the United States. In spite of the rigor of the curricula, these colleges had African American students with a wide variety of skills. However, these colleges “had only a handful of students in the more advanced programs with the bulk of the students in the various preparatory departments.”

The Development of Theology Departments in African American Colleges

African American colleges eventually established theology departments. Theology departments educated some students “with a common school education, some that were doing college work…and perhaps a handful who had finished college.” The colleges handed out certificates and diplomas to the less able students while reserving advanced bachelor of divinity or bachelor of theology degrees for students based on the number of years of college completed.

As the quest for education continued, mission societies and various religious denominations began to establish colleges with stronger curricula for the education of African Americans, in spite of the prevailing notion that African Americans could not and should not be educated. As the pressures to educate African Americans accelerated, denominational groups launched seminary programs and strengthened departments of theology for African American clergy. The mix of church-based courses of study for clergy, the development of theological departments in colleges, and the development of seminaries gave the African American churches in America mechanisms for promoting leadership education for African American clergy.

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33 Ibid 368.
African American denominations took on their responsibility for that education in a variety of ways that paralleled white seminaries in the United States.

The Development of Clergy Education Training in White American Protestant Denominations

Prior to the development of seminaries in the United States, those aspiring to be clergy were guided into ministry by "reading divinity.” Reading divinity “utilized at one time or another in all major denominations, was a type of ministerial apprenticeship.” The “reading divinity” apprenticeship involved three methods of education for the aspirant. One method was to have the student live and study with a pastor while reading a prescribed list of books in theology, biblical studies, and philosophy. After the student mastered the texts assigned, “he also had to write about and discuss his own responses with his instructor. In this process, he learned something about rhetoric as well as theology.” In addition, clergy were subject to training that engaged them in “learning by observation and through coaching from their more experienced colleagues.” Methodists used this educational method in their training of clergy following the example of the founder of Methodism, Rev. John Wesley. “From the beginning, Wesley had placed a premium on encouraging his preachers and people to read, and literacy remained an

35 Robert W. Lynn, "Notes toward a History: Theological Encyclopedia and the Evolution of Protestant Seminary Curriculum, 1808–1968,” *Theological Education* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1981), 120.
36 Lynn, “Notes toward a History,” 74.
important part of the Methodist experience.”37 The value of peer learning was also encouraged as “younger itinerants also evaluated and encouraged each other.”38

A second method of educating those seeking the ministerial vocation was to have students spend another year in college studies. The additional year was spent under the tutelage of a college president or teacher of divinity who selected texts to enlighten his students. On the western frontier and in the rural areas of the United States, the third method for educating ministers was to train them in a small group and have them examined by a church body. “Regions found it necessary to educate their own candidates rather than risk the expense and danger of sending them away for college…. [The] interim solution was a carefully organized program of “reading divinity.”39 The Presbytery of Concord, North Carolina, used this method and recorded in its 1917 minutes that it expected a candidate to exhibit a “satisfactory examination on the whole series of Languages and Sciences…the Confession of Faith…History of the Christian Church…a Latin exegesis…English Grammar and Rules of Oratory.”40

Reading divinity often proved to be an uneven educational method, however. Tutors, pastors, and scholars often developed varied curricula for aspiring clergy due to loyalty to specific theological schools of thought and group allegiances in denominations. The conflict of standards moved theological education for ministry toward seminaries. As churches built seminaries, they sought to develop curricula that would wed clergy to specific church doctrines and the mission of the representative body. “The founders of early seminaries were motivated by

38 Wigger, Taking Heaven by Storm, 75.
39 Lynn, “Notes toward a History,” 120.
40 Ibid., 120–21.
a threefold objective: The supply of ministers who by common education would share a common doctrinal stance, a commonality of affection for one another and a common zeal for the evangelistic mission of the church.\textsuperscript{41}

Seminary education was introduced in the United States with the establishment of Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, in 1808. “When Andover opened its door, there were three full-time professors on hand” to teach students critical literature and skills for ministry.\textsuperscript{42} Princeton Seminary of New Jersey was founded in 1812 with only one faculty person leading the school. Eventually, three other men guided its curriculum. Both institutions had the same curricular structure that involved “a three-year academic program, a resident faculty of three or more, an institution independent of the colleges and designed for the post-collegiate training of clergy.”\textsuperscript{43} Other seminaries developed by following the same curricular structure. Mainline church clergy education and training in the United States in the nineteenth century alternated, for a considerable time, between the two poles of “reading divinity” and institution-based theological education.

Institutions of higher education with theological departments and theological schools that served African Americans were scarce. Discrimination kept most African Americans locked out of mainline Protestant seminaries. In addition, the lack of opportunities for African Americans to acquire literacy kept many aspiring clergymen out of any institutions that might offer them a theological education. African American candidates for Christian ministry did not have the leisure of “reading divinity” with a college president or professor. Nevertheless, the African

\textsuperscript{41} Gilpin, \textit{A Preface to Theology}, 37.
\textsuperscript{42} Lynn, “Notes toward a History,” 122
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 118.
American churches in need of educated clergy leaders supported candidates who could make their way to a campus where some kind of instruction in theology was offered. Those men who could not acquire education for ministry at an institution turned to the African American church for clergy leadership education.

**African American Churches and Clergy Leadership Education, 1787–1870**

The historical African American churches—that is, those founded by African Americans either as independent bodies or from fragments of larger white denominations—all labored to develop leadership education programs to strengthen their clergy. The denominations that evolved and developed such programs were the African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and the African American Baptist Church.

Since access to literacy and clergy education was always a concern for the African American community, many African American clergy were approved to preach and lead a church after a congregation had examined their character. Mentors educated trainees by guiding them in apprenticeships and teaching skills in the local church. In addition, the denominational groups that constituted the African American church offered clergy leadership education to ministers. The education of clergy was particularly critical in the African American community, because the clergy were at the forefront as community leaders.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was born after a clash at St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, between Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and other African American congregants. Allen, a slave born in 1760, converted to
Methodism, finding attractive the Methodists’ crusade against slavery. As a freed man, Allen became a member of St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church and began preaching in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1786. An altercation that prompted Allen to leave St. George’s took place on a Sunday morning in 1787. Allen wrote:

A number of us usually attended St. George’s Church on Fourth Street; and when the coloured people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall, and on Sabbath morning we went to church and the sexton stood at the door, and told us to go in the gallery. He told us to go, and we would see where to sit….We took those 200 seats. Meeting had begun, and they were nearly done singing, and just as we got to the seats, the elder said, let us pray...We had not been long upon our knees before I heard considerable scuffling and low talking. I raised my head up and saw one of the trustees...having hold of the Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling him up off of his knees, and saying, “You must get up. You must not kneel here.” Mr. Jones replied, “Wait until prayer is over.” Mr. H. M. said no, you must get up now, or I will call for aid and force you away. Mr. Jones said, “Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more.” With that, he beckoned to one of the other trustees, Mr. L. S., to come to his assistance. He came, and went to William White to pull him up. By this time, prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church.  

Allen and many African American members of St. George’s Church left the church after the insult of not being allowed to pray in peace because of the racism and resulting discriminatory practices of the congregation. Allen was disturbed because he and other African Americans had invested themselves and their funds in this Methodist congregation. He moved on, however, determined to create a new way forward to serve God without insult. “For black Philadelphians, race-based deference had seen its final days...In leaving segregated St. George’s

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and building a black church, Allen knew that no church doctrine had been breached—only the custom of racial exclusion.”

As a licensed exhorter in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen established the Free African Society in April 1787 with the help of Absalom Jones, and by the 1790s, the new group had grown in membership. Allen and Jones co-led the group, “soliciting subscriptions to build a meeting house, but with the intention of remaining under the jurisdiction of the Methodist Church.” When the Methodist Church rejected their proposal, members of the society voted to affiliate with the Church of England. In 1816, Allen led a fragment of that group, along with other fledging African American Methodist church bodies, to organize a new Methodist Episcopal church in Philadelphia. At the meeting, Richard Allen was elected bishop of the newly named African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

From the beginning, education was a critical part of the agenda of the AME Church. Allen helped start the African Society for the Education of Youth in 1804. He may have felt a deep empathy for those who wanted education because he had never attended school himself and likely learned to read the Bible in the Methodists’ classes and society meetings. Yet he owned several Bibles and at least two scholarly books: *Expository notes, with practical observations upon the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* by Thomas Burkitt and *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* by Thomas Scott.

That legacy of literacy from Richard Allen was not forgotten. In a statement from the Quadrennial Conference of 1864, AME Bishop William P. Quinn informed the church that it

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could not neglect the pursuit of education. Quoted in Lincoln and Mamiya, Quinn states, “We assure you, dear brothers, this is no time to encourage ignorance and mental sloth; to get to the ranks of the ministry, for the education and elevation of millions now to issuing out of the house of bondage, require men not only talented but well educated.”\(^{48}\) Despite a desire for its ministers to leave illiteracy behind, the AME Church and its ministers had to face the challenges that prohibited African Americans from obtaining an education, namely discrimination and limited access to educational resources. As a result, the AME Church often allowed African American clergy, after a period of mentoring, to preach and lead a church once a congregation had examined their character. Nevertheless, there was always a drive in the AME Church to offer clergy more than just mentoring.

Daniel Payne, a future AME bishop, made education a major component of his legacy in the church. In 1842, he instituted clergy education for small groups of AME ministers under his leadership in Washington, DC. “Weekly training classes were held and ministers encouraged in building libraries containing the Bible, a Bible dictionary, pictures, maps, psychology books, and books from other liberal arts subjects.”\(^{49}\)

Payne required a course of study for AME ministers. His *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*\(^{50}\) outlined a course of study for exhorters and preachers in the AME Church that “included two years of study for the former and four years for the latter, involving grammar, geography, Methodist history, Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament*, British and

\(^{48}\) Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 53.


American theological works (Payley, Watson), homiletics, church history, and Biblical studies. Payne followed the tradition of theological education initiated in Britain by the founder of Methodism John Wesley by having his ministers read Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes*. This text, along with William Paley’s *Natural Theology*, was used as British Methodists established clergy education institutions in 1834. American clergy followed suit, making Watson’s work a standard element in clergy leadership education of the time.

Payne engaged in a battle with those who resisted his model of institution-based clergy education, even as he rose to the rank of bishop in the AME Church. He persisted in his goals, helping to establish Wilberforce University in Ohio in 1856. The AME Church heeded Payne’s charge to maintain Payne Theological Seminary as a part of Wilberforce. However, Payne and the AME Church were not alone in promoting institution-based theological education. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church also established educational programs for clergy.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was established as a denomination in New York in 1821. Prior to that date, the African American members of the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church had decided to withdraw from the Methodist Episcopal Church because of the denomination’s reluctance to allow African American clergy to itinerate or to be ordained as elders. The failure of the Methodist Episcopal Church to ordain African American men for the ministry was a point of tension for its African American members. They wrestled with the fact

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52 Dale A. Johnson, “The Methodist Quest for an Educated Ministry,” *Church History* 51, no. 3 (September 1982), 312.

53 Johnson, “Methodist Quest,” 304.
that African Americans made up almost half of the church’s membership based on the
calculation that “by 1793…the proportion of black members had risen to over 40 percent.”  

In 1796, African American members of John Street Church moved to a cabinetmaker’s
shop to hold their own worship services. By 1800, a new chapel was built for the group, and by
1801, the chapel was formally incorporated in New York as the African Methodist Episcopal
Church [called Zion]. Even so, white ordained clergy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who
were needed to administer the sacraments, supervised the new church. Eventually, the chapel
membership grew into a larger congregation, establishing links with other African American
churches. By 1824, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church separated from the Methodist
Episcopal Church and elected James Varick as its bishop. The AME Zion Church grew
considerably in the South after the American Civil War.

Early in its history, the AME Zion Church made ministerial education a priority, thereby
mimicking the priority established for an educated clergy of the Methodist Episcopal Church and
the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The minutes of the 1850 Philadelphia Annual
Conference of the AME Zion Church recorded the requirements for ministers joining the
conference. “[E]ach preacher after joining the Annual Conference shall, in the first year, study
Porter’s Homiletic and Homes Introduction and on the second year, he shall study Wesley’s
Sermons, [and] Mosheim’s Church History.”  

The New York Conference of the AME Zion Church also set up its own requirements for clergy. They stated, “It shall be the duty of each
minister in charge to inform each preacher who proposes to join the conference that he shall
procure and study the Bible and our discipline, English Grammar, Watts on the Mind, and Mason

54 Lincoln and Mamiya, The Black Church, 56.
55 David Henry Bradley, A History of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Vol. II (Nashville, TN: Parthenon Press,
1970), 65.
on Self Knowledge, anterior to his joining the Conference.” 56 Annual conferences also held educational sessions for ministers, making them “in essence Theological Schools, as they were the only means available for the training of the ministry.” 57 Conference-based clergy leadership education in the AME Zion Church continued until the Nineteenth Quadrennial of the church in 1892.

In the minutes of the Nineteenth Quadrennial Session of the AME Zion Church held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1892, the Board of Bishops proposed the development of “a Preacher Institute.” 58 Among the major goals for this teaching component of the church was to help ministers “to pursue a course of instruction or reading for the purpose of cultivating their moral, spiritual and intellectual powers.” 59 The institute was to “meet once a week and was to require the presence of every exhorter and local preacher of the charge.” 55 These directives were to be followed and reported on by local churches at meetings, called the Quarterly Conference, where each congregation reviewed its critical business with a supervising clergyman, called a Presiding Elder. The Board of Bishops of the AME Zion Church also suggested that a “correspondence school be established where all traveling and local preachers…together with other exhorters, shall be examined by the Presiding Elder, or his proxy, in the studies designated for them by the Book of Discipline, including those of the Correspondence School.” 60 In addition, it was suggested that churches raise funds for books and the establishment of a library for ministerial education. To provide a training school for its clergy, the AME Zion Church founded the Zion

57 Ibid., 97.
58 Ibid., 71.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
Wesley Institute in North Carolina in 1879. Eventually, the Institute was merged with Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina. “In 1904 the theological department of Livingstone College was upgraded to a school, and in 1906 the seminary was named in honor of AME Zion Bishop James Walker Hood.”

Some AME Zion clergy acquired education by attending college or seminary. Benjamin Franklin Wheeler, for example, began his education in the Preparatory Department of Oberlin College. Five years later, in 1888, he attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and graduated with a Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree from the Theological Department. He enrolled in Drew Theological Seminary and focused on the study of theology and Methodist church polity, earning the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1899.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the post-Civil War landscape of the American South, also faced the possibility of an exodus of its African American members. The African American men and women members were former slaves. These newly liberated people wanted to serve God in a manner free from constriction by former slave owners. Therefore, the church began to help African American members develop their own churches, which together became known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. The policies of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South with respect to free African Americans were hammered out at the General Conference, held in New Orleans in 1866. Plans were made for the organization of the church’s African American constituents into "separate congregations and districts, and annual conferences.”

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61 Christopher R. Hutson, "Case Study: Hood Theological Seminary,” Theological Education 45, no. 1 (January 2009), 35.

separate church in the American South after the Civil War because it found that “by revolution and the fortunes of war, a change had taken place in our political and social relations, which made it necessary that a like change should also be made in our ecclesiastical relations.”

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South conceded to its African American members’ demands by ordaining ministers for leadership in the new church body. In stipulating to the development of a separate church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South stated, “political activity of any sort in the recipient churches [is] strictly prohibited.” This restriction was acceptable to the members of an emerging African American church in the South facing an unstable social environment, particularly as the Ku Klux Klan attacked African Americans to keep them oppressed. The church, formally named “The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America,” was established at their General Conference in December 1870.

By 1883, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church had “seven schools with…fifty-seven students of theology…taught in two schools.” It eventually founded the Philips School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1944, and became a part of the Interdenominational Theological Center in 1959.

The development of African American Baptist churches is rooted in the founding of the “Bluestone Church on the William Byrd Plantation near the Bluestone River in Mecklenburg, Virginia, in 1758, and the Silver Bluff Baptist Church located on the South Carolina banks of the Savannah River.” From these prototypes, African American Baptist churches rose in the South. These congregations, like their Methodist counterparts, established themselves through

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64 Lincoln and Mamiya, The Black Church, 62.
65 Hartzell, "Methodism and the Negro,” 312.
66 Lincoln and Mamiya, The Black Church, 23.
affiliation with white denominations. From 1815 to 1880, many African American Baptists worked to establish churches through existing national white Baptist organizations via the African Baptist Missionary Society. Independent African American Baptist groups were established in Ohio in 1834 and 1839. The Wood River Association, established in Illinois in 1839, organized the Western Colored Baptist Convention for the development of the African American Baptist Church that operated from 1853 to 1859.

In the North, the American Baptist Missionary Convention was organized at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City in 1840. As African Americans faced the end of the Civil War, they formed the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention in Nashville in 1867. One convention—the National Baptist Educational Convention of the USA—was formed in Washington DC in 1893 “for the primary purpose of educating and training clergy and missionaries.” This body, along with the Baptist Foreign Missionary Convention and the American National Baptist Convention, merged to form the National Baptist Convention, USA in 1895. The development of multiple Baptist associations signaled the independent congregational governance of Baptist churches that allowed them to form associations as they saw fit. Two other African American Baptist associations emerged in the late twentieth century: the National Baptist Convention of America in 1915 and the Progressive Baptist Convention in 1961.

In the training of African American clergy, these conventions established a variety of standards and policies that reflected the already noted methods of educating clergy. African

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 28.
69 Ibid.
American Baptists organized the Virginia Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1887.\textsuperscript{70} In conjunction with the American Baptist Home Mission Society of New York, African American Baptists took part in the development of the Richmond Theological Seminary. Eventually, Richmond Seminary merged with other small seminaries to become Virginia Union University in 1896.\textsuperscript{71} Virginia Union still houses a theological seminary in Richmond, Virginia. In 1904, Southern Baptists and National Baptists worked together to establish a seminary in Nashville, Tennessee, called the American Baptist Seminary, but classes did not start until 1924.\textsuperscript{72}

The Methodist Episcopal Church also had a part in shaping general education for African Americans and launched education programs for African American ministers. As African American Methodists and Baptists formed African American churches, Methodist Episcopal Church tried to retain the southern African Americans who remained in its ranks after the Civil War. “By 1896, black Methodists numbered nearly 250,000, compared with 130,000 C.M.E.S, 350,000 A.M.E.Z.S., and 450,000 A.M.E.S.”\textsuperscript{73} With the end of the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal Church established the Freedmen’s Aid Society, which reached out to African Americans with educational opportunities. “It established schools, colleges, community centers, missions, and churches among African Americans, and soon had a favored position among black people, both in the North and in the South.”\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{70} Montgomery, \textit{Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree}, 232.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 232.
\textsuperscript{73} Lincoln and Mamiya, \textit{The Black Church}, 65.
\textsuperscript{74} Woodie W. White, “The United Methodist Church at 40: How Have We Done?” \textit{Methodist Review}, Vol. 1 (2009), 60.
The Methodist Episcopal Church was not quick to welcome African Americans clergy as leaders for the larger church, however. Two African American clergy experienced the church’s discrimination against African Americans. In 1852, the Methodist Episcopal Church, elected Francis Burns as its first African American bishop, who in turn was succeeded by John W. Roberts in 1866. Both bishops were sent to Africa as missionary bishops, far from any opportunity to operate in the United States, where their authority would threaten white members of the church. In the Methodist Episcopal Church, African American preachers were not permitted to be fully ordained as traveling elders until 1864. The African American members of the church were organized into separate, segregated annual conferences that allowed African Americans to foster leadership, but within boundaries that kept them from having authority over white church members. Nevertheless, tension between white and African American members remained. It expressed itself in the church’s reluctance to develop or foster black leadership, while placing whites in positions of oversight over African Americans. There was a continuing struggle on matters of equality. The Methodist Episcopal Church operated with the “implicit assumption of [black] inferiority to white, [which] persisted in the church even as support for African American clergy leadership emerged in the founding of Gammon Theological School.”

Of all the schools established to foster African American clergy leadership education in the nineteenth century, only the theological department of Howard University, a university founded to serve African Americans in 1870, and Gammon, founded in 1883, were fully

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76 Lawrence N. Jones, “They Sought a City: The Black Church and Churchmen in the Nineteenth Century,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1971), 271.
accredited graduate schools of theological education. In spite of these educational resources, more often than not, however, African American clergy gained the bulk of their training in churches, church schools, and by way of the mentoring process.

African American Clergy Leadership Education in Mainline Seminaries

Four African American men—J. W. C. Pennington, Samuel Coles, John Wesley Bowen, and Daniel Alexander Payne—serve as examples of persons who embraced the opportunity to matriculate in white mainline theological or divinity schools in the nineteenth century. These early opportunities for men of color to engage with their white counterparts in theological studies came at places like Yale Divinity School and Boston University School of Theology. Yale’s admission policy for African Americans was based on the African American student’s prior success, while Boston University’s open admission of both women and African Americans was founded on the school’s commitment to education for all people.

James W. C. Pennington, pastor of Temple Street Congregational Church in New Haven, Connecticut, and a supporter of the Mendi Mission, was the first African American student to attend Yale Divinity School. In 1835, “he was allowed to sit outside the classroom and hear lectures...In 1838, he...was ordained a minister, and served the black ‘Presbyterian Church’...for two years.”

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In 1875, Solomon Coles, a former slave, was the first black student to complete the full three-year Bachelor of Divinity program at Yale Divinity School. After graduation, he led Nazarene Congregational Church, the first black Congregational church in Brooklyn, New York.

John Wesley Bowen, who earned graduate degrees from Boston University, was the son of former slaves Edward and Rose Bowen. He was able to gain enough education to attend the high school department of New Orleans University, now known as Dillard University. He earned both bachelors and masters degrees at the University of New Orleans by 1878. After converting to Methodism, he was licensed as a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He taught Latin and Greek at Central Tennessee College, a college for freed blacks started by northern Methodist missionaries in Nashville, Tennessee. When he was able, Bowen moved to Boston to attend Boston University for additional education. At Boston University School of Theology, in 1882, he matriculated in the Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree program. “Bowen was assigned to the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was appointed pastor of the Revere Street [Methodist Episcopal] Church, a black congregation. Revere Street was then known as Fourth Methodist Episcopal Church.” He completed his bachelor degree program at Boston University in 1885 and immediately entered the Ph.D. program in historical theology. By 1886, he had passed his examinations in metaphysics, ethics, philosophy, and Hebrew and completed language studies in Latin, Arabic, and German.

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Bowen pastored churches after finishing his degrees and taught at colleges as well. Eventually, he moved to full-time teaching, becoming Professor of Historical Theology at Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, between 1893 and 1932, and sometime-Professor of Religious Education. He was probably the first professionally trained African American theological educator in the United States.”

Based on his experience of having extensive educational opportunities, “Bowen promoted the idea that the most determinative factor in the development of black social and intellectual life was education.”

AME Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne followed an educational path to ministry through the Lutheran Church. Payne, who was born in South Carolina in 1811, acquired enough education to become a teacher of both slave and free African American children in the state in 1829. When the South Carolina legislature outlawed teaching slaves, Payne moved to New York to pursue theological studies. In New York, he met Samuel Simon Schmucker, founder and president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. With the help of Schmucker and the school’s sponsorship, Payne attended Lutheran Theological Seminary, studying “German and Hebrew in addition to courses in exegesis, systematic theology, mental philosophy, archaeology, advanced Greek, and ecclesiastical history.” After completing his studies at Lutheran Theological in two years, he was licensed to preach in 1837 and ordained in

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83 Ibid.
the Franckean Synod in upstate New York in 1839. When Payne could not pastor in the Lutheran Church because it lacked African American congregations, he joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

By the time the African American church emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, the promotion of education for African American clergy had strengthened.

The efforts of the Black churches to provide a means for educating their members were monumental. By 1900, the Baptists were supporting some 80 schools and 18 academies and colleges. The AME Church accumulated over $1,100,000 for educational purposes between 1884 and 1900 and supported 22 institutions providing education above the elementary level. The AME Church established its first educational institution, Union Seminary, near Columbus, Ohio in 1844. This institution was later merged into Wilberforce University, which the church had purchased from the Methodist Conference in Ohio in 1856. In 1900, the AME Zion Church was supporting, as a denomination, eight colleges and/or institutes, while the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church had established five schools during their thirty-year history.

The educational opportunities offered at Yale and institutions like Boston University proved to be exceptional for African Americans because few white mainline seminaries welcomed African American students. Due to racism and discrimination, no African American in the American South was admitted to a mainline southern seminary until the latter part of the twentieth century. African American clergy seeking education for ministry were educated either by the apprenticeship method with the support of senior clergy leaders or in theological departments at African American educational institutions. Many clergy continued to serve churches without the benefit of either education or formalized programs. It should also be noted that resistance to any kind of theological education remained for some African American clergy and churches, which believed that education might destroy the spirit of the preacher.

86 Jones, “They Sought a City,” 271.
At the beginning of the twentieth century, two more major African American Christian bodies emerged in the United States: the Central Jurisdiction of the new Methodist body and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). The Central Jurisdiction created an African American church within a white church. The merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, and the Methodist Protestant Church led to the formation of the new Methodist Church in 1939. African American Methodists who were members of these bodies were victims of institutionalized racial segregation. As a condition of the merger, there was an agreement to segregate African American members of the three former Methodist church bodies, called “the Great Compromise of 1939.” This gesture placated the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and “assured the continuation of an all-white southern jurisdiction—the Southeast Jurisdiction, the territory of which was largely though not entirely coextensive with the area that had been occupied by the [Methodist Episcopal Church, South].”

Five jurisdictional areas comprised the new Methodist Episcopal Church. The church established a sixth jurisdiction, the Central Jurisdiction, based on discrimination against African Americans. The Central Jurisdiction was an all-black jurisdiction but did not include any black members, missions, or congregations located west of Colorado or in sections of New York State, such as the Bronx, Manhattan, and Buffalo.

“By any definition, it was a racially segregated unit of the church and…African Americans were to be segregated at every connection or level of the church’s life below that of its national structure.” African American clergy of the Central Jurisdiction found the extent of

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87 White, “The United Methodist Church at 40,” 61.
88 Ibid.
their clergy leadership appointments limited to the jurisdictional borders and only African American churches. Bishops were limited as well. “Black Bishops were elected to superintend the work of…the church in Liberia, West Africa, as well as the Black Methodists Churches throughout the Central Jurisdiction…which included the boundaries of…Nineteen Annual Conferences.”⁹⁰ This created an international black church within a white mainline denomination.

By 1966, when the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, creating the United Methodist Church, “the Plan of Union with the Evangelical United Brethren Church…did not provide for the Central Jurisdiction to continue. It died a slow death.”⁹¹ The Central Jurisdiction that segregated African Americans in this new church was not disbanded until 1968. Progress in dissolving the segregated conferences was slow, even as the General Conference “directed all racially segregated annual conferences to agree on a single nonracial annual conference structure by July 1973. The last racially segregated annual conferences were finally merged in 1975.”⁹²

African Americans in the new United Methodist Church gathered to promote self-advocacy. The lobbying arm of the Council of Negro Methodists, later called Black Methodists for Church Renewal, met in Ohio in 1968 to promote the equal treatment of African Americans in the church. Black Methodists for Church Renewal would help to establish the General Board of Religion and Race in the General Conference of 1968. However, African Americans in the United Methodist Church still worried about racism and discrimination. A question haunted

⁹¹ Ibid., 91–92.  
⁹² White, “The United Methodist Church at 40,” 64.
them: “Would white congregations and clergy accept black leaders in positions of authority as bishops and district superintendents? There was the general belief between both groups that black leadership would prove unacceptable to the majority of white Methodists, especially in the South.”

African Americans did move into leadership positions as they were elected to be bishops without restriction to racially bound conferences. General church officers who were African Americans served the entire church. Nevertheless, the development of an open itinerancy, where appointments are made “without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement” was still hampered by racism and sexism in the case of African American clergy.

The Church of God in Christ emerged over issues of doctrine. Its founder, Charles Harrison Mason, was born in Tennessee in 1866. As an adult, he became a Baptist minister. Influenced by the Holiness movement, Mason faced difficulty when he began to promote his “experience of sanctification” in 1893. Banned from Baptist associations because he preached about sanctification, Mason began a congregation in Lexington, Mississippi, with a colleague, Charles Prince Jones. When the membership of Mason’s new congregation grew large, a new building was erected in 1906 and named St. Paul Church of God in Christ.

When Charles Mason attended the Azusa Street Revival—an historic Pentecostal meeting that took place in Los Angeles, California in 1907 and marked the start of the Pentecostal

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 66.
95 Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 80.
96 Ibid.
movement—he was “baptized with the ‘Holy Ghost’ and fire, [and] the practice of glossolalia.”

Many of the churches that followed Mason rejected the new doctrine of Holy Ghost baptism and glossolalia. As a result, the body of churches that followed him fractured into two groups. Charles Price Jones would lead the splintered group under the name, the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A. Those who followed Charles Harrison Mason gathered under the legal name, Church of God in Christ (COGIC). “The first Pentecostal General Assembly of COGIC attended by representatives of twelve churches was convened by Elder Mason in Memphis in November 1907.” Mason’s organizational skills helped the church spread rapidly, aided by the work of evangelists who established churches across the United States. Mason ordained white men who wished to become Pentecostal clergy, and they were for a time members of COGIC.

Eventually, racial politics in the United States that demanded separation of whites and African Americans would drive white men to distance themselves from COGIC. These “sons in the ministry” of Charles Harrison Mason would go on to found the Assemblies of God church in 1914.

The COGIC clergy initially did not pursue theological education in institutions, despite Mason’s attendance at Arkansas Baptist College from 1893 to 1894. Members of COGIC were African Americans housed in urban north and southern regions. They faced the same educational

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97 Ibid., 81.
98 Ibid.
99 Despite Mason’s ability to train white clergy in his church and remain on good terms with them, he did not escape racism. When Mason moved into a white neighborhood in Memphis, Tennessee, a cross was burned on his lawn, a gesture of intimidation used by whites to frighten African Americans. See Anthea D. Butler, Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For further information on Mason, see the book Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ by Bishop Ithiel C. Clemmons (Lanham, MD: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1997).
hurdles as their African American peers due to discrimination and Jim Crow laws. Consequently, clergy leadership education had to be provided by local churches. Candidates for ordained ministry, mentored by senior clergy, were judged on character until they were approved as candidates for ordination. Aspiring clergy were licensed to preach by their pastor. To enter the ordained ministry, such persons must be recommended by their pastor to the Ordination Committee of the jurisdiction. Candidates...must complete a course of study approved by their respective jurisdictions, usually involving one to two years’ attendance at one of the seventy bible colleges sponsored by COGIC. 101

These colleges, local in nature, were preceded by the COGIC’s Saints Junior College in Lexington, Mississippi, founded in 1918. This institution was originally opened under the name Saints Industrial and Literary School. When COGIC established the school, their teachers “used the philosophy of black leaders like Booker T. Washington and Nannie Helen Burroughs who stressed vocational, agricultural, and home making skills.” 102 The institution’s educational agenda “was designed to prepare young people to serve in the COGIC community and in some cases to engage in missionary work for the church.” 103 Under the leadership of Dr. Arenia C. Mallory, the school attained junior college status in the 1960s, but due to financial difficulties, it was closed in 1977.

The Charles Harrison Mason System of Bible Colleges was established in 1972. It sought “to prepare ministers to deal with the whole person. The college offered courses in Bible, theology, history, ministry and the liberal arts. African American History and political science

101 Lincoln and Mamiya, The Black Church, 89.
102 Butler, Women in the Church of God in Christ, 98.
103 Ibid.
were key courses in the liberal arts offerings.\footnote{David D. Daniels, ““Live So God Can Use Me, Anytime, Lord, Anywhere”: Theological Education in the Church of God in Christ, 1970 to 1997,” Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 3, no. 2 (July 2000), 303.} In addition, COGIC sponsors the C. H. Mason Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. Mason Theological Seminary was founded in 1970 and is currently part of the Interdenominational Theological Center.

All of the church bodies named above were formed in a crucible of race and discrimination that made clergy leadership education difficult. Nevertheless, education for ministry was important to all of these groups, and they struggled to educate ministerial leaders for the sake of their constituents. These unevenly equipped leaders served their respective churches with all the wisdom they were able to acquire.

Whether through mentorship programs, a formal course of study, or within the context of the institutions that churches created, or those that African American people were allowed to attend, African American ministers prepared themselves to serve a diverse African American church. With this history, African American clergy and a few African American theological scholars began in the mid-twentieth century to assess how theological education for African Americans might be strengthened.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter reviewed the effort of nineteenth-century African American churches to establish educational resources for clergy leadership education. The effort revolved around several dynamic models. Some African American churches offered small group tutorials to clergy, led by other clergy, while other instructional models had clergy meeting in small groups...
called institutes. When a church convened for an annual conference or convention, the occasion itself offered varied opportunities for instruction.

The development of approved academic tools in the form of books, pamphlets, and the Bible offered churches the opportunity to standardize theological curricula and to evaluate the competency of African American men seeking to become clergy. The development of church-based schools, colleges, and theological schools speaks clearly to the efforts made by African American churches to develop clergy leadership education. That education would answer the need to cultivate leaders who could guide both the churches and their community constituents.

Leadership education for African American clergy was a struggle to acquire, but such leaders as Bishop Daniel Payne sought to offer African American clergy the resources they needed. Despite the campaign for clergy to acquire education in African American colleges developed by churches, mission organizations, and mainline seminaries, most African American clergy were educated in the local church or in church-sponsored educational programs such as schools, institutes, and educational conferences. African Americans continued to pursue this multi-tiered plan for clergy leadership education, just as African American clergy used every resource they could muster to combat racism and be the leaders their communities needed and deserved.
CHAPTER THREE

GROWTH IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY
LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION, 1867–1971

Introduction

This chapter begins by exploring the educational and leadership challenges for African American clergy leaders during the eras of Reconstruction and the Great Migration. During both periods, African American clergy desired education that would make them more effective in serving African American communities. Scholars such as Benjamin Mays and others would advance African American leadership clergy education from 1930 to 1950. A larger opportunity for African American clergy leadership came after the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka case went before the United States Supreme Court. The resulting African American clergy activism in the civil rights era prompted the desire for new models of African American clergy leadership education. With the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the rise of the black power movement, African American clergy and theological scholars moved quickly to foster a new paradigm for African American clergy leadership education that had international implications in South Africa.

Education during and after Reconstruction, 1867–1913

With the promise of new opportunities during the Reconstruction period in the American South, African American clergy stepped up to help African American freedmen. African Americans felt that their participation in the affairs of state would give them access to rights, education, and a new way of life. For leadership, they turned to the leaders who had guided them in the past—the African American clergy. “Ministers were conspicuous members of the state constitutional conventions during 1867 and 1868 and...were prominent among the blacks elected to seats in the state legislatures. They also held appointed positions from the state down to the county and municipal levels of government.”¹⁰⁶ These clergy experienced the move into political positions as an extension of their call to ministry. “A man in this state,” explained Charles H. Pearce, an AME minister and political activist in Florida, "cannot do his whole duty as a minister except he looks out for the political interests of his people. They are like ships out at sea, and they must have somebody to guide them; and it is natural that they should get their best informed men to lead them.”¹⁰⁷

Yet, despite the African American clergy’s apparent mandate to lead, the Union conspired against African American clergy leaders and other men of color in their campaign for leadership. As southern whites recovered from the Civil War, it became clear that they would not be ready to relinquish power to African American clergy or African American people in general. Mississippi governor Benjamin Humphries declared, “The Negro is free, whether we like it or

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¹⁰⁶ Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree, 178.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
not; we must realize that fact now and forever. To be free, however, does not make him a citizen, or entitle him to political or social equality with the white race.”108

Efforts to disenfranchise the African American in America took on new zeal as African American leaders in government were denied access to their positions. Detractors burned churches and African American clergy seen as community leaders were sometimes killed. The United States government gradually pulled back support for African Americans in the South. President Andrew Johnson, in an effort to placate white southerners, “vetoed an extension of the Freedmen's Bureau and a civil rights bill in 1866.”109 African Americans encouraged their communities to believe that Christian witness of white American citizens would prevail to keep their lives from being eroded, but they hoped in vain. Vulnerable African Americans found themselves without protection as newly elected President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew the few remaining federal troops from the South as part of the bargain made following his disputed victory over Samuel J. Tilden in the election of 1876. Congress crushed the controversial Civil Rights Act of 1875,110 which would have given African Americans equal access to public accommodations and rights in the court system. African Americans began to sue for equal access to public accommodations in the courts. Eventually, a series of these cases reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional.

Such actions seemed to signal that African Americans and their communities must make their own way. African American clergy leaders tried to accommodate the white citizens of America by not pushing for access to education and full citizen rights. They hoped that assuming

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108 Ibid., 160.
109 Ibid., 161.
a posture of accommodation would lessen the fear and dislike of African American people. This strategy did not work.

As the Reconstruction Era ended, some mission societies from the North abandoned educational mission work among African Americans in the South, but not all of them. The northern Presbyterians, northern Methodists, Congregationalists, and northern Baptists kept their commitment to educational mission work among African Americans. Indeed, “[t]he mission budget for black education within these denominations doubled from 1870 to 1891 and quadrupled by 1906.” The churches kept their commitment to provide liberal arts, professional, and theological education for African Americans. The hope was that the colleges and schools they supported would produce great leaders for African American people.

Even as these churches and their mission organizations made efforts on behalf of African Americans, the restriction of African American life—in the South, in particular—became stronger. Economic opportunities for African Americans to own land and run businesses eroded because whites found ways to cheat them out of money and keep them in debt. Public constraints on the lives of African Americans tightened. African Americans were limited in where they could go and always approached communities dominated by whites cautiously. These restrictions would evolve into informal structures that would limit African Americans’ access to government, the courts, education, and all aspects of life throughout the South. The country began to signal that there was no way out of the trap of racism and its resulting discrimination.

By the beginning of the 1880s, two separate societal systems began to emerge in the United States: one for whites and one for African Americans. The components comprising the African American society became increasingly restrictive. Laws and customs that constricted

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111 Case, “From the Native Ministry to the Talented Tenth,” 73.
their lives, generally known as “Jim Crow,” dashed the hopes of many African Americans and created a maze of limited access to goods, services, and rights. In the face of such betrayal, African American people turned for help to the African American church and its leaders. However, even for the church, this was a trying time. “The churches, institutions of peace, were ill-equipped to provide a shield against the savage fury of white racism. Violence against African Americans reached an all-time high during this period.” The most terrifying act of violence against African Americans was lynching. “Between 1889 and 1893, 839 people were lynched in the United States; 705 of these incidents were in the south and 579 of lynching victims were black. From 1894 to 1898, 680 of the 774 lynchings in the nation took place in the South and 544 of those killed were blacks.”

African American leaders expressed outrage, and petitioned the governing authorities for protection, and justice. Some African American clergy leaders spoke out for justice in the pages of church publications and from the pulpits. Elias C. Morris, president of the National Baptist Convention, counseled African Americans to be good citizens, but he cautioned them “not to suffer without protesting the inhuman treatment administered to members of our race.”

During this period, some African American clergy advocated for emigration to Haiti or Africa. Clergy leaders, such as AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, urged clergy and laity alike to move to Africa to start new lives free of the oppressive structure under which they lived in America. Other clergy leaders were concerned more about missions to Africa that would help to establish the African American church as part of the church universal with a duty to spread the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

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113 Ibid., 214.
Mission endeavors enabled other African American clergy leaders to try to demonstrate that they and their people are valuable Christian citizens of the United States, invested in promoting the Gospel and the uplift of the African. Many “believed that they had been brought to America for slavery by providential design, so they might be Christianized and civilized to return [to] the Dark Continent with the light of civilization.”  

This theme was evident in the words of Rev. M. C. B. Mason of the Methodist Episcopal Church when he spoke to the Congress on Africa in December 1895, sponsored by the Methodist Church’s Stewart Missionary Foundation for Africa. The foundation sponsored the event to promote African missions among African Americans. Mason, who would become corresponding secretary of the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society, was intent on promoting African Americans as bearers of a civilizing Christianity of which they were heirs. He sought to convince his African American listeners that joining in missionary endeavors to Africa would place African Americans in their rightful place as intellectual and moral equals to whites.

The question now is not what shall be done with the Negro, but what will the Negro do with himself, his privileges, and opportunities? Upon the answer to this question depends whether he shall be an insignificant figure in the world or whether he shall become a permanent factor in its life and civilization. Mere intellectual ability will not answer. Something great must be done, thoroughly unselfish, altruistic, magnanimous—something that will challenge the attention and consideration of mankind everywhere. Let this be done, and a new day will dawn upon us; a new day for Africa in America and for Africa beyond the sea.  

If African American clergy leaders could engage in missions on the same terms as white Americans, perhaps they could establish that they were equal citizens in the kingdom of God, thereby earning that equality on American soil. It was also a source of pride that they could

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115 Paul William Harris, “Racial Identity and the Civilizing Mission: Double-Consciousness at the 1895 Congress on Africa,” Religion and American Culture 18, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 151.
demonstrate that their people had risen from the ranks of lowly slaves to become educated ambassadors for Christ. In part, African American clergy wanted to convince white citizens that the violence that they frequently meted out upon African Americas was undeserved.

Many clergy, however, were simply trying to cope with life in America as persons-who lived with the daily threat of violence.

Other ministers...adopted a strategy of lying low and avoiding language and behavior that might provoke white attacks...ministers in North Carolina resolved to “severely condemn” outrages committed against black men and women, but they further resolved, “to impress upon our people the necessity of avoiding by word or action anything that will produce race conflict and strife.”

As the African American clergy emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century, clergy leadership split into two groups: an educated class of clergy, and an uneducated class of clergy. Despite the opportunities for education and training offered by churches, schools, institutes, and a few seminaries, African Americans who did acquire education for ministry did so against the odds. “Hosts of ministerial students were unable to gain the maximum benefit from their school or seminary experiences because they failed to complete the courses or had to work at tiring jobs to earn the cost of room [and] board.” Still, as African American communities grew and churches multiplied, African American clergy gained what education they could. “By the turn of the century, most black ministers probably fell in between the categories of illiterate country preachers and the still fairly small group of college-educated and seminary-trained clerics.”

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116 Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree, 317.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid., 319.
African American clergy often came under attack by members of their own communities due to their lack of education. Booker T. Washington, an African American educator and race accommodationist who founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, had little regard for African American clergy. He attended Wayland Baptist Seminary in Washington DC in 1878 for six months before leaving, because he found ministers there to be incompetent and immoral. “In his 1890 speech before the Women's New England Club, for example, he conceded that many ministers were religious but argued that their religious sensibility consisted largely in emotion.”

Washington, almost exclusively dependent on white benefactors who saw him as an answer to the Negro Problem, was constantly engaged in labeling the African American clergy as the problem in their communities. “Moreover, while he attacked ministers by charging ignorance and moral vice, he repeated his claim that black religious ritual, cultivated and supported by black ministers, was in fact an expression of their parishioners' ignorance and moral degradation.”

Washington, an educator, decided to develop a theological school to educate African American clergymen, whom he believed had failed the African American church and society. After noting that only a small proportion of black ministers had received theological education of any kind, Washington made a proposal to his benefactors. He suggested that a school be established "at some central point in the South, on a thoroughly Christian but strictly undenominational basis, with a one or two years' course covering such branches as would fit a

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121 Washington did have respect for religion. He matriculated at Hampton Institute, where he studied the Bible. See Robert J. Norell’s *Up from History* and *Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington.
student to get a comprehensive idea of the Bible, to teach him how to prepare a sermon, how to read a hymn, how to study, and, most important, how to reach and help the people outside of the pulpit in an unselfish Christian way.”

Philanthropists supported Washington’s model, and his proposal for the education of African American ministers gained support from Bishop Daniel Payne of the AME Church and journalist Ida B. Wells. Bolstered by support from some in the African American church and supportive whites, Washington recruited Edgar James Penny, a black Congregationalist minister from Andover Newton Theological Seminary, to teach at the Phelps Bible School at Tuskegee Institute, which opened in 1892. The new department educated men and some women for ministry and was successful. The twenty-fifth anniversary issue of the student newspaper, *The Tuskegee Student*, reported on the success of Washington’s effort:

The Extension Work of the Bible Training School consists in:

(1) Mission Work. Every Sunday members of the school visit the Sunday schools and churches in the country about the school, walking sometimes five miles; they visit the almshouse and the county jail and make reports in writing on what they have seen and done.

(2) The Night Bible School. This school was organized to help ministers who want to know more about the Bible and are notable to attend day classes; these men come to the school twice a week for two hours’ instruction, some of them walking four or five miles.

(3) The Ten Days' Visit of the Senior class to neighboring towns and settlements for the study of social conditions among the people.

While Booker T. Washington worked to be the leader who would offer solutions to the education of African American clergy at the close of the nineteenth century, rural and urban

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122 Ibid., 338.
123 Ibid., 343.
124 *The Tuskegee Student*, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, 28, no. 15 (April 28, 1906), 44.
African American clergy leaders struggled to provide leadership to African Americans as they faced continual crises in the nation. However, the changes in the South would soon bring new challenges to both groups of clergy.


African American communities in the South managed to survive in spite of Jim Crow laws and the violence that threatened them daily. It would ultimately be an economic crisis that pushed them to leave the South. When World War I was declared, the immigrant labor force from Europe declined. The industrialized northern United States needed laborers and turned to the African American labor force in the South. African Americans welcomed an opportunity to leave the South “as Jim Crow laws solidified” and the “cotton tenant farmers system collapsed and…the process of industrializing in the South began.”  

This movement—labeled the Great Migration—began as African Americans poured into both northern and southern cities to take jobs. In fact, “[d]uring the years of the first great migration from 1910 to 1913, 1.2 million black people left the South.”

With this migration and the rows of empty pews and smaller congregations it engendered, African American clergy leadership in the South faced challenges. As parishioners moved to northern cities, they took their churches with them. Sometimes, African American clergy even led members of their churches to the North themselves. “Some astute labor agents

125 Lincoln and Mamiya, The Black Church, 119.
126 Ibid., 118.
promised free passage on trains to Negro ministers if they could convince their people to leave.”

African American clergy in cities targeted as havens for migrants from the South were challenged to sustain religious communities while seeking to expand services to help their people adjust to city life. They were forced to accept that the cities were a new mission field and they were the missionaries. In Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, for example, a group of seventy-one African American men was thrown into a workhouse as they struggled to survive in the city. “The Rev. J. C. Austin of the Ebenezer Baptist Church helped to obtain their release. The migrants were escorted to the church for a special church welcome and meals. Austin formed a committee to help the men to find jobs, housing, and clothing.”

Many African American denominations formed alliances to support the new migrants, such as the Interdenominational Minister’s Alliance of Philadelphia. These organizations were able to welcome southern African Americans to the city in 1917, after working with city officials to accommodate their needs.

African American clergy responded to the influx of African Americans by building larger churches to accommodate the swelling population. The Abyssinian Baptist Church reluctantly sold its property in midtown Manhattan to acquire land in Harlem, the section of the city that housed the majority of African American migrants. The pastor, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., had prodded the church to move so that it could offer more services to African Americans, such as a soup kitchen. “Powell’s church grew to become one of the most important institutions in Harlem, in part because of its multidimensional social ministry that included a community

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127 Ibid.
Many churches offered more than social services to help the migrants to thrive. The Metropolitan Baptist Church, lead by Rev. William W. Brown, already established in Harlem, operated “a butcher shop, a grocery, and a hardware store for its members. Brown encouraged real estate investment, purchased houses in Harlem to rent to members, and encouraged cooperative business enterprises.”

Some African Americans who migrated from the South founded their own congregations so that they could worship in the manner to which they were accustomed. Many of these congregations rented storefronts to house their activities. Sometimes, congregations moved from storefront to storefront until they could raise enough money for a church building. New African American religious bodies, such as the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), multiplied in storefronts. As small congregations, they provided congregants a degree of emotional involvement and personal participation that the larger black churches could not match.”

Clergy from both large and small churches labored to give guidance to the migrants as they adjusted to urban life. “The main function of these churches from World War I until the mid-1950s was to act as a ‘cultural broker,’ a mediating institution, to help acculturate rural migrants to the urban environment.”

Beyond this, the African American church was a foundational institution in helping African Americans to negotiate politics, resist discrimination, and continue to embrace education and literacy. As the African American church stretched to meet its multiple mandates, African

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130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 194.
American clergy leaders struggled to meet the needs of their congregations. Most of them were underprepared to help African American congregants facing a complex urban environment. However, that did not stop them from trying. When the U.S. census of religious bodies was taken in 1936, each major African American denomination showed as less rural than before the Great Migration. “The emphasis on localized needs and concerns consumed African American clergy, and their attention to national issues was not as strong as it had been in earlier decades. C. Eric Lincoln suggests that during this period, the African American church experienced “a relative quiet and an apparent vacuum of church leadership.”

**The Call for New Models of Clergy Leadership Education, 1935-1950**

As African Americans and their churches moved through the Great Migration and the years of the Great Depression, African American clergy sought to be the leaders their people needed. The majority of African American clergy during this era depended upon church-based mentorship programs that gave access to ministerial education and training in the local church. This model assured that clergy with uneven levels of education could serve urban and rural African American churches. Providing African American clergy with an expanded theological education fell mainly to African American colleges and seminaries if clergy had the educational background to attend or the financial ability to pay the tuition of such institutions.

Religious scholars, such as Dr. Benjamin Mays, endorsed the notion that better educational opportunities for African American clergy leadership would strengthen their ability to lead the African American church. Mays, who graduated from Bates College in Maine, was

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134 Lincoln and Mamiya, 121.
ordained as a Baptist clergyman in 1922 and earned a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1935. After writing his dissertation, Mays was asked by Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, to head its School of Religion.135

Mays critically examined African American clergy education throughout his singular career. At a 1931 conference of black students at Yale Divinity School, entitled Whither the Negro Church? Mays called for clergy leadership that would serve and lead black churches. Students at the conference stated that the “Negro church must discover and develop a new kind of Negro leadership that would do for America and the Negro race what Gandhi has done for India.”136

Mays, co-author with Joseph W. Nickerson of the 1933 book *The Negro’s Church*,137 sought to understand the challenge of this goal in that there were “too few college and seminary trained clergy, and…sermons that paid too little attention to temporal affairs.”138 When Mays led the Howard University School of Theology as dean, his main goal of many was to produce black clergy who were “distinguished intellectually…who were committed to challenging social caste and ending legalized segregation.”139 Ultimately, Mays’ goal for clergy education was focused

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135 Leonard Ray Teel and Benjamin Mays, “Teaching by Example, Leading through Will,” *Change* 14, no. 7 (October 1982), 20.


139 Ibid., 223–24. See also, Mays, *The Negro's God*, for his investigation of the theological foundation that African American clergy should consider in leading the African American church.
on leadership. “Mays longed for an educated black male clerical class that could double as local political leadership”\footnote{Barbara Dianne Savage, “Benjamin Mays, Global Ecumenism, and Local Religious Segregation,” \textit{American Quarterly} 59, no. 3 (September 2007), 796.}

Mordecai Johnson, who hired Mays, held degrees from Atlanta Baptist College, Morehouse College, and the University of Chicago. Denied admission to Newton Theological Seminary, he attended Rochester Theological Seminary in New York to acquire a theology degree. He would later complete the Master of Sacred Theology degree at Harvard Divinity School, prompting him also to speak consistently of the need for an educated clergy.

Together, Mordecai Johnson, Benjamin Mays, Howard Thurman, and George D. Kelsey, all Morehouse professors, set the tone for African American clergy leadership education in the early part of the twentieth century. These men, along with others, were deeply concerned about the state of African Americans in the United States, and they looked to African American clergy and scholars to foster new ways to meet the challenges that came with living as second-class citizens due to race-based prejudices.

Dr. William Stuart Nelson, an African American religious scholar and dean of the Howard University School of Religion from 1940 to 1948, promoted these important voices in the university publication \textit{The Journal of Religious Thought} (established in 1943). In addition, Nelson launched a think tank for African American religious scholars called The Institute of Religion. The Institute of Religion, held annually from 1944–1948, gave African American religious scholars a venue “to discuss the role of religion and race in a post-World War II global context. Major African American religious scholars, including Howard Thurman and Benjamin Mays, participated in the annual meetings, and their “impact on these institutes was felt both in
their participation…and in the groundwork they laid for black church studies scholarship and the mentoring of young scholars in the school of religion….These scholars were forerunners of 1960’s black liberation theology.”\textsuperscript{141} In their work on issues of racism, “they connected Christianity and theological and religious research to the immediate concerns of the surrounding black communities of Washington DC, the United States and even the world.”\textsuperscript{142} Two books reflected their provocative scholarship, setting the tone for the next phase in African American clergy leadership education: \textit{The Christian Way of Race Relations}, and \textit{Jesus and the Disinherited}.\textsuperscript{143} These two books placed Jesus on the side of the oppressed and encouraged African American followers of Jesus to consider acting for justice, as Jesus did in his lifetime. Both texts stirred up considerable conversation about the type of leadership education that African American clergy might need in order to lead communities that historically had faced discrimination. The book \textit{The Christian Way of Race Relations}, edited by Dean William Stuart Nelson, condensed critical wisdom from this period. In Nelson’s article, “Crucial Issues in America's Race Relations Today,”\textsuperscript{144} he suggested that educating African American clergy leaders had to include the best theological scholarship available, and that education had to include methods to defeat Jim Crow laws along with exposing racism as a moral evil.

Howard Thurman, Nelson’s co-contributor to the edited volume, published his book \textit{Jesus and the Disinherited} in 1949, casting Jesus as a liberator on the side of the oppressed.


\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.


Thurman’s text exposed the power to misuse religion to manipulate the oppressed. His example of such came from his experience with his grandmother, who had been a slave. She loved to have Thurman read the Bible to her, but she would not allow him to read from the Pauline letters. When he asked her why she shunned that part of the Bible, she reflected that her master would engage a white minister to preach to his slaves. The preacher frequently quoted Christian scripture from the Pauline letters. “At least four or five times a year, the white preacher used as a text: ‘Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters, as unto Christ.’ Then he would go on to show it was God’s will that we were slaves and how, if we were good and happy slaves, God would bless us. I promised my maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible.”  

Thurman understood the power of his grandmother’s scriptural choices and inferred that religion used to oppress the marginalized must not be practiced or promoted. He questioned, “What does our religion say to them? The issue is not what it counsels them to do for others whose need may be greater but what religion offers to meet their own needs.” That question was readily applicable to the concern about African American clergy who needed to be trained to lead African American people to develop a theology and church that gave them life rather than oppressing it.

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146 Ibid., 13.
Brown v. Board of Education and Opportunities for Clergy Leadership Education

As African American theological scholars pondered the challenge of helping African American clergy leaders to acquire education and training, a lawsuit presented to the U.S. Supreme Court would open another avenue for their goal to be realized. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The case, brought by African American parents of schoolchildren in Kansas, argued that separate schools—by placing African American children in one school and white children in another—were inherently unequal. After deliberation, the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational accommodations were unequal and therefore unconstitutional. This decision reversed the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that supported state rulings on segregation. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision empowered African American clergy to seek broader educational opportunities for both their constituents and themselves. It “changed the way Black ministers and others pressed for change. This decision prompted a nationwide discussion about the legitimacy of segregation. It prompted many clergy to speak out, though the dangers of doing so were always apparent.”\(^{147}\) The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision prompted African American citizens, and a few African American clergy, to protest discrimination and legal boundaries that limited educational prospects and diminished prospects for a fuller life. Their work “ushered in a new era. Direct action emerged as an effective tactic for achieving social change.”\(^{148}\)

Despite the action of the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1954 *Brown* decision, African Americans who sought to study in mainline white seminaries found that they still met persistent


\(^{148}\) Ibid.
resistance, especially in the southern United States. African Americans continued to be educated in institutions that focused on theological training solely for African Americans and in church-related denominational programs. Still, even these schools offered African Americans opportunities to move beyond church-based clergy training programs. At the least, these schools began to expose African American students to theological studies that included instruction by African American scholars and theologians. The newly created Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, served as a locus for the development of African American clergy leadership education during this period. The formation of this theological consortium in 1958 brought together Morehouse School of Religion, founded by Baptists, and AME Turner Theological Seminary, CME School of Religion, and Gammon Theological Seminary, each founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church. This institution eventually welcomed the Charles Harrison Mason Seminary of the Church of God in Christ and the Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary founded by the Presbyterians in 1970.

**The Civil Rights Movement and Clergy Leadership, 1954–1960**

In 1954, the same year that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education*, a woman named Rosa Parks, a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), is said to have acted on behalf of her community in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks, who was riding in a city bus and sitting in the forward section reserved for white patrons, refused to yield her seat to a white man. Her act launched the modern civil rights agenda of the twentieth century to a new level. African Americans in Montgomery, who had been just waiting for an opportunity to protest segregated seating on buses, saw Parks’ arrest as the catalyst they needed to take action as a community. A boycott of Montgomery city
buses, organized by African American women’s groups, civil rights groups, and some local African American clergy, began on December 1, 1955. The boycott sought to change the entrenched culture of discrimination that haunted African American riders of the city bus system. After decades of accommodation by African Americans in local congregations and cautious leadership in the face of discrimination, some clergy saw this as an opportunity and began to embrace roles as civil rights advocates and public activists.

A few African American clergy opened their churches to mass meetings that impelled the African American population of Montgomery, Alabama, to walk rather than ride buses that perpetuated segregation. However, African American denominations were ill prepared as institutions for collective civil rights activity, and official denominational bodies of African American churches did not enter the fight for civil rights. For the most part, conservatism, fear, threats, political, and economic pressure kept the African American church bodies and their clergy on the sidelines of the struggle for civil rights. However, individual members of many congregations responded to the call to protest inequality because of their links with secular organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The church and civil rights organizations automatically had close links because members of the church and members of civil rights organizations were often the same individuals. Gayraud Wilmore suggested that it would not be “an exaggeration to say that the black church was the NAACP on its knees.” Therefore, while African American denominations avoided public support of the civil rights movement, some clergy and laity permitted themselves to participate in a campaign for the overdue recognition of their human dignity.

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It would be courageous African American Christian laity from a variety of churches in Montgomery, who would engage in the daily work involved in planning and implementing the bus boycott. It would also be the women of the Montgomery Women’s Political Council who gave help to the bus boycott in Montgomery. Faithful women who knew how to organize sustained the movement by passing out leaflets, attending mass meetings, marching, and being arrested for their activities. Women participated like Mary Fair Burkes, who helped to found the Women’s Political Council and had challenged segregation laws in her youth. She had worked with Jo Ann Robinson, who taught at Alabama State College. When Robinson became president of the Women’s Political Council, she “prepared leaflets and pamphlets for the incipient uprising…[while] helping to raise funds for the boycott’s spontaneously jerry-rigged and frequently imperiled private transportation system.”

Brave women such as these, along with men, stepped out to confront segregation in Montgomery. The laity of the churches reacted swiftly to the call for action. It was then that clergy “decided it was time for them, the leaders, to catch up with the masses.”

With events in Montgomery as a touchstone, African American clergy began a cautious career as public activists. A few African American clergy who dared to take leadership roles in the Montgomery bus boycott pushed a young minister to the forefront to act as spokesperson for the movement. That man was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Morehouse faculty member George Kelsey and president Benjamin Mays influenced King while he was a student at the college. As a graduate student at Crozer Theological Seminary, King heard Mordecai Johnson lecture on his position on justice and the church, as

150 Paul Harvey, Freedom’s Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 179.

151 Ibid.
well as on the work of Mahatma Gandhi. His exposure to the work of theologians Harold Dewolf, Walter Muelder, and Edgar Brightman at Boston University further equipped him to be a thoughtful leader. His legacy as the son of activist clergyman Martin Luther King Sr. prepared him to step into the public eye as a clergyman. When the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, began, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was ready to carry a message of nonviolent resistance to the discrimination that African American communities, their churches, and clergy had experienced. King was uniquely equipped to engage the leadership of those churches and to lead a significant civil rights movement. When he called for other African American clergy to join him in the effort, King said:

[I am] sick and tired of seeing Negro preachers riding around in big cars and living in big houses and not concerned about the problems of the people who made it possible for them to get these things. It seems I can hear almighty God saying, “Stop preaching your loud sermons…for your hands are full of tar. For the people I sent you to serve are in need, and you are doing nothing but being concerned about yourself. “Seems I can hear God saying that it’s time to rise up now and make it clear that the evils of the universe must be removed. And God isn’t going to do that all by himself.\(^{152}\)

Some African American clergy and clergy organizations did not respond to King or the need for their leadership in public civil rights activity. Older African American clergy leaders who advocated for the accommodationist posture not only refused to participate in a new civil rights movement, but some made that refusal public within the African American community. It is well known that Rev. Joseph Jackson, leader of the National Baptist Convention, rejected any kind of civil rights activity. Jackson’s stance was in direct opposition to the ideals of “Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, Benjamin Mays, and a number of other clergy

committed to...social change strategies, which Jackson condemned as inadvisable and injurious to the cause of racial advancement and harmony.”  

Like Washington and [W.E.B.] Du Bois, Jackson and King certainly disagreed about the most effective approach to gaining African American civil rights. Jackson believed that “African Americans should place greater faith in economic self-help for racial betterment than in political activism.” King’s public advocacy for civil rights threatened to upset the status quo of African American life that Jackson held as normative. Jackson made public his “disdain for King’s appropriation of Gandhian tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience.” The tension between Jackson and King was reflected in African American clergy activism. As many African American clergy opted to avoid public resistance to oppression and discrimination, “most of the aid for the Civil Rights movement came from maverick ministers acting without the backing of their congregations or state church leaders.”

The eventual success of the Montgomery bus boycott enticed the Rev. Dr. King Jr. and other clergy to expand their campaign for civil rights for African Americans. Not all of the clergy involved were seminary educated, but their churches had trained them for the leadership of African American congregants, and many were trained specifically as advocates for African American people.

Despite resistance, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the civil rights leader, educated in the halls of the best African American and mainline academies in the United States and trained

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153 Lincoln and Mamiya, The Black Church, 36.
154 Wallace Best, ”The Right Achieved and the Wrong Way Conquered: J. H. Jackson, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Conflict over Civil Rights,” Religion and American Culture 16, no. 2 (June 1, 2006), 206.
155 Best, ”The Right Achieved and the Wrong Way Conquered,” 205.
156 Ibid., 206.
for leadership in the African American church, would present a renewed vision of clergy leadership.

It was the genius of Martin Luther King, Jr., that brought the three motifs or traditions together…a prophetic ministry that wedded the deep spirituality and [the] will to survive of the alienated and impoverished masses, with the sophisticated pragmatism and will to achieve equality and liberation that characterized the parvenu urbanités and the Negro intelligentsia—the New Negro of the Harlem Renaissance. King embraced all three of these tendencies and created a multi-dimensional movement, inseparable from the Black Church that set in motion social, political, economic, religious, and cultural forces.¹⁵⁸

King’s voice and actions stirred up the African American clergy, church, and community. African Americans in the United States, especially in the South, began to confront the Jim Crow structures that had limited their lives. African American clergy and seminary students, such as John Lewis of American Baptist Seminary and James Lawson of Vanderbilt Divinity School and Boston University, walked beside Martin Luther King on civil rights marches throughout the South.

As the movement took on more energy, African American leaders from diverse communities began to press for new ways to articulate the change in African American life. The civil rights movement prompted new conversations about justice, civil rights, and the needs of African Americans students attending the nation’s academies and schools. In order to respond to the many facets of the civil rights movement, King, with others, founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957. Ordained African American men such as Andrew Young and Ralph Abernathy, who served on the executive board of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, joined King in leadership of civil right campaigns. In the northern city of Boston, in 1965, King led marchers to protest racially segregated schools, with the assistance of

Rev. Virgil Wood, an African American minister. “From 1963 to 1970, Wood led the Blue Hill Christian Center, of Boston’s Roxbury community, as its Pastoral Director, and [was] head of the Massachusetts Unit of SCLC. He … coordinated the State of Virginia in the Historic March on Washington April 28, 1963.”

The success of the American civil rights movement gave African American people a new sense of power and confidence in themselves and their clergy leaders. However, the pace of change was too slow for some who wanted to shed the burdens of the past more quickly. This desire was in evidence in the articulation of new identity politics that led Negroes to use the term “black” when referring to their racial status. This change signaled the shedding of the term Negro as restrictive and antiquated. Protests, marches, speeches, and advocacy manifested these position shifts, as African American clergy leaders and their laity, as well as like-minded citizens, understood, and embraced the need for change in the African American community. With many successes in building coalitions for civil rights, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference broadened its reach into the African American community and founded the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Black Power and Black Theology, 1960–1966

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was organized in 1960 by activist Ella Baker and funded by the SCLC. It served as the student arm of the civil rights movement. Student activists from nationwide colleges poured into the South to participate in

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such protests as Freedom Rides to change segregation laws in the South and to lead voter registration campaigns.

A young man by the name of Stokely Carmichael, an early leader of the SNCC, ultimately broke with the SCLC, SNCC’s parent organization, by promoting a more radical civil rights posture. Carmichael, a student at Howard University, had become increasingly impatient with the nonviolent nature of the movement as directed by King and the clergy under King’s leadership. Carmichael made a radical turn in a speech given in Greenwood, Mississippi, where the civil rights demonstration, called the March against Fear, took place in 1966.

“On June 16, 1966, in Greenwood, Mississippi, Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was arrested for the twenty-seventh time. When released, Carmichael had had enough of being pushed around and gave a speech at the mass rally. ‘We want Black Power,’ he shouted during his speech. Repeatedly, the crowd shouted back, ‘Black Power!’ …and Black Power took hold.”¹⁶⁰ The term implied violence and impatience, which contradicted the teaching of King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The Rev. Dr. King, committed to promoting his agenda of nonviolence, was deeply concerned about Carmichael’s call for black power. The call was an urgent demand for change that spoke to an angry impatience on the part of African Americans as they knocked on the door of change and waited for it to open. King and other African American clergy, who had some major successes in the South confronting prejudice and discrimination, did not want that angry impatience exposed. However, King did understand that “the black community had had enough. But he believed that the Black Power movement was dyed in the stain of despair, inclined toward nihilism, and

destined for isolation and separation.” Still, not all African American clergy leaders were in the same camp as King.

In July 31, 1966, a group of African American clergymen would take out a statement in the New York Times stating that that Black church would call for the end of the misuse of power by American people so that “the cry for ‘black power’ [would] become inaudible, for the framework in which all power operates should include the power and experience of black men as well as white men.”

The group that emerged from the development of this statement formed the National Committee of Negro Churchmen. This group began to search for a theological connection to the black power movement as they were trying to find a way to provide needed leadership for African Americans as race riots broke out in Chicago, Cleveland, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.

The Beginning of Black Church Studies, 1967–1971

In a meeting in Dallas on November 1967, the National Committee of Negro Churchmen drafted a document, entitled “The Report of the Theological Commission of the National Committee of Negro Churchmen.” The agenda set forth by this commission called for a “theology relevant to the black revolution.” The development of a school of theological thought was needed as the call for black power grew stronger in the African American community and the African American church. African American clergy needed theological principles in order to lead their churches into a new era of activism against racial injustice. The Board of Directors of the National Committee of Negro Churchmen issued another statement in March 1968, stating that black theology was critical to their work for justice and making it clear

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161 Ibid.
that they “would no longer tolerate being bypassed by the power deputies of white church structures in their work with the black masses.”

By the time the National Committee of Negro Churchmen reconvened in St. Louis in October 1968, they were grieving the loss of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., tragically felled by an assassin’s bullet. Even as King’s voice became silent, new scholarship on black theology and religious studies emerged from such scholars as Albert Cleage, Joseph Johnson, Major Jones, Henry Mitchell, and J. Deotis Rodgers. People in the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, who had once called themselves Negroes, were also noting the significance of King’s death by using new nomenclature. They began to identify themselves as “black.” James H. Cone wrote of this shift:

The word "Negro" in their name reflected their close association with the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King, Jr., but their endorsement of Black Power indicated that they intended to separate themselves from King's unqualified acceptance of the concepts of nonviolence and integration. The word "Negro" remained in their name at least until the fall of 1968. By 1969, the word "Black" had replaced "Negro" and the word "Conference" later replaced "Committee," the first change indicating a further movement toward the affirmation of the idea of blackness and the second suggesting their permanent existence as a group.

Many who had called themselves “Negro” took up this name change. Now using the term “black” as in “black power,” when applied to the decedents of former slaves, allowed them to shake off an identity that was worn through like a threadbare coat. Later, this naming or renaming would allow for the use of “Afro-American” and “African American” when referring to a person of African descent in the United States.

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164 Ibid.
In November 1968, a meeting of seminarians and black clergy convened in Boston, Massachusetts, bringing clergy, seminarians, and theologians together to confer about the inclusion of all the questions that black men have about their experiences in the totality of the theological education curriculum.” Shortly thereafter, in 1969, African American religious scholars at Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta began organizing a group that by 1970 became The Society for the Study of Black Religion.

African American clergy from mainline denominations were inspired by the term “black power.” When the United Methodist Church formed from a union of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1966, a group called the Black Methodists for Church Renewal emerged to make sure that the discrimination that haunted the members of the Central Jurisdiction of the old Methodist Episcopal Church would not be repeated. “With black caucuses within predominantly white religious bodies calling for change, some religious leaders who had remained silent on the Civil Rights issues in the 1950s began to speak out.”

The term “black power” invigorated African American scholars in the theological academy as well. The most powerful framework for African American theological scholarship in the black power era came from theologian James Cone and his work in black theology. In 1969, James Cone published *Black Theology and Black Power*.

The publication...made room for an alternative strategy for the Black Church and an intrusive new tenant in the halls of academe. This method of theologizing had not been altogether absent during the years before King, but had sulked in the shadows outside the mainstream Black churches and the ivy-covered walls of

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their schools and colleges. The name given by Cone…was "Black liberation theology."  

Cone’s work would become “the religious first cousin to the Black Power philosophy enunciated and popularized by Stokely Carmichael.”  

With the work of James Cone, African American clergy and theologians would take on a more strident voice, articulating the need for the mainline theological academy to make black theology a part of the curricular fabric of its institutions. Other theologians called for the study of the African American Church as a religious body that made major contributions to the development of the Church in the United States and abroad. Joseph B. Bethea, then Director of the Black Church Studies Center at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, noted that this was the beginning of a “series of events and publications that was to establish black religious studies of black church as an integral part of any theological education that would be relevant in this latter part of the 20th century.”  

In 1970, the Executive Committee of the Association of Theological Schools called for a meeting of African American educators in the seminaries of the United States, based on a recommendation of its sub-unit, the Committee on the Black Religious Experience. The meeting that took place at Howard University sought to have the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) respond to the pressing concerns of African Americans who needed theological education. Black educators wanted seminaries in the United States to respond to their lack of curricula for African American students. In response, the ATS Executive Committee filed a report on the

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169 Ibid., 161.

education of African Americans in theological schools in the 1970 issue of *Theological Education and Supplement*.

At that ATS meeting, Dr. Charles Copher of Atlanta’s Interdenominational Theological Center suggested that seminary curricula focused on the black church and the black experience should have five guiding principles:

1. The discovery and reclamation of a black heritage that has been lost, unrecognized, or ignored as an entity of little or no value.
2. The development of a sense of dignity and worth, and of pride in the black heritage on the part of black people.
3. The increase of knowledge and the development of skills that will free black people from oppression and dehumanization, and enable them to survive in an unjust society.
4. The informing of white people of the black heritage toward the end of changing attitudes for the better, and of liberating white people from false notions.
5. The investigation and analysis of the black religious experience toward the end of discerning its liberating and life-sustaining aspects for the benefit of both black people and white people.\(^{171}\)

Charles Shelby Rooks, then associate director of the Fund for Theological Education and eventually president of Chicago Theological Seminary, reflected on the work of that committee in the spring 1970 issue of *Theological Education*. Describing the justification for black studies curricula that would be integrated into the curricular structure of ATS seminaries, Rooks wrote:

The committee believes that the Black religious experience offers theological education a unique and unparalleled opportunity for interdisciplinary approach to the curricula. Seminary instruction committees everywhere talk about interdisciplinary studies and how to do them. Yet, few people who talk about an interdisciplinary approach seem to realize that the issue, which might move such studies from the talking stage to action, is the Black religious experience. No other issue in American theological education so clearly cuts across curricula.

Theology, church history, biblical studies, the experiential and utilitarian aspects of theological education—all these could be the beneficiary of new life with the infusion of the Black experience.\textsuperscript{172}

This conference raised high hopes for its participants. Going forward, its participants planned to work with seminaries to change theological education for the better. The presence of black church studies in the curricula would “at the very least…be the most viable remaining opportunity in theological education for creative, imaginative, and innovative curricula development.”\textsuperscript{173}

In January 1971, an article in \textit{The Christian Century} reported that ATS seminaries had made little progress on the recommendations that came from the ATS meeting in 1970. The study conducted by \textit{Christian Century} and presented by Cornish Rodgers, an African American United Methodist clergyman, revealed that seminaries responded to the recommendations published in the 1970 publication only if African American students were adamant with their demands. “While there were a few notable exceptions, most schools did not seem to consider black studies an urgent matter until the peace of their own campus (or nearby ones) was threatened by black students, who in some cases were joined by radical whites.”\textsuperscript{174}

Responses by seminaries to the call for curricula relevant to African American students mostly resulted in thin course offerings like “Black Churchmanship, Black Preaching, Black History, Black Theology, and Black Worship.”\textsuperscript{175} Seminaries that added such courses altered...
their general curricula very little. The instructors who taught these courses were mostly part time faculty who were clergy or former pastors who did not hold advanced degrees.

The most creative response to the call for black theological education for African American students was from seminaries that were developing “black theological training centers in larger cities.” Seminaries in Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, and the Berkeley-San Francisco regions developed courses and practica in consortia to address urban and black ministry issues. This was not the remedy that African American students and scholars hoped for, however. The black theological training programs kept the “constituent seminaries free from having to change internally.” African American scholars and clergy continued to press for the inclusion of courses and programs for black church studies in seminary curricula, even though they had made progress in encouraging the theological academy to take African American clergy leadership education seriously.

**Black Theology and Black Church Studies in South Africa, from 1969**

The efforts of African American theologians to shape a Black theology and resulting curricula in Black Church Studies were not unnoticed abroad. James H. Cone’s book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, had invigorated South African theologians. In response to the power of Cone’s book, Dr. Basil Moore, an ordained Methodist minister and the organizer of the University Christian Movement Directorate of Theological Concerns, organized a group with Dr. Manas Buthelezi, and Rev. Bonganjalo Goba, who joined Moore as early investigators of the Black theology movement in the United States. The theology group known as Black Theology

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176 Ibid., 131.
177 Ibid.
South Africa (BTSA) benefited from “the dialogue that went on between the officials of the University Christian Movement and black theologians in the United States, especially James Cone.”  

James Cone’s books, *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation* prompted members of the University Christian Movement to converse with African American theological scholars in the United States in order “to learn as much as possible from them regarding this new method of theology, its socio-political motivation and context, and its vision of human liberation seen from a theological perspective.”

South African theologians began to articulate some of the foundational elements of African American theological thought, such as a God who sided with the oppressed. With the introduction of a new theological outlet for the frustration of black South Africans who struggled with life under apartheid, black South African clergy and others began to explore the usefulness of black theological thought in defeating the painful elements of the oppressive system under which they lived. In 1971, Stephen Biko, one leader of the all-black South African Students Organization, developed a theology commission on Black Liberation theology. The organization began to distribute information about Black Liberation theology beyond the walls of the academy to South African clergy, black and white. In the case of black South African clergy, the South African Students Organization hoped to encourage preaching and liturgy in churches that mitigated the themes of suffering and heavenly rewards, while inspiring parishioners and community members to act against an oppressive government system.

The University Christian Movement Black Theology Project, the South African Students Organization (SASO) Black Theology group, and its organization, the Black Community

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Programmes, established in 1971, worked to provide opportunities at conferences for the discussion and study of Black Theology. The University Christian Movement published papers from seminars on black theology, entitled “Essays on Black Theology,” edited by Sabelo Ntwasa.

“These three organizations took their theological insights “to church organizations like IDAMASA (Inter-denominational African Ministers Association of South Africa), AICA (African Independent Churches Association), and others.”

The effort to influence clergy leadership education took place in local communities in clergy group meetings, and in publications of articles by white and black South African theologians.

Interactions with South African theologians placed African American theological scholars and clergy in the United States at the forefront of an international civil rights movement. Seeking to offer knowledge about the African American religious experience and the wisdom of the civil rights movement, African American theologians focused on the creation of new African American clergy leadership education programs in theological schools and seminaries that would house an African American theological canon.

Conclusion

Challenges to African American church leadership education in the eras of the Reconstruction and the Great Migration kept African American clergy busy caring for the needs of congregants. African American clergy leadership education remained uneven. In the 1930s, there were multiple calls for changes in African American clergy leadership from educators and intellectuals in African American seminaries and colleges. With African American clergy

180 Ibid, 167.
participation in the modern civil rights era, the need for better leadership education was promoted. African American clergy and intellectuals began to press for new theological methodologies that would strengthen African American clergy leadership after the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The influence of the call for black power and the publications of Dr. James H. Cone led to conversations with South African theologians. The pursuit of new curricula for Africa American clergy leaders motivated African American scholars to create Black Church Studies programs in mainline seminaries.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK CHURCH STUDIES PROGRAMS, 1969–1990

Introduction

The initial Black Church Studies programs were developed in theological schools and seminaries in the United States, with the first prototype implemented at Colgate Rochester Crozer/Bexley Hall Divinity School in New York. This chapter begins with the history of that Black Church Studies program established in 1969, then reviews the Colgate Rochester Crozer pilot project that focused on the interactions of African American clergy and white faculty at Colgate Rochester Crozer Seminary. The history of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on the African American Church at Vanderbilt University and the Candler Program on Black Church Studies at Emory University are reviewed, revealing African Americans’ uneasy relationship with mainline theological seminaries in the American South and the challenge of establishing Black Church Studies programs in these two institutions. Both programs, established in 1985 and 1990 respectively, were inheritors of the legacy of prototype programs like that of Colgate Rochester Crozer/Bexley Hall Divinity School.
The Black Church Studies Program at Colgate Rochester Crozer/Bexley Hall Divinity School, 1969–1979

As African American theological scholars engaged in discussions about Black liberation theology, the opportunity to launch a Black Church Studies program—the first of its kind in the United States—occurred at Colgate Rochester Crozer/Bexley Hall Divinity School in Rochester, New York. The school had an historical connection to the civil rights movement because a young man named Martin Luther King Jr. graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the school in 1951. King had left behind a legacy of activism that Colgate Rochester Crozer/Bexley Hall African American students took up in 1967, as they lobbyed for the hiring of African American faculty. African American students at Crozer Seminary who organized a black student caucus “asked that an African American professor be hired to teach a course related to black history. During the 1967–68 academic year, two visiting professors taught just one day a week.” In the fall of 1968, a full-time African American professor, Rev. John David Cato, assistant minister at the Sea and Land Presbyterian Church in New York City, joined the faculty. Not satisfied with just one professor, on December 10, 1968, the Black Student Caucus demanded, among other things, that the next three faculty appointments be filled by African Americans and that the seminary hire African American staff for recruitment and field education.

When the administration of the school did not respond quickly to their demands, nineteen African American male students instituted a lock out, taking over a main campus building, beginning March 1968 and lasting eighteen days.

After a meeting of faculty, trustees, members of the Black Student Caucus, and invited African American scholars, in June 1969, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School President

Gene E. Bartlett announced the initiation of the Program of Black Church Studies. In September of that year, the Rev. Dr. Henry H. Mitchell was appointed to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Professorship of Black Church Studies and Director of Black Church Studies at Crozer. An African American faculty of six, who began teaching both black and white students from a course listing of eight subjects, joined him.

Dr. Mitchell served as director of the program until 1973, followed by Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, who became director and the Martin Luther King Jr. Professor of Black Church Studies from 1974 to 1983. As director, Dr. Wilmore, oversaw a grant funded program designed to model how white faculty and local African American clergy might work together in a specialized seminary program. The Lilly Foundation offered Colgate Rochester/Crozer /Bexley Hall Divinity School a grant to help the seminary explore interactions between African American pastors and white faculty members. Under the direction of Dr. Wilmore, the Black Church Leadership, and Faculty Development Project was designed “to diminish the isolation of predominantly white-oriented theological education from the dynamic religious life that historically shaped the black community and to have significant influence upon efforts to bind together black and white churches in mission.”

The grant also sought to enhance faculty development, so that seminary instructors worked with African American pastors, thereby gaining some perspective that “could be infused into the regular curriculum with large benefits for the training of future church leaders for areas where black and white churches should be working together.” The project, initiated in 1976 and ending in 1979, focused on discovering “knowledge and information…relevant to theological education, the black church, and the

183 Ibid.
mission of the whole people of God…in the United States. A major goal was to understand “the nature of black church leadership and the disjunction between that leadership and theological education offered by most American seminaries.” The major question explored by the study explored was, “Can it be assumed that there is a fund of practical knowledge, experience and spiritual strength in the black church which needs to be appropriated and built on by the predominant white seminary so that its graduates, black and white, might be better prepared for leadership?” In addition, the project sought to address the suspected isolation of the seminary from the African American church in Rochester, New York.

Eight African American pastors and six white seminary professors worked together on the Colgate-Rochester project from 1976 to 1979. Including Dr. Wilmore, the seminary professors who participated in the project were: Drs. James B. Ashbrook, Psychology and Theology; W. Kenneth Cauthen, Theology; Paul L. Hammer, New Testament; Werner L. Lemke, Old Testament; Lee Smith, Applied Theology; and Leonard M. Spielman, Church History. Eight pastors also participated in the project: Revs. Samuel Adams, Baptist; Walter C. Blue, Pentecostal; Leon Dupree, Church of God in Christ; Paul Garlington, Pentecostal; Clarence C. Garvin, Baptist; Andrew Gibson, African Methodist Episcopal Zion; Herbert V. Reid, Baptist; and Minister Franklin Florence, Church of Christ. Of the eight pastors, only one had attended seminary. These pastors were selected for the program from a group of forty pastors after a prescreening process. “Each pastor was personally interviewed by the director of the project and

184 Ibid., 85.
185 Ibid., 86.
186 Ibid., 88.
187 Ibid., 99.
invited to participate on the basis of background, experience, and readiness to both contribute to and benefit from the experiment.”

The diverse group of faculty and pastors meet for ten weekly seminars each semester and for three-week seminars over a two-year period. During that period, they discussed topics including Old and New Testament, Christian Theology, Christian Ethics and Urban Strategy, Ancient and American Church History, and Pastoral Leadership and Pastoral Counseling. The faculty members and ministers met in sessions where dialogue could take place, allowing the pastors to reflect on their experiences, because

it was assumed that the black pastors…had developed insights, bonds of experiential knowledge, and coping skills which had not only made them effective pastors in their own situations, but could inform white seminary professors and make them better able to prepare men and women in the regular M.Div. program.

The sessions began with dinner, followed by Bible study “because of the strong biblical orientation of the pastors.” Class discussion used the Bible to reflect on biblical and theological resources for preaching, counseling, and community action. Visiting black seminary professors served as consultants and helped both the pastors and the professors to understand some of the contributions of the academic study of black religion in the various disciplines of the curricula.

188 Ibid.
189 Ibid., 90.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
Using case studies and sermons, each two-and-a-half-hour session covered two subject areas. Worship was a major component of the session and, in the summer, pastors led worship for the group.

At the end of the two-year project, all pastors were interviewed about their experiences in the program. All six faculty members visited the eight pastors’ respective churches to assess what the pastors had learned. Congregants who might be able to evaluate the influence of the project on a particular pastor were interviewed. Faculty who participated in the project provided feedback about the experience and recorded their feedback in short papers at the conclusion of the project.

The final evaluation conference involving consultants from the Association of Theological Schools, the Fund for Theological Education, the Lilly Endowment, and the national staff of the American Baptist Convention was held on May 21–22, 1979. All faculty, administrators, students, and trustees of the seminary also participated in the conference.

The significant finding of the project was that although seminary faculty and non-seminary-trained pastors of African American churches from Rochester, New York, had differing levels of education, the differences did not limit their ability to work together as colleagues. The seminary faculty, when challenged by the presence of African American pastors, found that they were motivated to adapt material from their fields of study in order to be relevant to the pastors and the needs of their constituents. The pastors mastered subject matter “at a level of abstraction equivalent to the M.Div. degree, if appropriate methods of instruction and a favorable learning environment are present.”\(^\text{193}\) As to the effect on seminary curricula, insight about the bicultural roles of pastors and dual social existence of many urban African American

\(^{193}\) Ibid., 94.
Christians “are rarely taken into account by the normative disciplines, particularly in the practical fields, and need to be better utilized in the curriculum of the seminary.”¹⁹⁴ In the case of evaluating the project as a extension of black church studies, faculty became aware that

> the massive presence of the black church, with or without seminary-trained leadership, is an undeniable fact of religious life in our metropolitan areas where unemployment, substandard housing, poor health care, high rates of crime, low-quality public education, and increasing polarization between classes and races are inescapable realities. Most of the black ministers of churches, which face these realities daily, are well aware of their educational deficiencies and want to improve themselves in order to engage more effectively the problems of metropolis.¹⁹⁵

Crozer already had a Black Church Studies program, but this study reinforced a commitment to provide educational opportunities for clergy who did not have seminary degrees and provided a model program for other seminaries. The seminary hoped that such a project could help to gather information about the needs of African American clergy and their churches. In addition, the project inspired discussions in the African American community and the seminary about the gap that often exists between mainline seminaries and the African American religious community beyond its walls.

The current website of the Black Church Studies Program at Colgate Rochester Crozer details programs that include the Alternate Education Program, or PEARL (The Program of Education and Action for Responsible Leadership).¹⁹⁶ The PEARL program reflects the goals of the larger program, that is, “to prepare leadership for the Black Church [and] relate to the enrichment of educational experience for all students and to a strong relationship to the wider

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 87.
community of Rochester and its African American churches.” Appearing to take cues from the Dialogue Project of 1979, the Program of Education and Action for Responsible Leadership designed for clergy and laity “seeks to meet the theological educational needs of the Black Church and the Black community, while bringing churches and the school into closer cooperation to meet the needs of the world.”

Persons matriculating in the “three-year certificate program can complete 12 courses in Bible, Church History, Theology and Ethics, and Ministry/Community Studies.” After completion of the PEARL program, people may go on to acquire a certificate of study or a bachelor's degree earned through Crozer and Empire State College, State University of New York. Master of Divinity graduates of the seminary can use the program courses for continuing education credits.

Other seminaries established Black Church Studies programs after the Colgate-Rochester program was established. The Center for Urban Black Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, was developed in 1969, and the Church and the Black Experience program would emerge at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, the following year. The Office of Black Church Studies was established at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina in 1972. The development of the African American Church Studies Program at Fuller Theological Seminary followed in 1974. About a decade later, in 1985 the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies Program emerged at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Tennessee. In 1989, the Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio established the McCreary Center for African

197 Ibid.
199 Ibid.
American Religious Studies and, in 1990, the Program of Black Church Studies at the Candler School of Theology began at Emory University.\textsuperscript{200}

\textbf{The History of Vanderbilt University and the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies}

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South evolved after Methodists of the American South split from Methodist churches in the North over the issue of slavery. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, established in 1845, thrived until the American Civil War decimated the South, its citizens, and its economy. The end of the war found the church, like most southern institutions, in disarray. “Many congregations had ceased to exist, bureaucratic offices no longer functioned, church buildings and other church property had been severely damaged, and in many instances destroyed, ministers many places were unable to make their appointed rounds.”\textsuperscript{201}

In spite of the chaos, in 1866, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South met in New Orleans, in hopes of rebuilding the church. One of the first proposals from the General Conference was development of a seminary to train ministers for the church. The conference responded by recommending the appointment of men to “biblical chairs”\textsuperscript{202} to educate young men for the ministry. However, the South was in need of educated men to bring renewal to the South.

\textsuperscript{200} See Pollard, “Black Church Studies,” 103.


\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 44.
In 1871, the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South began to explore the construction of a university. Central University was established with five schools offering education in theology, law and medicine, normal, scientific, and literary studies. A board of trust was established to raise funds, to appoint persons to the faculty, and to determine the direction of the institution. However, the maintenance of the university was immediately at risk because of its difficulty in acquiring funds.

One of the university’s board members, Bishop Holland McTyeire of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South approached the wealthy philanthropist Cornelius Vanderbilt and his spouse for funds to support the new university. Vanderbilt promised a half million dollars to support the new institution. McTyeire returned to the board with the promise of the money and thereby changed the name of the institution from Central University to Vanderbilt University in honor of its benefactor. Vanderbilt would eventually contribute one million dollars to the institution that bore his name. Vanderbilt University opened in 1873 with a normal school, a law school, a medical school, a literary and scientific school, and a biblical studies department.

Vanderbilt Divinity School and the African American Presence

Vanderbilt Divinity School’s Bible Studies department, administered by Bishop McTyeire, sought to offer a curriculum that educated men for service to the church. The ethos of the Bible department reflected its Methodism founders. In addition to regular chapel services, there were class meetings, and mission work in prisons and orphanages that echoed the mission work of early Wesleyans. Instruction focused on Methodist history and systematic theology, as influenced by the work of John Wesley, Nathan Bangs, and Wilber Fisk. The department

203 Ibid.
promoted clergy education that served the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. To be sure, the promotion of clergy education within a seminary had its local detractors, many of whom felt that university- or college-based programs did not make the preacher. Those complaints notwithstanding, men still came to the Biblical Studies department. In 1915, by Board of Trust action, the Biblical Studies department became the Vanderbilt Divinity School, with its own dean and faculty.

The new university reflected its southern context and the de facto rules supporting racial segregation in the South. Therefore, both the university and theological department remained closed to African Americans. Ironically, there is a brief mention of two African American servants in the early history of the Divinity School. An African American woman named Aunt Mary and a man named Uncle Josh “would serve food in Wesley Hall, the residence for students that would be built in 1881.”204 Other than the mention of these black servants, Vanderbilt Divinity School appears to have made no room for African Americans, as the southern United States remained a bastion of segregation for African Americans. Vanderbilt’s school of religion remained closed to African American students until the 1950s.

In the 1950s, Harvie Branscomb, the chancellor of Vanderbilt University, requested that John Keith Benton, the dean of the Divinity School, investigate the development of admission policies for African Americans in fifteen southern seminaries. Benton collected information from thirteen schools and reported that ten southern seminaries “admitted blacks as regular students, but in general the enrollment was restricted to candidates from the denominations to which the

204 Ibid, 50.
school belonged…The Methodist divinity schools at Duke and Emory did not admit black students.”

The ten seminaries that taught African Americans permitted them to be in classes with white peers. These African Americans were able to earn the standard seminary degrees offered by each institution. In eight of the seminaries, African Americans could eat with their white classmates in seminary dining halls. In six schools, African Americans could live on campus. In five of the institutions, blacks were afforded the same educational and social privileges as white students without discrimination.

As the 1950s unfolded, Chancellor Branscomb was facing pressure to allow African Americans to enroll in the university, in spite of the local presence of schools that catered to African Americans, such as Fisk University and Tennessee State.

In September 1952, Dean Benton informed the Chancellor that the Divinity School faculty had adopted a resolution recommending that “instruction of the school should be open to qualified students without reference to their race or color.” Two African American students from Nashville’s Scarritt College for Christian Workers were allowed to take courses as a result. The first full-time African American student to matriculate for a degree at the school would be the Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Johnson, Jr., president and teacher at Phillips School of Theology, a Colored Methodist Episcopal seminary in Jackson, Tennessee. Johnson “had a doctorate in Theology from Illif School of Theology, but did not have a Bachelor of Divinity.”

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207 Ibid.

208 Scarritt College was a school for the training of women missionaries established by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. See the book by Alice Cobb, Yes Lord, I'll Do It: Scarritt’s Century of Service (Nashville, TN: Scarritt College, 1987).

Johnson, admitted to the School of Religion in 1953, would go on to acquire a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Vanderbilt University, graduating in 1958. While Johnson was a full time student, his presence did not challenge the university community or disrupt life at the Divinity School because he owned a home and did not live on campus. Johnson took meals in the University dining hall and was accompanied by Divinity School faculty members in hopes that he would not be accosted. These arrangements allowed Johnson to acquire two degrees from Vanderbilt without raising any concerns for the university.

James Lawson, an African American man who matriculated after Johnson, challenged the university and the Divinity School during his enrollment in a way that Johnson had not. Lawson had attended Baldwin Wallace College in Ohio, graduating in 1951. As a conscientious objector, he was sentenced to prison in 1951 for refusing to report for the draft during the Korean War. After his release from prison in 1952, Lawson, a staunch Methodist, went to India as a Methodist missionary. “While in India, he deepened his study of Gandhi’s use of nonviolence to achieve social and political change.”

In 1956, Lawson returned to the United States and began theological studies at Oberlin College’s School of Theology. In 1957, he was introduced to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was visiting the college. Due to King’s stance on nonviolence, Lawson engaged him in a conversation about civil rights work and the principles of nonviolence. Lawson intrigued King, who had also studied Gandhi’s principles. After the conversation, King encouraged Lawson to

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come South, telling him, "Don’t wait, come now. We need you now; we don't have anyone with your specific background in nonviolence."\textsuperscript{211}

Lawson moved to Nashville, Tennessee, and enrolled in Vanderbilt Divinity School in 1957. Already a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), he began working as the southern director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He also attended Vanderbilt during the day. At night and on weekends, Lawson would lead workshops on nonviolent protest in Nashville and several other southern states. He developed workshops for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the fledgling group that would become the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Eventually, Lawson focused his workshops on Nashville, in conjunction with the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference. Workshops took place at First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, the church led by an African American clergyman, the Rev. Kelly Miller Smith. After a number of workshop sessions, Lawson and others decided that desegregating Nashville would be a goal for members of conference groups that included students from Fisk University and the American Baptist Theological School. On Saturday, February 13, 1960, sit-ins were launched in Nashville in downtown stores. Local newspapers identified Lawson as the leader of the unrest.

Vanderbilt University was unable to tolerate such radical politics in its midst. On March 2, 1960, the executive committee of the Board of Trustees of Vanderbilt University met with the dean of the Divinity School, Dr. J. Robert Nelson, to discuss Lawson, his wayward student. Nelson presented a statement from Lawson stating that he “could not separate his thoughts and practice at the school from his commitment to the larger goal of dismantling racial segregation

Lawson’s statement on law and justice angered the executive committee and the board asked him to withdraw from the Divinity School or he would be expelled. The next day, Lawson was expelled, throwing the Divinity School into chaos for months. Faculty who supported Lawson lobbied for his reinstatement. Dean Nelson and some faculty resigned in protest over Lawson’s expulsion.

Despite alumni petitions, faculty resolutions and pressure from other camps, Lawson remained expelled and needed to attend the Boston University School of Theology to acquire his Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) degree in 1960. He would remain active in his work for civil rights, teaching nonviolent protest all over the South, eventually becoming a leader in the SCLC.

Lawson’s expulsion protest and the resulting upheaval at Vanderbilt Divinity School presented an opportunity for Rev. Kelly Miller Smith. Rev. Smith was a member and president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and president of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council. He was a charter member of the National Urban League, a civil rights organization, and he took an active leadership role in desegregating the Nashville Public Schools. His visibility in community politics was balanced by the respect that Smith received. His “attributes of grace, warmth, dignity, and diplomacy commanded the respect of the ruling white elites in the city.”

Due to his profile in the community, Dean Harrelson, who had become a member of Smith’s church, appointed Smith to the faculty of Vanderbilt Divinity School in 1969. The appointment of Smith was also strengthened by the fact that he taught homiletics part-time at American Baptist

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213 Ibid., 240.
College, an African American College in Nashville. Smith was appointed to a one-third-time position at the Vanderbilt Divinity School in order to recruit African American students and teach one course. He also hosted conferences on the African American church and invited African American theological scholars and preachers to the Divinity School. In turn, he made it possible for Divinity School faculty and students to learn more about the African American church and its gifts. Smith, in all his work at Vanderbilt, “attempted to span the chasm between the Divinity School and the [b]lack community.” However, Smith’s presence and work signaled a limited commitment to African Americans and institutional progress. “Smith’s appointment…was the clearest sign of the school’s minimalist commitment to institutional change.”

Only one other African American faculty person, Dr. Peter J. Paris, was appointed at the Divinity School during the entirety of Smith’s tenure. Smith labored at this work until his death in 1984.

The Divinity School honored the legacy that Dr. Smith left behind as it inaugurated the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies in 1985. The establishment of the program acknowledged that Smith had run a de facto Black Church Studies program since 1969, and the official program would build on his work. After 1985, the number of African American faculty would increase. In order of appointment, ethicist Walter Fluker, Hebrew Bible scholar Renita Weems, homiletician Eugene Sutton, and ethicist Victor Anderson were brought on to the faculty. Charles Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, would also carry on the work of Kelly Miller Smith as a part-time faculty member in homiletics and the practice of ministry.

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214 Ibid., 242.
215 Ibid., 241.
216 Ibid.
The presence of African American faculty and administration would not completely solve all of Vanderbilt’s concerns for African American students, but the institution continued to make strides in hiring faculty. By 1987, two tenure track faculty came to instruct at the Divinity School. The Rev. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor would join the faculty in 1990 as Visiting Professor and Liberation Theologian; Dr. James H. Cone would also teach at the school from 1995–96 as the Cole Lecturer. Current faculty are: Drs. Victor Anderson, Professor of Christian Ethics and African American Studies; Dale P. Andrews, Professor of Homiletics, Social Justice, and Practical Theology; Sandra Barnes, Professor of Sociology of Religion; Dennis C. Dickerson, Professor of History; Juan Floyd-Thomas, Associate Professor in the Field of Black Church Studies; Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Associate Professor of Ethics and Society; and Herbert Marbury Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible.

In 1988, Dr. Forrest Harris, Sr. was appointed as the first full-time director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies in the African American church and assistant professor of the practice of ministry. Dr. Harris has published three books: *What Does It Mean To Be Black and Christian: The Pulpit, Pew and the Academy in Dialogue, Ministry for Social Crisis: Theology and Praxis in the Black Church Tradition*, and *What Does It Mean To Be Black and Christian: The Meaning of the African American Church*.

Since his appointment, the Institute has offered forums, clergy and laity conferences, retreats, and the certificate program for black religious leadership. Under his administration, the Institute has focused on (1) the education of clergy and laity for leadership in ministry; (2) the promotion of dialogue between African American theologians and church leaders; (3) the development of research serials on the history of black religion in America, leadership in black churches, and black church theology, and the development of educational programs to enrich the
ministerial praxis in the black church.\textsuperscript{217} In the years Harris served as director, the Institute has sponsored a national forum on the question, “What Does It Mean to Be Black and Christian?”

“As a part of the Vanderbilt Divinity School, the Institute is an important resource for bridging African American church studies and theological education of African American laity and clergy for leadership in ministry.”\textsuperscript{218} The Institute prepares women and men for ministry in the African American church through its Certificate in Black Church Studies. The central focus of the certificate program is to bridge the church and theological academy as the church designs and implements social action ministry for congregational and community transformation.

“Persons enrolled in the program will give attention to (1) biblical materials focusing on justice and prophetic ministry, (2) theological problems arising out of the African American experience, (3) contemporary ethical dilemmas faced by Black persons in church and community, and (4) practical experience in designing and implementing social crisis ministry.”\textsuperscript{219} The program is open to clergy, lay people, and students in the Vanderbilt Divinity School.

The program seminars and workshops on Liberation Theologies and Social Ministry, Economic Empowerment, At-Risk Youth Ministry, and Church-Based Health Promotion are offered. An annual mandatory retreat and attendance at conferences is considered part of the curriculum. Vanderbilt Divinity students must complete a concentration of courses selected by the Institute and participate in at least four programs in order to earn the Certificate in Black Church Studies. A field education experience is required and must reflect one principle of the program. This component of the curriculum is developed in conjunction with the director of the

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 251.

\textsuperscript{218} Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies, About the Institute, http://divinity.vanderbilt.edu/programs/kmsi/kmsi_about.php (accessed March 15, 2012).

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
Institute and the field education faculty. Clergy and laity who complete designated continuing education seminars receive a Certificate in Black Church Studies from the Institute.

The History of Emory University and the Candler School of Theology
Black Church Studies Program

The Methodist Church, South established Vanderbilt University. With its founding, the church believed that it had a place of learning that would give the southern church and society the critical leaders that it would need. In June 1914, however, the Vanderbilt Board of Trust severed its ties with the church because of a dispute with church bishops over who would appoint university trustees. The Tennessee State Supreme Court case, which ruled on the split, forced the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to launch a plan for a newly affiliated southern university.

At the 1914 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, debate about establishing a university that would meet the needs of the church in the South continued. “Even more urgent… was the creation of a school of theology…to provide for some fifty loyal Methodist theological students at Vanderbilt who were ready to leave the institution which…renounced its Methodist bonds.”

The General Conference established an Education Commission charged with exploring the development of a church-related institution to train clergy. The commission included four bishops: W. B. Murrah, W. A. Candler, James H. McCoy, and John C. Kilgo. Asa Candler, the brother of Bishop W. A. Candler, also served on the commission with laymen from Memphis, Tennessee, Atlanta, Georgia, Louisiana, and Virginia. Clergy from Alabama, North Carolina, and Texas were also represented. The Commission began its deliberations in Birmingham,

———Boone M. Bowen, The Candler School of Theology: Sixty Years of Service (Atlanta, GA: Emory University Press, 1974), 10.
Alabama on June 17, 1914. In 1914, Emory College in Georgia sent a proposal to the Educational Commission following the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The proposal from the college offered its resources to the church for the education of its clergy. On July 15, 1914, the Commission met in Atlanta to consider the proposal that was presented by Emory College president, James Dickey. On July 16 of the same year, “Bishop Warren G. Candler, commissioner chairman, presented a letter from his brother, Asa G. Candler, offering $1 million to the Educational Commission for the endowment of a university definitely directed to the advancement of sound learning and pure religion.”

In addition, the letter stated, “To this end that the institution may be secured to the Church beyond the possibility of alienation at any time in the future, I will accompany this contribution with the deed of gift explicitly so providing.” This additional statement demonstrated Candler’s and the church’s concern about the establishment and protection of its colleges and universities, since the loss of Vanderbilt University was still an open wound for the church.

The charter for a new university in Atlanta was approved on January 25, 1915, establishing the power of the General Conference or designated agents to elect trustees and supervise property and assets. The new university was given permission to offer instruction in “theology, all the arts, sciences and professions, and all branches of higher instruction and learning.” Plans to place the university in Atlanta were supported by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce that contributed funds for its support. The School of Theology, later to be named the Candler School of Theology in honor of Bishop Candler, opened in 1914 in the Wesley

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222 Ibid., 179.

223 Ibid., 181.
Memorial Church in Atlanta. Emory College moved from Oxford, Georgia, to Atlanta in 1915 to help establish the university. Bishop Warren A. Candler, commissioner chairman, became the university’s first president.

The Candler School of Theology admitted women who were college graduates so that they could gain skills in “Christian service to the home and foreign mission fields and such other lines of activities open to women as the church may foster and maintain from time to time.” African Americans students were not admitted to any part of Emory University because of a state law. Even as the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954 was implemented in the nation, Georgia legislators resisted the order to integrate educational institutions in the state. By the late 1960s, very little had changed in many parts of the state, and separate but unequal schools remained in place. It would be 1961 before the Georgia legislature passed a law that mandated the desegregation of public education in the state.

This legal resolution did not help Emory University or Candler School of Theology. “Georgia still required that private educational institutions remain segregated or give up their exemption on taxes.” In 1962, Emory, prohibited from admitting African Americans, filed a lawsuit against the state of Georgia in the Georgia Supreme Court. The School of Dentistry wanted to admit an African American student, Ben F. Johnson, Jr. The dean of Emory Law School argued the case, and the university won the case that same year. Prevailing in court finally allowed Emory and other private institutions to retain tax-exempt status while admitting African American students.

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224 Ibid., 186.
225 Gary S. Hauk, A Legacy of Heart and Mind: Emory since 1836 (Atlanta, GA: Bookhouse Group, 1999), 114.
In January 1962, two African American women matriculated in Emory’s nursing school. In response to the Black Student Alliance, demands were made that Emory hire its first full-time black administrator, Marvin Arrington, a graduate of the Emory School of Law, as a student personnel adviser in 1969.

The theology school was by now given greater latitude in welcoming African Americans to its halls. In the past, the school had cooperated with Gammon Theological Seminary, established in 1883 by the Methodist Episcopal Church for African Americans. Candler collaborated with Gammon in promoting programs that allowed educational opportunities for African Americans and whites, while not forcing integration. Between 1936 and 1937, the Rev. Raymond Henderson of the African American Wheat Street Baptist Church spoke to the faculty of the theology school without incident. In 1949, “the Candler School and Gammon cooperated in an effort to help rural ministers. The two institutions operated the program on a segregated basis, but cooperated on curriculum and fund raising.”

The first African American faculty member at the Candler School of Theology was Grant Sneed Shockley, appointed in 1970. The first black man to graduate from Candler was the Rev. Dr. Otis Turner in 1974, and the first African American woman to graduate from the School of Theology was Rev. Felecia Pearson Smith in 1977.

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The Black Church Studies Program at Candler did not begin until 1990. Without historical documents to pinpoint the precipitating cause for the creation of the program, I sought information from a former director. Dr. Rosetta Ross offered the following information in an email:

The Black Church Studies program resulted from activism by students in the late 1980s. As a result of activism by the black caucus, then-Dean Jim Waits and Academic Dean Carl Holliday met with the caucus and drafted a job description for a "shepherd" for black church studies. Robert Franklin who had been in a similar post at Colgate-Rochester recently had lectured at Candler. He became the first director (serving as a full-time tenure track faculty member).” (Dr. Rosetta Ross Robbins, personal communication, August 2, 2011).


In the program brochure, the mission of the program is offered:

Candler’s Program of Black Church Studies seeks to offer significant leadership in the creation of a more just nation and world by calling our own institution to greater engagement with people of African descent in America, Africa, and throughout the world. It provides special counsel and advice to black graduate students and serves as a liaison to black alums. The Black church has long been the custodian of many of America’s most holistic values. The Program of Black Church Studies bears witness to these values by drawing on the broad spectrum that is black religion. It also works to establish liberating resources for the African American community, Africa, the Diaspora, and the interracial community of hope.

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229 The historical archives of the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology were not accessible during my field research. This severely limits the historical data about the program in this study. Contact with past program directors did not result in the acquisition of any historical data.

230 Dr. Rosetta Ross, email message to author, August 2, 2011.

231 Candler Program of Black Church Studies, Program Brochure, Brenda Bennefield, Program Associate for Black Church Studies, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, September 3, 2010.
The program offers the Certificate in Black Church Studies. Students seeking the certificate must attend a fall retreat, which serves as an orientation session for the program. Each student consults with an advisor and the program director as they move through the program. Students participate in a semester-long colloquy during the spring semester of either their second or third year of study at Candler School of Theology.

The Program of Black Church Studies sponsors chapel worship and annual lectures, such as the Howard Thurman Lecture, the Anna Julia Cooper Lecture, and the Bishop James S. Thomas Lecture. Travel seminars to Egypt and Ghana are offered. Participants in the program are encouraged to use the academic resources of Columbia Seminary, the Interdenominational Theological Center, and the African American Studies Department of Emory University.

Current faculty are: James Abbington, Associate Professor of Music and Worship; Michael Joseph Brown, Associate Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins and Director of the Graduate Division of Religion; Noel L. Erskine, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics; Teresa L. Fry Brown, Associate Professor of Homiletics; Emmanuel Y. Lartey, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Care and Counseling; Luther E. Smith, Jr., Professor of Church and Community; Andrea C. White, Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture; Bishop Woodie W. White, Bishop in Residence.

The program has sponsored major conferences. In 2006, Alton B. Pollard III, then director of the Candler's Black Church Studies program, and Forrest Harris, director of the Kelly Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School, sponsored the first National Black Church Studies Forum at Candler. “Dr. Gayraud Wilmore, retired from the faculty at Atlanta's Interdenominational Theological Center and considered to be the ‘dean of
black church studies,” offered the keynote address.”232 In January 2009, the Fifth Annual the Black Church Studies program at Candler School of Theology, Emory’s Graduate Division of Religion, and the Kelly Miller Smith Institute of the Vanderbilt Divinity School sponsored the Black Church Studies Summit.233 The conference, entitled The Viability of the Black Church Twenty Years Later, 1990–2010, featured former directors Dr. Alton Pollard and Dr. Robert Franklin as speakers. Dr. Walter Fluker and Dr. Katie G. Cannon also spoke at the event.

Dr. Pollard suggests,234 “By most standards the Black Church Studies programs with the highest US profile are at Vanderbilt Divinity School and Emory University’s Candler School of Theology.”235 For the purpose of this study, these two university-related programs are analyzed using interviews from participants in the two programs for insights about the state of Black Church Studies and African American clergy leadership in the American theological academy.

**Conclusion**

The initiation of a pilot program in African American clergy leadership education at Colgate Rochester Bexley Divinity School gave African American scholars and clergy a prototype for the development of such programs in seminaries. As other programs developed from 1969 to 1990, African American scholars and clergy found spaces to lodge in the

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234 20th Anniversary: The Black Church Studies Program Presents, Candler School of Theology. PDF document. Brenda Bennefield, Program Associate for Black Church Studies, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, email to author, September 3, 2010.

theological academy, as the programs offered theological courses designed to marry African American religious history and experience with the work of African American clergy. In these programs, African Americans theologians had a platform to address Mays’ concerns about African American clergy leadership and Thurman’s compassion for the disenfranchised.

In 2012, only three of these African American clergy leadership programs are housed in university-affiliated seminaries. This study is concerned with two of those programs—at Candler School of Theology at Emory University and Vanderbilt School of Theology at Vanderbilt University—because this research was developed to inform the development of an African American clergy leadership program at Boston University School of Theology. Therefore, there remains the task of assessing how these programs have served African American clergy leaders. First, however, there must be a review of the theological foundations on which these programs rest.
CHAPTER FIVE

ELEMENTS OF BLACK LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN THE COMMUNITY CHURCH AND THE THEOLOGICAL ACADEMY

Introduction

The education of African American clergy leaders in Black Church Studies programs has its foundation in the exploration of the development of theology by African Americans in the United States. This chapter provides an overview of that development by beginning with the development of Christian theology by African American slaves in the United States. African American leaders, such as Demark Vesey, Nat Turner, Robert Young, David Walker, and Frederick Douglass, used their literacy to inspire African Americans to oppose slavery. The libatory language of clergyman Henry Highland Garnet and the call for a theology for African Americans by Bishop Henry McNeil Turner serve as foundational frames for twentieth-century theologians. The work of Rev. Howard Thurman and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are reviewed here as examples of the development of African American theological thought in the twentieth century. James H. Cone’s Black Liberation theology that emerged from reaction to the black power movement is discussed. Finally, the chapter reviews womanist theology as corrective to black liberation theology, using the work of womanist theologians Katie Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, Delores Williams, and Emile Townes. In the theological academy, where the state of the African American church is studied, the works of these theologians still serve as foundational texts in the study of black liberation and womanist theologies. Therefore, they are noted in this chapter as critical keys to understanding some of the curricular material that
participants in African American clergy leadership programs examine as they experience Black Church Studies.

Theological Thought of African Americans in Slavery

When Africans were enslaved in Africa, a great many fell victim to the unbearable machinery of slavery in the United States of America. They found themselves ripped from family, community, rights, and their very humanity. Broken and bewildered by their state, they made slow adjustment to a life that separated them from all they had known. It did not help that they were treated as animals and/or property. In spite of slave owner declarations that Africans had no souls, Africans did bring to American soil a worldview of the human connection to divinity. They melded fragments of their religious worldviews with the Christian theology and praxis they were exposed to by white people, particularly Christian missionaries, clergy, and slave owners.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel began mission work with slaves, even as slave owners fretted about Negroes “growing too proud on seeing themselves upon a level with their masters in religious matters.”

In response to slave owners’ fears, white preachers exposed African Americans to a Christianity that introduced them to God, but still kept them restricted as slaves. African Americans dealt with a number of contradictions in the Christianity they were offered. They were always dealing with “white versus black, earthly freedom versus heavenly freedom…equality versus racial hierarchy, theologically ordained privilege versus divinely

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backed subordination, mind versus body, civilized versus heathen.”

These contradictions that always placed African Americans at the lowest state were supported by whites’ interpretations of the Bible.

White clergy, missionaries, and slave owners introduced the Bible to African American slaves as the source of understanding Christianity and God. They carefully selected biblical texts that supported a Christianity that reinforced the second-class status of the African people they enslaved. “The pantheon of premier texts regularly cited in support of slavery included primarily six Christian Scripture texts: 1 Corinthians 7:2021 2, Ephesians 6:5–9 3, Colossians 3:22, 4:1 4, 1 Peter 2:18–25 5, Philemon 10–18 6, and 1 Timothy 6:20–21.”

From those texts, they promoted a theology that reinforced the condition of slavery as part of a God-given status of African people. These texts put the African American slave outside the realm of God’s liberating acts of deliverance. Slave masters used these texts to justify that “Paul never suggested that slavery was sinful, and, like Jesus, Paul was quite aware of the cruelties of the slavery practices in the Roman Empire.”

As African American slaves appropriated a different set of texts by secretly learning to read or hearing the Bible, they turned to the texts of the Hebrew Bible. “They were attracted primarily to the narratives of the Hebrew Bible dealing with the adventures of the Hebrews in bondage and escaping from bondage, to the oracles of the eighteenth-century prophets and their denunciations of social injustice and visions of social justice and to the New Testament texts

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239 Ibid.
concerning the compassion, passion, and resurrection of Jesus. With these and other texts
African American Christians laid the foundation for what can be seen as an emerging canon.”
They interpreted scripture texts in order to internalize resilient responses to dealing with their
painful circumstances.

The slaves developed a theology that helped them cope with the unbearable burden of an
enslavement, which did not release them until death. They believed that “just as God delivered
the Hebrew children from Egyptian bondage and Daniel in the lion’s den, so God [would] also
deliver African slaves from American slavery and will…bestow upon them the gift of eternal
life.” However, their true concern was not eternal life, but how God might act on their behalf
in the world in which they lived. Slaves constructed a theology in which the elements of justice,
hope, and love were present.

The most prominent theme in this trinity of divine virtues is the justice of
God…African Americans have always believed in the living presence of the God
who establishes the right by punishing the wicked and liberating their victims
from oppression. Everyone will be rewarded and punished according to their
deeds and no one—absolutely no one—can escape the judgment of God.

Based on these theological reckonings, slaves kept their eyes on slave owners and
understood that those owners would face God’s punishment for the sin of slavery. That long-
term view of the activity of God was fueled by hope. “The theme of justice is closely related to
the idea of hope. The God who establishes the right and puts down the wrong is the sole basis of
the hope that the suffering of victims will be eliminated.”

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241 Cone, “God and Black Suffering,” 704.
242 Ibid., 702–3.
243 Ibid., 703.
Slaves who examined the Bible found that God loved them just because they were part of God’s creation. “God's creation of all persons in the divine image bestows sacredness upon human beings and thus makes them the children of God. To violate any person's dignity is to transgress God's great law of love."244 Using the three theological anchors of justice, hope, and love, African Americans were able to bear oppression and eventually give witness to a God who was on the side of the lowest of the low.

Slaves developed a context in which their theology could be embodied in liturgy and preaching. Many of the slaves, therefore, created a secret church, labeled by African American scholar Albert Raboteau as the "invisible institution."245 They would steal away into the woods at night, away from the constraints of a church and religion constructed by slave owners. “One practice was to meet in secluded places—woods, gullies, ravines, and thickets… called hush harbors."246 Gathered in a circle, African American men and women spoke from behind quilts and into huge cooking pots to muffle sound. They cried out for their liberation from bondage. They sang songs called spirituals that had a message of liberation, noting that “God’s righteousness is revealed in deliverance of the oppressed from shackles of human bondage.”247 With a hidden hope, they sang musical notes and lyrics of “Negro or Black spirituals [that] expressed their repudiation of the contradiction between slavery and the gospel.”248

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244 Ibid., 704.
246 Ibid., 215.
reflection from these courageous African Americans was also found in the sermons of African American slave preachers in the hush harbor.

These slave preachers preached sermons using their knowledge of the Bible, the liberating theology, and the faith of the slave community, becoming leaders who would dare encourage a theological freedom that African Americans needed to face the negative effects of slavery. The men who were leaders in difficult situations were forerunners of nineteenth-century leaders who spoke and acted for the liberation of African American people.

Historical Resources for Black Liberation Theology in the United States

Several African American men in the nineteenth century made early contributions to the historical roots of black liberation theology. Demark Vesey had been a member of Charleston, South Carolina’s AME Church when he began a plot to lead a revolt against slave owners in the area. Vesey, a former slave, influenced African Americans to rebel by stating that the Bible sanctioned the deaths of slave owners in order for the liberation of African Americans to take place. In court records, Vesey was understood to have spoken of “the creation of the world, in which he would say all men had equal rights, blacks as well as whites.” Vesey was betrayed by an informant, tried in a court, and executed along with other African American men in 1822. The AME Church was shut down and its pastor, Morris Brown, moved to Philadelphia to become an assistant to Bishop Richard Allen.

The next wave of rebellion came in the form of prose from Robert Alexander Young and David Walker. A free African American man from New York City and abolitionist, Robert

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Alexander Young wrote *The Ethiopian Manifesto, Issued in Defense of the Blackman’s Rights, in the Scale of Universal Freedom*, published in New York in 1829.\textsuperscript{250} His pamphlet presented the theme of divine judgment, reminding slave owners that

> Your God, the great and mighty God…hath looked down with mercy on your suffering slave; his cries have called for a vindication of his rights and know ye they had been heard by the Majesty of heaven….Both voice of intuitive justice speaks aloud to you, and bids you to release your slave; otherwise…eternal stings of an outraged and goading conscience will, ere long, hold all them in subjection who pay not due attention to this, its admonition.\textsuperscript{251}

Young further emphasized the centrality of freedom from slavery and justice for African Americans who have the “decree of emancipation…already issued from the throne of heaven.”\textsuperscript{252} He promoted a God who was more powerful than the slave owners and their theological justification for the degradation of African American people. He further inferred that there was a second person of the trinity sent by God, a “black messiah who will liberate the African peoples of the world.”\textsuperscript{253} Overall, Young emphasized that African Americans should depend on a “deity whose love and justice were to be displayed in human history.”\textsuperscript{254}

David Walker, a northern African American abolitionist from Boston and member of May Street Black Methodist Church, published *David Walker’s Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* in 1829. In this pamphlet, Walker addresses many of the same themes as Young. Walker was dismayed by the biblical teachings that African American slaves received about a God that kept them submissive. “According to Walker’s understanding of Christianity, the


\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
church’s complicity with slavery stood in stark opposition to the teachings of Jesus.” He felt that true Christianity, recognizing the humanity of the African American was in accordance with a God who created all people. Failure to recognize that God created all people equal would bring about punishment because God “being a just and holy Being will one day appear fully on behalf of the oppressed and arrest the progress of the… oppressors.” Walker, like Young, believed that the hope for justice was the food that kept broken African American people alive. That same hope for justice and liberation that remained unfulfilled was an indictment of those who promoted slavery. Walker’s critical theological question confronted the slave owners: “Can the Americans escape, God Almighty? If they do, can he be a God of justice.” Walker did not encourage African Americans to be passive partners with whites in waiting for liberation to come. Walker encouraged African Americans to be assertive in their demand for liberation. He boldly insisted that men needed to fight racism that denigrated the men of the Black race by diminishing their humanity. The theological messages about confronting white Americans about injustice to the African Americans in Walker’s publication were not well received. However, the threat that white Americans feared the publication of the *Appeal* came not from Walker, but from Nat Turner.

Nat Turner learned to read and write as a child. As a member of the Baptist church in Southampton County, Virginia, he was an avid Bible reader and extremely religious preacher.

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255 Ibid., 539.
256 Ibid., 540.
257 Ibid.
Turner, who was called, experienced visions that he believed were messages from God. In 1828, he had an experience in which the “Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first.” Turner was convinced by his vision that he should “slay his enemies with their own weapons.” On August 21, 1831, he led a slave rebellion in order to kill slave owners and liberate slaves. For his crimes, he was executed on November 11, 1831.

African American theological interpretations about liberation did not stop with Nat Turner's action. New protests were forged with pen and paper from men such as Frederick Douglass.

Ex-slave, orator, and abolitionist, Fredrick Douglass published his book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in 1845. In this book, he told his life story and confronted Christian slave owners and the churches that supported the enslavement of African Americans. His prose reflects the language that will be used by practitioners of twentieth-century black liberation theology in their theological critique of the white church.

We have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church members. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. The slave prison and the church stand near each other. The clanking of fetters and the rattling of chains in the prison, and the pious psalm and solemn prayer in the church, may be heard at the same time. The dealers in the bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence of the pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support

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260 Ibid.
the pulpit, and the pulpit, in return, covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity. Here we have religion and robbery the allies of each other.”

This development of theological language and arguments moved to the pulpit of two clergy in the nineteenth century–Henry Highland Garnet and Bishop Henry McNeal Turner. Garnet had been a slave until he fled north with his family at the age of nine years old. After theological training at Oneida Theological Institute in Whitesboro, Garnet became a Presbyterian clergyman, pastoring Liberty Street Church in Troy, New York. In 1843, Garnet, known for his abolitionist activity, made a speech at the National Negro Convention in Buffalo, New York, entitled "Call to Rebellion.” In that speech, Garnet reminded listeners that Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner had resisted slavery in their own manner. Garnet appeared to call for open rebellion against slavery, stating,

Brethren, it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors when the bloody foot-prints of the first remorseless soul-thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. Brethren, the time has come when you must act for yourselves…Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves…Let your motto be resistance! resistance! RESISTANCE! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance.

Abolitionist such as Frederick Douglass did not welcome Garnet’s call for resistance, and Douglass rejected Garnet’s strong language and stance in that convention. Garnet held his ground, however, and remained a vocal advocate for African American resistance to enslavement and discrimination.

Bishop Henry McNeal Turner also made a major contribution to the history of black liberation theology. The nineteenth-century clergyman, elected bishop of the African Methodist Church in 1880, had served as an army chaplain, held a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives during Reconstruction, and worked as an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau. Turner's role as a clergyman made him part of the vanguard of African American ministers who "wanted an equal society for all after the Civil War. These religious leaders combined religion and politics to implement the aims of African Americans as new citizens of the United States."264

Turner was unapologetic about his theological framing of God. His foremost concern was the survival of African American people under the oppressive burden of life in the United States. His theology was aimed at helping African Americans to realize that they had a stake in forming a theology that met their needs. He wrote:

Since time began those who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why shouldn't the Negro believe that he resembles God as much so as any other people? We do not believe that there is any hope for a race of people who do not believe they look like God.265

Turner, in his preaching and publications, promoted a theology that alienated African Americans and some clergy leaders of the AME church. However, as historian Gayraud S. Wilmore summarized, Henry McNeal Turner "made a black theology of liberation the core of his preaching and writing, and helped to implant the spirit of revolutionary religion…taking up the struggle against colonialism and racism in the last quarter of the century."266

266 Ibid., 365.
ruminations of slaves and the contributions of advocates like Young, Walker, Vesey, Turner, Douglass, Garnet, and Henry McNeal Turner offered streams of theological reflection for clergy and theologians of the twentieth century to engage.

Theologian Howard Thurman adopted the Christian theology of slave communities, as he recognized Jesus as one who identified with the marginalized in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*, and he mined the Negro spirituals for affirmations about the resilience of African Americans in his 1955 book *Deep River: Reflections on the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals*. Although Thurman was concerned about racial justice, he “did not become a political activist; he took the “inward journey,” focusing on the spiritual quest for liberation beyond race and ethnic origin. He was able to develop this universalist perspective without ignoring the urgency of the political issues involved in the black struggle for justice.”

In his book *The Luminous Darkness*, Thurman wrote about the effects of discrimination and segregation on communities, stating, “Segregation is a sickness and no one who lives within its reach can claim or expect immunity. It makes men dishonest by forcing them to call an evil thing good; it makes men discourteous and rude when it is contrary to their temperaments and sense of values to do so.”

With the development of the modern civil rights movement in the United States, African Americans reached for their theological resources in scripture and song. They, like their ancestors, called on a God who loved them and sustained them, a Jesus who suffered as they

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suffered, and a spirit of hope as they faced racism in twentieth-century America. Their theological leadership came from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

King, an African American preacher, used the resources of the African American church in the civil rights struggle. He had encounters with racism in his youth, and inspired by the religious teaching of his parents, he believed that he had every right to the American dream as a citizen of the United States. King was educated in the moral and theological structures of the Africa American church by a clergy father, Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. His father, who understood his role as both a church pastor and community leader, led community protests, exhibiting his belief that African American citizens could access the American system of rights and privileges.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s theology “focused on the themes of justice, love, and hope, all grounded in the black church's faith in Jesus Christ.” ²⁶⁹ He extended the challenge to love the enemy as presented in Christian scripture and theologically embraced by African American slaves. He called on all Americans to take responsibility for oppressing African Americans in the context of racism and segregation, so that there might be reconciliation in the body of Christ. King evolved from an African American preacher of justice to a civil rights leader who preached to “the white segregationists, [who] refused to acknowledge the worth and dignity of all people.” ²⁷⁰ He pleaded with segregationists to realize that to refuse to unify with African Americans was “blasphemy and... segregation…a blatant denial of the unity…in Christ.” ²⁷¹


²⁷¹ Ibid.
King also used his theological training at Crozer Seminary and Boston University School of Theology to enhance the theological concepts embraced by the African American church. Theologian James Cone perceived that in addition to using resources from the church, “King drew from other intellectual sources, namely, black ‘secular’ integrationism, Protestant liberalism, and the nonviolent protest tradition of Gandhi and Thoreau.”

King Jr. was also adept at blending the theological wisdom from the African American community. “While Walter Rauschenbusch and other liberal theologians influenced his views regarding the American dream and the beloved community, the integration tradition of Douglass, NAACP, and the Urban League was more decisive in determining King’s ideas.” King both exegeted meaning from the African American context and mined the resources of community organizations while at Boston University. His leadership principles, enhanced by his theological scholarship at Colgate Crozer and doctoral work at Boston University, helped him to develop a Hegelian method in working to protest the unfair treatment of African Americans:

King’s thought, like Hegel's, emerged out of his encounter with two opposites and his endeavor to achieve a synthesis of the truth found in each…King's philosophy of integration and his strategy of nonviolent direct action evolved from his rejection of both the accommodationism of black conservatives and the separatism of black nationalists.

King also read Reinhold Niebuhr’s Moral Man and Immoral Society, but he felt that Niebuhr’s “estimate of human nature was too low and his view of love was restricted to relations

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272 Cone, “The Theology of Martin Luther King Jr.,” 22.
273 Ibid.
274 Ibid., 23.
between individuals and not applicable to society."²⁷⁵ For King, the emphasis on love for one another in society was deepened by the teachings of the African American church.

King also explored the state of suffering as a means of motivating change in American society. He took the history of suffering by African Americans and elevated it to a method of empowerment. He wrote in his book The Stride to Freedom:

We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering….Do to us what you will and we will still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children; send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities and drag us out on some wayside road, beating us and leaving us half dead, and we will still love you. But we will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And in winning our freedom we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.²⁷⁶

Theologically sophisticated from graduate theological education and spiritually shaped by the African American church, King developed a theological synthesis that pointed to a new worldview. “Everything King did and said regarding the church and society was intended to create a new community in which love and justice defined the relationship between all people.”²⁷⁷ By the time he began to speak about the war in Vietnam and the trouble in Latin America, he had cultivated a global theological methodology. King’s evolving worldview was based on the African American theological frames of suffering, justice, hope, and a love that bound the survival of the global community to the ability to honor the God in the humanity of the other man.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.
²⁷⁶ Ibid.
²⁷⁷ Ibid., 29.
The Emergence of Black Power and Its Influence on Theology

In June 1966, the Meredith Mississippi March against Fear, led by civil rights activist James Meredith, was held to inspire African Americans to register to vote in the United States. Frustration and intimidation followed the marchers as they moved from Memphis to Jackson, Tennessee. Meredith was shot on June 6, 1966 and other civil rights activists, including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Floyd McKissick of the Congress of Racial Equality, and Stokely Carmichael, leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SCLC), took on the leadership of the march. On the march, the call for “black power” came from a frustrated Stokely Carmichael, who had been arrested many times. This phrase, first used publicly by Carmichael on June 16, 1966, resonated with African Americans who felt that suffering, as modeled by the Rev. Dr. King Jr., did not provide enough influence to encourage change in American society. Instead, the call for “black power” was meant to expose the other experience of suffering, that of anger and impatience with the wait for freedom from racism and injustice. However, King could not accept the premise of “black power.”

In accordance with this theological vision, King initially rejected black power because of its connotations of revenge, hate, and violence. He believed that no beloved community of blacks and whites could be created out of bitterness. When black-power militants turned away from nonviolence and openly preached self-defense and violence, King said that he would continue to preach nonviolence even if he became its only advocate.278

However, many African Americans, including clergy, were ready to explore the new theological opportunities that the term “black power” offered African American theological scholarship and the Church. One African American clergyman and scholar who would bring the exploration of “black power” to the church and the academy was theologian James H. Cone.

278 James H. Cone, “Calling the Oppressors to Account for Four Centuries of Terror,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31, no. 3 (June 2004), 182.
Cone, an AME minister with a Ph.D. in Theology from Northwestern University, published his book *Black Theology and Black Power* in 1969.

The first chapter of his book explains the definition and context of black power. Black power means “complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary...[It] is an attitude, an inward affirmation of the essential worth of blackness.”  

Cone suggested that there was a need for a black theology rooted in the context of African American Christians. That theology had to include a repudiation of discrimination against African Americans. That theology began with Jesus, “who is God himself coming into the very depths of human existence for the sole purpose of striking off the chains of slavery...Jesus’ work is essentially one of liberation.” Therefore, a black power that advocates the liberation, from discrimination, and affirms the status of people of African descent, carries a message. “The message of Black Power is the message of Christ himself...Christianity is not alien to Black Power; it is Black Power.”

Cone linked evil in Christianity to the evil perpetuated by white people against African American people in American society. He claimed that racism is so embodied in American white people that they can no longer identify racism as evil. Discrimination and hatred against African Americans seem like part of the natural context of life. If black liberation theology confronts the sins of white persons in their white churches, the result must be that white churches become *black*. “It is the job of the Church to become black...and accept the shame which white society

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280 Ibid., 35.
281 Ibid., 37–38.
places on blacks…The church knows that what is shame to the world is holiness to God.”

Therefore, the white church must embrace a Christ that has taken on “blackness.” In this manner, the state of blackness becomes good. Failure to embrace this blackness is to promote racism, which allows for the continued oppression of people of African descent. This is sin. The white church and its people by virtue of their sin exclude the Christ, who must operate outside “the denominational white church.”

Cone suggested that the salvation of the white church and white people is predicated on repentance. The white church “must own that it has been and is a racist institution whose primary purpose is the perpetuation of white supremacy.” Cone wanted the white church and its people to make room for black theology and black people as it accepted that repentance was their only way forward as members of the Christian community. He pressed the white church to understand that “to repent involves change in one’s whole being. In the Christian prospective, this means conversion…For the White church[es], this means a radical reorientation of their style in the world toward blacks. It means that they must change sides, giving up all claims to lofty neutrality.” Cone challenged the white church not only to see the oppressed, but to identify with them as well. Cone also critiqued the African American church for its acceptance of theological norms set by the white church, and a theology developed by white people. The African American church, which started out with the affirmation of a theology that promoted the freedom of African American people, compromised its mission and theological message when oppression and racism eroded the world around them. While Cone understands that such

282 Ibid., 69.
283 Ibid., 80.
284 Ibid., 81.
285 Ibid.
strategies may have been successful in preserving the African American church as an institution, he suggests that “[t]he real sin of the Black church and its leaders is that they convinced themselves that they were doing the right thing by advocating obedience to white oppression as a means of entering at death…heavenly bliss.” In order to repent of the “sin” of misleading African American people, the African American church had to recognize that because they “by virtue of being black…automatically [one is] a part of the unwanted.”

“The African American church must reaffirm this status, accepting the meaning of blackness in a white society and incorporating it into the language and work of the gospel.”

Clearly, Cone and his followers believed that the church must be aggressive in combating any dehumanizing limitations of African American people in the United States and that the African American church must promote a black theology that would “discuss the doctrine of God, man, Christ, Church, Holy Spirit…making each doctrine an analysis of the emancipation of black people.” As a result, black theology promoted an eschatology that is concerned with justice in the now rather the notion of comfort in heavenly places. The theological influence of the work of James H. Cone was a crucial part of African American clergy leadership education as African American clergymen prepared to be leaders of church and community. Cone’s work was used as a platform on which they gained theological authority to act boldly in promoting a theological imperative for liberation for African American people. After further exploration of Cone’s work, African American women theological scholars began to analyze his work for its lack of attention to African American women’s experience.

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286 Ibid., 106.
287 Ibid., 113.
288 Ibid., 121.
**Womanist Theology**

In response to Cone’s development of black theology, African American women in theological studies began to explore the meaning of black theology in their lives. They sought to have womanist theological thought—that is, the theological contributions of African American women—stand as a corrective to the work of James H. Cone, who had not made room in his work for African American women’s experience of God, liberation or justice. The first scholar to explore African American women and theology was Katie Cannon, who promoted related scholarship by using the term womanist.

Cannon’s article, “The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness,” written for the anthology *The Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, edited by Letty M. Russell, presented the African American woman’s historical context in the United States as chaotic and harmful. Cannon reviewed the status of African American women from the launch of slavery in the United States. In slavery, Cannon suggested that African American women faced both racism and sexism in the sexual abuse of their bodies and the exploitation of their labor. Their ability to nurture family and community was constantly interrupted by the selling of family and community members. Cannon then traces the historical struggle of African American women to retain dignity and meaningful lives in the context of racisms and sexism.

She subsequently exposes the resourcefulness of those same women who used religious resources to cultivate a resilience that helped them to survive. African American women developed a theology of survival with religious resources built on a “confidence in the

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sovereignty of God, an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God.”290 The preeminent resource was an African American church that provided biblical scripture, hymns and creative preaching to shape a theology that shifted in order to meet the needs of African American women. “The faith assertions of the Black church encouraged slaves to reject any teachings that attempted to reconcile slavery with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”291

With the end of slavery in the United States, African American women again turned to the church when their rights were denied during post-Civil War Reconstruction. Again, according to Cannon, the African American church supplied theological resources about God and the state of God’s relationship to African Americans, such as “scripture lessons…that focused on Christians working to help the social order come into harmony with the divine plan.”292 African American women in churches used scripture to form a librative theology that was concerned with the well-being of African American women, men, and children living under the oppressive racial regime in the American South with discriminatory laws, such as Jim Crow and the Black Codes. They felt mandated to do such because “the biblical teachings of the Black church served as a bulwark against laws, systems, and structure that labeled black people as nonentities.”293 If such mandates came from the Bible, then the God who provided such language had to be a God who spurned the oppression of African American women and their communities.

Cannon traced the activity of African American women through the beginning of the twentieth century, providing a picture of African American women who fought oppression through the Great Migration, wars, and the modern civil rights movement. In spite of their many

290 Ibid., 31.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid., 33.
293 Ibid., 35.
crusades for justice, African American women remained poor, overlooked and disappointed in their lack of progress in due to “the history and ideological hegemony of racism, sexism, and class privilege.”

Cannon initially describes activities of self-advocacy by African American women instigated as “Black feminist consciousness.” The development of that consciousness is a daily exercise in the confrontation of gender, race, and class oppression. Ultimately, Cannon reforms the term, “Black feminist consciousness,” into “Black womanist consciousness.” Cannon was the first African American womanist scholar to incorporate Alice Walker’s definition of a womanist, from her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose:*

(1) From *womanish.* (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “you acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. *Serious.*

(2) *Also:* A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally, a universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige and black?” Ans. “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

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294 Ibid., 39.
295 Ibid.
296 Ibid., 40.

(4) Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.297

With the work of Cannon, African American theological scholars expanded the discussion of African American women and their theological experiences to the exploration of sexism, racism, and classism hindering their work in the theological academy and church. African American women theologians such as Jacquelyn Grant, Delores Williams, and Emile M. Townes used Cannon’s introduction of Walker’s term and rich definition to expand womanist theological studies. Jacquelyn Grant, a doctoral candidate at Union Theological Seminary in New York, explored the implications of black theology for African American women. In her article “Black Theology and the Black Woman,” Grant presents the case for her position, stating that liberation theologians have ignored some of the oppressive problems of the societal contexts that harm those in the human community. In her study of liberation theology, she notes, “Where racism is rejected, sexism has been embraced; where classism is called into question, racism and sexism have been tolerated; and where sexism is repudiated, racism and classism are ignored.”298

In the article, Grant seeks to present a critique of liberation theology for African American women whom she suggests are “the most oppressed of the oppressed.”299

Grant began her argument with the assessment that African American women are absent from the scholarship and literature of black liberation theology and the black church. She begins


298 Ibid., 324.

299 Ibid., 325.
with the premise that in black theology, “(1) either black women have no place in the enterprise, or (2) black men are capable of speaking for us.” Believing that these assumptions are faulty, Grant suggests that a culture shaped by patriarchy shuts down opportunities for women to be seen or heard. Grant suggests that this tendency to exclude women has permeated theological studies. Women have been pushed into a box where their exploration of theological studies is limited to the study of the women and their assigned societal roles. Further, the study of African American women has been neglected, since those women had historically been identified as slaves who were afforded neither voice nor visibility in American society and culture. Grant suggests that the development of scholarship by African American men and women has reflected this same pattern, wherein African Americans embraced the patriarchy that would assure them status in society and the academy. The embracing of patriarchy by African American men would assure that African American women would face discrimination because of their race and their gender. The result was a parallel type of discrimination that assured “black women would have no place in the development of Black Theology.”

In response to this development, Grant explores both the problems emerging from the African American church and its treatment of black women, and the sexism implied in the black liberation theology detailed by James Cone. In dealing with the black church, Grant suggests that the African American men have theoretically shaped an historical African American church where men limited the participation of African American women purposefully. The exclusion of African American women from critical leadership positions in the church and from the pulpit served to exclude them from leading and growing in the very institution that claims to advocate

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300 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
for their liberation and well-being. In addition, the silence of the African American church about the economic oppression of African American women kept women in danger of living without resources for their health and safety. These historical sins were inherent in the development of black theology by Cone, because he did not address the issues of African American women who make up the majority of the membership of the African American church.

Grant exposed the roots of this problem for African American women that were fostered by the black power movement during the civil rights activity of the 1960s. In that movement, African American women were regulated to roles that kept them in the background. The collusion of church and community kept African American women on “lock down” for life.

Based on this analysis, Grant challenged the African American church to advocate for theologies and structures that made room for African American women, free of sexism at the hands of African American men. By doing so, Grant sees the African American church becoming a true institution of liberation, promoting a liberation theology that makes the entire African American church—men, women, and children—critical to its mission of deliverance. Grant also notes that African American women should develop theological critiques of the women developing feminist theology, a branch of liberation theology emerging in the academy. Adding that more work needs to be done by African American women scholars, Grant noted:

Black and Third world women have begun to articulate their differences and similarities with the Feminist Movement, which is dominated by white American women who until now have been the chief authors of Feminist Theology. It is my contention that the theological perspectives of Black and Third world women should reflect these differences and similarities with Feminist Theology.\(^{302}\)

\(^{302}\) Ibid., 324.
Grant offered diverse theological insights to African American women theologians and church members in her book *White Women’s Christ, Black Women’s Jesus*, published in 1989.\(^{303}\) First, Grant explores feminist theology and its prominent scholars in the United States. In spite of her appreciation of their scholarship, Grant refuses to ignore racism, sexism, classism, and the way that the intersection of those oppressive states in feminist theological study robs African American women of their voices in the theological academy. Grant recommends that African American women must find deliverance from oppression by seeking a place where “God and humanity meet through God's direct communication with poor Black women through Jesus and through God's revelation in the Bible.”\(^{304}\) With such knowledge, African American women can create theologies that free them from patriarchy. This is important because African American women must see the “significance of Christ [in] his humanity, not his maleness.”\(^{305}\) Grant believes that this approach is critical to African American women because they must avoid “Jesus as a symbol and a sanctioner of male or White or economic supremacy…this imprisons Jesus in an elitist, racist, and sexist symbol system that often results in a notion of servanthood that devalues the humanity of Black women and oppressed others.”\(^{306}\)

In developing a womanist theology in her 1993 book *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*,\(^{307}\) theologian Delores Williams pointed African American women away from Jesus and to the wilderness of the biblical character, Hagar. From the

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\(^{305}\) Ibid.

\(^{306}\) Ibid.

struggles of the slave Hagar, as noted in Genesis 16 and 21, Williams draws the conclusion that "God acts as a supreme being who offers survival and hope for a productive quality of life for the African slave Hagar and her son Ishmael rather than as a liberating divinity."Using Hagar’s story, Williams seeks to avoid the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. She is less concerned with Jesus’ atoning death or act of surrogacy. Instead, “she argues that Black women should avoid surrogacy and turn to the ministerial vision God gave Jesus that included right relations through words, touch, and the destruction of evil.” Williams opens up conversations about African American women, sexuality, and protection of the body as related to the biblical story of Hagar, who experiences evil because she does not have rights to her own body. Using the text, Williams points to God’s action in the story as a way for African American women to find sources “for social, personal, and religious issues such as motherhood, surrogacy (in both pre- and post-Civil War periods), ethnicity (particularly a focus on skin color), and wilderness (as it parallels Hagar's life in the wild) in contemporary Black women's lives.”

Theologian Emilie M. Townes published Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope in 1993, as well. In the book, she expands the womanist idea beyond the Bible to biography as a source for guidance by exploring the life of Ida B. Wells Barnett, an example of womanist justice making. “Townes names five aspects of a Womanist Christian ethic in Wells Barnett's social and moral perspectives: authority, obedience, suffering, liberation, and reconciliation and power.” Townes expands her exploration of womanist theology in society with the 1993 anthology A

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309 Ibid., 168.
310 Ibid.
312 Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness, 4.
Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering.\textsuperscript{313} This anthology presents a womanist theologian’s reflections on the nature of evil as experienced by African American women in the United States. The shaping of Townes’ book expands the womanist exploration of race, gender, and class as factors in describing evil beyond the church and in the greater society.

Townes follows up in 1995 with a second text, Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation.\textsuperscript{314} This second anthology provides resources from womanist scholars about life in the context of church and society. Again, Townes’ editorial touch offers womanist theology a strategy to use in the confrontations of evil by African American women.

The work of the womanist theologians not only serves to criticize the work of James H. Cone. Their work also offers visibility to the theological thought of African American women ignored in the African American church and the African American theological academy. In positioning African American women at the core of the study of black liberation theology, these women made room for African American women clergy to begin to explore their roles as leaders in African American churches and communities.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter examined the development of Christian theology by African American slaves. The theological statements of nineteenth-century African American abolitionists and clergy who advocated for the liberation of African Americans were presented as the roots of

\textsuperscript{313} Emilie Townes, \textit{A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

theological thought that came into being in the twentieth century in the work of Rev. Howard Thurman and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The modern civil rights movement in the United States, and the resulting black power movement that emerged in 1966, provoked James H. Cone’s book *Black Theology and Black Power*. The book on black liberation theology placed the subject in the theological academy and offered African American clergy a new theological frame for promoting liberation and justice through the African American church.

Cone’s work, criticized by womanist theologians Katie Cannon and Jacquelyn Grant, led to expanded theological work by Delores Williams and Emile Townes. The work of all these womanist scholars pushed scholars and clergy to address issues of racism, sexism, and class in the context of church and community.

The information detailed in this chapter provides an examination of the canon that informs the curricula of Black Church Studies programs in the United States. These components supply African American clergy leaders with historical insights into the theological shaping of the African American religious experience. In addition, the review of this body of knowledge provides them with an historical representation of the labor of African American abolitionists, theological scholars, and clergy whose work serves as catalyst for ongoing exploration of African American clergy leadership in the twenty-first century.
CHAPTER SIX
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF ORAL HISTORIES

Introduction

The historical analysis of the African American clergy leadership education programs at Vanderbilt Divinity School at Vanderbilt University and Candler School of Theology at Emory University includes details such as: Where are the programs located in the United States? When and why did these programs for African American clergy emerge? Who provided leadership for the development of these programs? How were curricula and leadership educational programming defined and designed for African American clergy? Who participated in these programs?

After approval of the qualitative research design by the Boston University Institutional Review Board, I made contact with program directors of the Black Church Studies programs at Candler School of Theology and Vanderbilt Divinity School. Copies of the research recruitment letter, which included a short description of the study, criteria for participation, and release forms, were sent to both program directors.

In the case of Vanderbilt Divinity School, the director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies program responded to the request with an offer to find participants for the study. An assistant would distribute the recruitment letter with instructions to have candidate participants respond to both me and the assistant, who would arrange meeting space for on-site interviews. Interviews with ten candidate participants were conducted at Vanderbilt Divinity
School in March 2011. Each oral history session included a review of the recruitment letter explaining the nature of the research study and the collection of the release form. The oral history interviews lasted from forty to fifty minutes. All ten oral histories were audio taped in their entirety.

I contacted the Director of the Black Church Studies Program at Candler a number of times to request assistance in contacting participants affiliated with the program. The program director was unable to assist me. In order to find candidates for interviews I used the snowball methodology. In an effort to acquire participants in the Black Church Studies Program for the study, a recruitment letter was sent through the Womanist list serve,315 developed by womanist scholars in religious and theological studies programs. Other participants were sought by searching Facebook for the terms “Black Church Studies,” “Candler School of Theology,” and accessing the Candler Black Church Studies Facebook page. Google search engine was used to discover web pages where individuals listed their participation in Candler’s Black Church Studies Program. I contacted 25 people. Persons interested in participating in the study made contact with me by email or Facebook. They received in return an email that included a recruitment letter that included a short description of the study and a release form. When the release forms were returned by email, I arranged telephone interview times.

Each oral history telephone session with candidate participants included a review of the recruitment letter and the release form. Calls with candidates lasted, on average, from 30 to 45 minutes. Between October 2011 and January 2012, seven interviews were conducted and, with permission, each interview was audio taped in its entirety. Some persons contacted offered the

names of other possible candidates for the study, when I made the request. All recording devices and all oral history transcripts from both programs were kept in a locked box in my office.

**Limitations**

The gathering of primary resource materials for the research study was challenging. The Kelly Miller Smith Program had limited historical materials available, such as program bulletins and articles. The director of the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology was unable to give me access to any historical documents about the program because they were located in her office and not available to the public. Requests for materials or interviews about the history of the programs from former program directors, such as Dr. Robert Franklin and Dr. Alton Pollard, did not result in any information for the study. Calls to the former administrators at Candler who had hired the first director and faculty members were not returned. The program director at Candler was not available to consult with me about the Black Church Studies Program that she directed. Oral histories from current program directors could not be collected.

**Oral History Data Collection**

Oral history interviews were conducted in an open-ended, narrative-based manner via telephone or onsite. The oral history protocol listed nine key questions, three of which were demographic in nature. They are as follows:

- What is your race/ethnicity and age?
- What denomination are you affiliated with at this time?
- What is your role in ministry?
As you were engaged in workshops, lectures, symposia, or classes in the Black Church Studies Program, what kinds of learning experiences were most helpful to you?

Does the program offer you access to learning experiences about African American clergy leadership?

What were some of the theological issues and concerns you have identified as you have worked in this program?

What are the strengths of this program?

What are the weaknesses of this program?

What have you learned about the relationship between the Black Church Studies Program and outreach to the African American Church?

**Data Analysis**

The following data was collected from the persons who participated in the oral history interviews at Vanderbilt Divinity School that housed the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on the African American Church and the Candler School of Theology that housed the Black Church Studies Program. After recorded interviews were transcribed by a transcription service, each transcript was carefully reviewed by listening to each recorded oral history and then subjected to detailed analysis based on the questions listed in the oral history protocol.

Questions one through three were reviewed for demographic analysis. Review of questions four through nine suggested two main categories for analysis of the answer about the two Black Church Studies Programs: “what” and “how.” These two categories were used to review answers to oral history questions from participants for information about their knowledge of the programs and their understanding of how components of the program influenced them.
All participants from the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on the African American Church at Vanderbilt Divinity School identified themselves as African American or black. They ranked in age from 24 to 35 years of age. Five protestant denominations were represented in the denominational affiliation of the ten participants: African Methodist Episcopal, Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Disciples of Christ, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship (2), Baptist (5). Of the ten participants, only one person had no role in ministry in the local church. Others identified themselves as having specific ministry roles in Christian education ministry, youth ministry, and young adult ministry in the local church. Two persons held titles as Director of Innovation (media) Ministry and Assistant Minister, respectively. Three persons were licensed ministers, and one was unlicensed minster. All had been participants of the Candler Black Church Studies Program for at least one year.

All the participants from the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology identified themselves as African American or black. They ranged in age from 29 to 52 years. Their roles in the ministry were as follows: an ordained full-time pastor, a college administrator, two associate ministers, a nonprofit director, an army chaplain, and a college chaplain. The denominational affiliation of the participants was Missionary Baptist, AME, Church of Christ, AME Zion, United Methodist, and National Baptist. All had been participants of the Candler Black Church Studies Program for at least one year.

**Question Four**

*As you were engaged in workshops, lectures, symposia, or classes in the Black Church Studies Program, what kinds of learning experiences were most helpful to you?*
In response to question four about the what kinds of learning experiences in the respective Black Church Studies Programs were most helpful, participants responded that classes, lectures, weekend intensives, symposia, and conferences were all helpful. Miller Smith Institute participants from Vanderbilt responded most frequently that classes or specific courses provided the best context for learning:

Alphonso:

I like classes and symposia and intensives...Classes require more critical thinking. Classes have been extremely instrumental in helping to find your voice and identity in ministry...A few months ago; we had the ‘We Who Believe’ Conference, which was a collaborative effort between the Lily Endowment, the Black Church Studies Program, the African American Pulpit Journal, and the American Baptist College. We had preaching and various scholars from across the United States who shared in different workshops. We had revival. I think that’s been most helpful.

Aimee:

Introduction to Black Church Studies helped a lot in my formation by introducing me to a plethora of authors...and then my womanist literature course as well as my liberation ethics courses.

Coreen:

I think that engaging in the classes has kind of opened my mind up to see why people say that prosperity gospel theology can be problematic and why mega churches can be problematic.
Cora:

I think the most helpful to me has been we went on a trip to Dallas last spring semester, which was supposed to have been a preaching clinic, and they had Dr. Teresa Frye Brown and some other scholars there to present for us...Just having been exposed to conversations...gave me the desire to further my academic pursuits because...even though we have wonderful African American faculty, their areas of study have not really prompted me to want to be interested in further studies. So knowing that there are other African American academics who are doing other things...was kind of like a light bulb.

Robert:

I like lectures. I think lectures have always been good for me and symposia have been good, because you have multiple personalities at one time in conversation with each other as well as responses from the audience...I appreciate the theological round tables that happen on campus. It’s kind of an amazing sacred space where you’re able to share your ideas and thoughts. When we are around each other, we have this common language that allows us to engage each other in a powerful way.

The responses from Black Church Studies participants from Candler School of Theology were as follows:

William:

There was not one single model that was not helpful, but I really found that that lectures on African American church culture was most helpful. I really needed to listen to the professor and then hear the thoughts of my peers.
Alexis:

I don’t know that there was any aspect of Black Church Studies that was not useful for me…You had to do the retreat and it involved several workshops that you did have to take related to Black Church Studies in areas of pastoral care, homiletics, and the black church in the community.

Georgia:

Well, there’s a course called Prophetic Voices…We discussed all the isms. We got a lecture on a topic on Tuesday, and Thursday we had to practice preaching for it against or for it. During our colloquia, we did speak about youth ministry quite frequently because a lot of us are paid as youth preachers because of our age. We spent time talking about sexuality in the black church and how it should be addressed.

Monique:

Conferences were most helpful for my learning. The classes had the basic teaching methods that all teachers use. The conferences, they reached beyond the everyday lecture format and brought in new people, so we were exposed to new information. I liked to see if what I learned in class lined up with what I heard in the conferences.

Juanita:

Intro to Black Church Studies was phenomenal…It allowed us to have conversations that we would not have had, had any other ethnic group or any other group been present. Therefore, we were able to have some very candid and dynamic conversations around our issues and whatever we wanted to talk about…We would have guest lecturers. A conference was very helpful because they had a variety of speakers and topics that dealt with sex and sexuality.
Summary: Question Four

Participants in the Miller Smith Program and Black Church Studies program at Candler School of Theology stated that the structure of both programs offered opportunities designed to help participants acquire knowledge. Diverse learning contexts gave participants access to womanist literature, liberation theology and other subjects in Black Church Studies, while additional information on the subject came from workshops or conferences that expanded the programs beyond the physical plant. Participants in both programs mentioned the positive effect of group learning that allowed for the sharing of ideas and resources. The participants described learning opportunities as “formative and enlightening, and dynamic.”

Question Five

*Does the program offer you access to learning experiences about African American clergy leadership?*

In response to the question about the opportunity to participate in African American Clergy leadership education in the two Black church studies programs, participants from Miller Smith Institute at Vanderbilt responded:

Karen:

There are opportunities to be involved with the different conferences that give us the opportunity to see all these great leaders—Jeremiah Wright, Freddie Haynes, Cynthia Hale, Teresa Frye Brown. It gave people the opportunity to have conversation with them
and to introduce ourselves to them… Also a lot of us went to AAR, the American Academy of Religion, and they tell us about different opportunities that are available. I actually benefitted from that by getting a Fund for Theological Education scholarship to go to AAR and be a part of a workshop for individuals interested in doctoral studies so, and that’s leadership development.

Alphonso:

One of the first classes I took when I came here to the Black Church Studies Program was on Black Religious Leadership and Liberation Praxis. That course consisted of us examining past leaders, but also examining present leaders. We had to take a current issue and see how those leaders would respond to that issue, whether it was AIDS or incarceration. In my opinion, I grew from that that particular exercise. Dr. Louis Baldwin has just written a book on Dr. King, and we’ll be having a symposium with him in April where we’ll be examining leadership.

Coreen:

I don’t know how many leadership courses there are, but I can remember one specifically. I had taken one leadership class but it was certainly not for African-Americans. The Black Religion in Context class has covered the most in leadership and looking at various black religions and looking at the dynamics that they [leaders] used… even the motives and the strategies that they used to shape the movements that they partook in. I have not had a class on African American clergy leadership. That piece is necessary and I think that that would be one thing that could be cited, as I get ready to leave from this place.
Joan:

I know they have those courses in different schools, geared to pastoral leadership but this school doesn’t have a curriculum that is geared towards that.

Cora:

Being in a church where my licensing class was fourteen deep, and eleven of those fourteen people were women I think I’ve learnt that a lot of male preachers don’t know how to handle leaders who are female clergy. They don’t understand the dynamics of their interactions…In the conferences, they I had some workshops that talked about leadership, but those have not been the workshops that I have sat in. I always look for ways of trying to enlarge my tool kit on how to do things like budgets and things like that, but we haven’t learnt that.

In responding to the same question about access to learning experiences about African American clergy leadership education, Black Church Studies participants from Candler School described opportunities where discussion of the topic took place.

Katrina:

There was a leadership in the church course, but one of the White Methodist teachers ran it. The person that is my boss now came in and did a lecture on African American leadership…but that was one day.

Georgia:

There was no actual course in leadership, but I had [exposure] to it at a school conference. It was the twentieth anniversary conference that was a Black Church Studies
celebration. There were many different panels and one did include clergy leadership. I would have liked to see some other courses include information that can be used by black church leaders. I didn’t like that we didn’t cover business and administration because I always thought that was a major issue in black church.

William:

There were several classes where leadership was mentioned. My African American preaching class was focused on African preaching styles, but we talked about leadership as an extension of what a pastor preaches on Sunday. Other classes talked about great clergy leaders and theologians from the past. There was not a concentration on things such as administration, or issues the black church faces that a leader would have to deal with in the church.

Sharon:

I know that we had symposiums on African American leadership. Introduction to Black Church Studies was largely about African American leadership and characteristics of the charismatic leaders, and the defiant leaders.

Alexis:

Dr. P taught a class on Martin and Malcolm…We really did get to engage many theologians and writers and clergy leaders on a one on one basis like Prathia Hall Wynn and Dr. Cone. We had engagement with them because they were brought to the campus.
Monique:

African American clergy leadership was mentioned in my AME polity class. That was the only place…One of my main issues was about women, leadership and ministry. It was helpful to read about women who preached at midnight revivals because they could not preach during the day. It was good to read about the woman who influenced Martin Luther King’s Dream speech. It would have been helpful to have conversations about women, discernment, and leadership. I just needed more information about how to find my way as a clergywoman.

Juanita:

There was emphasis on preaching, you know understanding how to do that…Those types of things. The dynamics of leadership, the different styles of leadership, how to deal with difficult situations in congregations or difficult personalities, how to deal with boundaries…some of those things may have come up in my pastoral care class…But being intentional about church leadership, religious leadership whether it be in the church or the community, I think that’s a growing edge for us. I wish that there could have been more focus on the idea of what it means to lead and to run a nonprofit…Be in business.

Summary: Question Five

In answering this question, participants defined African American clergy leadership education in a variety of ways. Participants from Vanderbilt and Candler described African American clergy leadership education as taking in place at a variety of settings such as conferences, classes, and symposium.
The participants noted the opportunity to review and evaluate information about past African American clergy leaders and apply that knowledge to current issues was helpful. While exploring charismatic leadership and defiant leadership of African American clergy leaders from past, was a factor in African American clergy leadership, the opportunity to develop a clergy leadership profile where such factors might be explored by a participant was not offered. Only one participant suggested that there was no African American clergy leadership education in the curriculum of the Miller Smith program.

**Question Six**

*What were some of the theological issues and concerns you have identified as you have worked in this program?*

When asked about theological issues that were raised by participation in the Black Church Studies programs, some participants expressed that they had a better sense of the critical nature of the program as a conduit to understanding God in the context of the African American church. Responses from the Miller Smith Institute were offered:

**Mercedes:**

The theology that is kind of held up by the Black Church Studies Program holds up this idea that theophany can happen. It doesn’t have to happen in the wilderness. It can sometimes happen on our own terms. Many times, I think in black theology, and in womanist theology that God in many ways shows up when we engage God’s presence and create spaces that have to be counter spaces.
Ashe:
I think I have a better view of God and theology and the way I am in the world with other human beings… I have cultivated these new skills, and now I am able to see clearer God talk everywhere. It’s really exciting.

Coreen:
I would have to say that the one thing that I have learned is that, to really know who God is, is a process, and we are always in the process of coming to know who God is.

Robert:
I would say that the Black Church Studies Program informs my theology… I ask, “What is God saying to people who look like me, sound like me and have similar issues with me?”

Alphonso:
My theology has never been monolithic. I’m a child of hip-hop culture. The program has put me in touch with the many ways in which my theology has gotten warped in different ways. I have a love for different elements of mysticism, for example with Thurman’s understandings of life, and… other elements of black religious identity.

Joan:
I am thinking about womanist liberation theology and its necessity now. We have to think about what… being black in America means, and we have to confront the gender issue for women in the church. What does God look like in a society where African American women between the ages of 14 and 25 are being affected with AIDS? How do we rename God and actually have those HIV-infected people back into our community?
Black Church Studies participants from Candler School of Theology expressed the following about theological learning:

Alexis:

The focus on liberation theology has been probably the most significant aspect of it for me. Dr. P.’s knowledge of African theology, helping us to find that connection with our own thoughts was tremendously valuable to me.

William:

The theology class gave me a small “c,” catholic or universal picture of the black church and the theology of those churches…I was most impressed with the work of James Cone and the critics of Cone, such as the womanist theologians.

Katrina:

My theology has somewhat changed. I’m still somewhat traditional. I’m probably a lot more liberal toward homosexuality than people I am working with. Sometimes I can’t bring the theory or find the way to articulate liberation theology or womanist theology in non-academic terms.

Monique:

My theological views were not changed but I had a theological issue. How you bring gender-neutral language to the African American church? It was pushed or forced upon you to use gender-neutral language…How do I tell my grandma that God is not a man? So am I supposed to go to my grandmother, who raised ten children by herself after her husband died with the support of God, and talk to her about her male God? I think that if you wanted to be inclusive of all, then you had to include people who used God, she and
God, he. We were made to think that we had to take our knowledge and pull the carpet from under the feet of our parents and grandparent to correct people. We did not have a clear way to make the transition to the church using theology and inclusive language after we left the program.

Juanita:

I found that there was a shift in my theology. I won’t say it’s just primarily because of as a result of the Black Church Studies program but it was the thing that I became more aware of in terms of how many black people see Jesus and what that means for us. One thing that was really helpful for me was to be aware or mindful not to speak of the black church as homogeneous.

Georgia:

I began the question of our traditional practices in black churches and what the theological basis of them were…There was a lot of dissonance for me as I reflected theologically about what I learned and what I put in practice.

Summary: Question Six

The programs provided a means to explore multiple theological streams of theological consciousness that were important to the identity of participants. However, the theological knowledge gained in through the program prompted theological concerns.

Question Seven

What are the strengths of this program?
In identifying strengths in the two Black Church Studies programs, Miller Smith Institute participants and Black Church Studies participants from Candler School of Theology gave similar answers naming faculty as the major strength of the programs among a few others.

Aishe:

I think the Black Church Studies Program creates a bit of a hush harbor…Now it’s under surveillance many times, but at the same time, it creates a place where theophany can happen. It’s not the space that we’re given, and it’s not the regular space at Vanderbilt, it’s the other space that we can recreate out of our own tools to engage God.

Coreen:

The strengths I would definitely have to say are the professors. We have some very strong, brilliant professors who are very knowledgeable but compassionate.

Cora:

In thinking of our professors, they taught us how to maneuver the space and how to write and really encouraging us to pursue further education.

Alphonso:

Some of our faculty members that write books, articles, still go to worship. They are still involved in faith communities in various capacities. I think that ultimately that influences their scholarship, which they also bring back into the classroom.

Joan:

The strength of the community is the teachers, their connections back in to the community and to the church. They try their best to do that connecting.
Aimee:

This program is focused on social justice. I think it is a virtue to make sure that the church’s curriculum, the worship moment, are embodying what liberation is in this, post-everything context.

Joseph:

I would say at this point they are doing a pretty good job. The faculty is visible and willing to help anybody. They’re accessible. You know sometimes you have these programs and there’s just a name and the professors are stretched, doing so many things, they can’t really give their attention, but that’s not like that here. This program gets the faculty attention and as a result, we get the attention that we need.

Mercedes:

I think that we have the program is in itself strength, especially at a majority research institution. The program enables us to be in touch with African American professors and faculty…willing to have dialogue and encourage our research.

The responses from Candler School of Theology participants:

Alexis:

Most helpful for me were the black professors. Each of them played a significant role in Black Church Studies for all of us and their knowledge base in their areas was comprehensive.
Sharon:

I wanted to engage more black womanist scholars…We were having this sort of joint Black Church Studies -Black Student Caucus week…I got up the nerve to ask why couldn’t we bring one of the womanist scholars. The next thing you know, Emily Towns is going to give a lecture. This was kind of stuff faculty would do for the black students who were engaged in the academy or the church.

Catherine:

If I didn’t have the Black Church Studies program, I would still be oblivious and idealistic. The strength of the program is…they (faculty) really wanted to make us have opinions and take the initiative, as well…They gave me the confidence to be okay with being a Baptist woman, and an ordained preacher.

Alexis:

We had an inclusive policy with language. It forced, many African American pastors entrenched in patriarchy to put down whether they believed in it or not. That was important. Out of an entire seminary experience or the entire Black Church Studies experience, the womanist perspective is the most significant aspect of it all for me.

Georgia:

It was a combination that was based on the community. If we were in the program and we found a resource, we would tell each other. We were able to share and develop through resources that we had…Every African American professor that I sat with in a class had tough love in a way…they would expect more. I think the strength of the program was the diversity of information that was covered. Actually, it was the breadth of resources we were dealing with.
William:

There was a definite balance in the program to the rest of the curriculum at Candler. In the courses we took outside the program, there would be that one section where there would only be one brief mention of African Americans or African American history or minorities. It was good to have a concentrated focus on African American contributions to theological scholarship. I can say they did not know where we were going to wind up but they tried to prepare us for anything.

Juanita:

I thought that they (faculty) were intentional to create some opportunities for students to build relationships, to work together. The other thing I would say is that we had a lot of great black professors and I appreciated that. They challenged me….They understood what it meant for me to be there, struggling with some of the things I was hearing in the classroom and how I would be struggling with my own faith and my own hermeneutic. I also appreciated the number of women that were brought to the floor. We have all these men before us and we hear their names but we don’t hear about these women who are doing wonderful, dynamic work…There were conversations about how am I going to operate and function when I leave Candler as it relates to being a black woman in ministry. I think that strength of the program was giving us exposure to what clergy were doing that worked.

Summary: Question Seven

The presence and structure of a Black Church Studies program in a university related seminary was identified as strength of the Miller Smith program at Vanderbilt. The program was
protective space at a majority research institution that allowed for community where participants forged the critical experience of learning ways to engage peers, faculty, and God. The Miller Smith Program and Candler Black Church Studies participants overwhelmingly held faculty in high regard. Faculty was described as compassionate, loving, and understanding mentors. They served as liaisons between the African American clergy leadership programs and local churches. A curricular strength of the program was in womanist theology and some women felt that the program offered them affirmation for the vocation of Christian ministry.

**Question Eight**

*What are the weaknesses of this program?*

The lack of leadership education showed up as a weakness in both the Black Church studies programs in the study. Participants in both programs felt that information on leadership development and clergy ethics was needed. One weakness of the programs identified by participants was the absence of resources on the needs of African American clergywomen.

At Vanderbilt, participants had concerns about the following:

Robert:

That whole idea of clergy ethics, I know it is important, but why isn’t it being taught? I think a lot of our churches, a lot of our ministries are suffering due to poor ethical decisions. I’ve always wanted a course dealing with ethics in ministry ---dealing with money, politics in the pulpit, relationships that are improper in ministry. I would love to have a course on ethics, which a lot of programs do not have.
Joan:

I would say more workshops: management and administration of the church but also personal care. The ins and outs of a hospital visit or a funeral, how do you process that? I think those types of things might be a great addition to the program.

Alphonso:

How do you teach Black religious leadership or help identify the intricacies of what it means to be an administrator? What does it mean just to establish a particular leadership profile and understanding how to operate as a leader with a community of people? I think that those are some of the most critical issues, which ultimately lead to pastors being burnt out in churches. There’s never a class that’s really geared [for that]. What would that mean to have different black religious leaders come for two, three days, and share with us about who they are and how they have understood themselves. I think that’s what a Black church studies program should be.

Ashe:

We seem to focus so much on the civil rights era and we have really neglected our present day civil rights issues. I think we need to evaluate whether liberation theology for the black church as diverse as it is, is it adequate to see to the needs of parishioners. Does it speak truth to power to the environmental racism, the sexism, the heterosexism that the black church has supported in many ways? I think that is a weakness. There is much more work to be done as far as it relates to women in leadership in the black church. I do know that somebody is out there that needs to be in here to instruct and broaden our horizons about what we do and we go as women in the twenty-first century.
Karen:

It’s not an academic weakness; it speaks to the monetary lack. [There needs to be] more funding specifically for black students for going to conferences.

Coreen:

The faculty is stretched thin. I think there is so much that they want to give, but they find that they can’t give any more. We need Black faculty engaged who can pour more into the black students here.

Ashe:

I am very grateful to Vanderbilt in that my professors are accessible to me. I have been able to talk through my vocational issues, but I think that these people are staying in their office after class. There should be an official time to do some mentoring.

Aimee:

There is a queer class, and I am lacking knowledge about that difference between the black church and queer theory. Perhaps at least the discourse needs to be talked about because it is ranked as one of the highest sins in our church…I am working with [the] Black Religious Scholars group and the Womanist Initiative to translate black religion to the church so that it benefits black women primarily. The church needs to reconcile with black women. That is one theological practice that I think needs to happen.

Coreen:

We are beating each other up with our theologies in our churches and we’re saying…no women in the pulpit. I think re-imagining God and who God is for people would be the way we need to look at theology.
Alexis:

Now that, if there is a weakness I would say that there needs to be a more significant component of womanist activity in Black Church Studies…It always seemed that Black Church Studies are still so entrenched in liberation theology but the Womanist portion of it we always had to kind of advance.

The responses from Candler School of Theology participants about program weakness were:

Katrina:

I wish I had gotten more in touch with alums. I don’t know if alums were just struggling after they graduated, but it would have been nice to see them come out in full force a little bit more.

Monique:

What can we do about the generational gap in the church? How do you get the young to appreciate the older generation and get the old to respect the young? In our church, we had an all male high school mime group and they used contemporary gospel music with a hip-hop beat. I played their music for some older people in the church to try to see if I could help them understand the youth. I almost started a riot. I left thinking that the generational gap issue is a punch line instead of a thing that the church is really trying to address…I am AME now, but I grew up in the Evangelical Church Alliance. Everyone assumed that I grew up in the so-called Black church and had the same experience growing up in the Black Church as if there were only one. I wish the definitions of the
black church were broader. Many black people are in black churches in white
denominations and sometime they are not acknowledged as part of the so-called black
church. The program could be missing some black people who create the black church in
some different way…the not so typical way.

Georgia:
I don’t know if I can consider this a weakness of the program or of this institution…I
would have liked to see some other courses include information that can be used in the
black church…I didn’t like that we didn’t cover business and administration…I always
thought like that was a major issue in the black church…Someone came and talked to us
about how we can navigate this or get a PhD,…Why not teach us how to church
plant?…How to really budget as a pastor; you know, just church administration. As a
leader, you should still learn how to do church administration. So, that was a weakness.

Juanita:
I tell you a topic that I think that needs to be dealt with, it is class…I believe that the
Black Church Studies program has to have a class on sex and sexuality in the black
curch and we have to deal with HIV and AIDS. We can’t do HIV and AIDS because we
can’t deal with sex and sexuality. How can we not be having this conversation? It’s a
conversation that’s just long, long, long overdue…We touched on Islam, but we need to
talk about it in the Black Church Studies program…look at how black folks are moving
to other faiths and what is the draw. It would be wonderful for us to even go and visit a
mosque.
William:

There was an absence of teaching on administration and leadership … There were hints of it in the psychology class, but no focus on African American leadership… It would have been helpful to learn to how to deal with different types of people and situations… different leadership styles. Now we studied different leaders. That was helpful but for the next generation that comes thorough there might need to be a class or something else to discuss African American leadership… Many African Americans do not have a theological image of themselves in Christ. They kind of accept self-imposed racism and limits in their thinking. The clergy may not know how to take their seminary learning and use it to help the church be more in touch with a theology they can own… We need to think about what we do in our churches that we inherited from past generations.

Summary: Question Eight

Participants in the Miler Smith Institute program and the Black Church Studies program at Candler mentioned the lack of African American clergy leadership education. They felt that there was a need for more exposure to subjects such as clergy ethics, business, nonprofit administration, politics in the pulpit, as well as African American clergywomen and leadership. The need for exploration of emerging theologies in relationship to the African American Church such as queer theology seemed to be a concern for one participant. In spite of the fact that exposure to womanist theology being named as strength by a participant, one participant felt teaching about womanist theology was not as prominent as teaching about liberation theology.
The absence of conversation on Islam, other religions and the African American church was described as weaknesses.

The lack of discussion of sexuality, sexism class, gender, HIV/AIDS left participants feeling underprepared to lead in congregation’s discussions about these concerns. The opportunity for participants to learn about how to help a congregation with theology and internalized racism was viewed as a weakness. The needs of youth, young adult ministry, and the generational gap in the church needed more discussion in the curriculum. The lack of extensive contact with alumni/a was seen as a weakness of the program at Candler. The definition of African American church as informed by the program at Candler was seen as a weakness because it did not seem inclusive enough of the diversity of African American churches in the United States to one participant.

**Question Nine**

*What have you learned about the relationships between the Black Church Studies program and outreach to the Africa American Church?*

In answering the question about the relationship between the Black Church Studies program, the community, and outreach to the Africa American Church participants in the Kelly Miller Smith disclosed that community or church involvement by the program was uneven and some relationships with the Black Church Studies program at Vanderbilt were developed because of alumni connections.

Robert:
I hadn’t really seen seminary doing much in the community. I think that we’re so academically focused that we’re not sensitive to the traditions from which we came…We need to hear what the church needs. This is what the academy needs to do.

Aimee:

There is not enough collaboration with the seminary, and the Black churches that are in our area. I don’t know if there is a fear of being able to transfer the information, or prejudice even though we are black and trying to reach the Black church.

Karen:

The only connection comes with those churches that have a huge reliance on theological education. Traditionally and historically Black denominations, AME, AMEZ, CME, National Baptists, USA or America, or Progressive National Baptist, are the ones that come to mind. You’re not going to find Church of God in Christ students here. Those holiness, Pentecostal-like churches are not big on education. I don’t know if that’s a breakdown between their theology, and their ecclesiology, or if it’s a Vanderbilt Black Church Studies problem. Maybe it’s both.

Alphonso:

Students take what we discuss and figure out ways how to bring that back to the community and then constantly bring the community here…Sometimes in different events where you will see student’s church members here.

Joan:

I guess that I am grateful to be in this particular Black Church Studies program…I do my Field Ed in a church that serves the underprivileged, marginalized. The pastor graduated from Vanderbilt and still has close connections with my advisor because he and his wife
serve within the black church. So, this program has allowed me to see that connection
and it is a strong connection.

Cora:

The ministers I know from the community who attend these things are usually people
who are friends of people who are faculty here.

The responses from Candler School of Theology participants addressed the relationship
between the program and the local church as well:

Alexis:

How do we keep the ties between the academy, the church, and the community? There’s
a disconnect. Once we leave, we have this knowledge but we struggle to be able to
maintain a connection in all of these areas. I think to be able to make the link to the
program once you leave or have the program sustain alumni support are problems. I think
that is the greatest weakness.

Katrina:

It is a really sometimes an awkward relationship between seminary, and community. You
have those that are in leadership that don’t have your education. So, when you try to
reach out to the community and church there is a dynamic of dealing with those that did
not get the education.
Monique:

The program was far removed from the local church. They were disconnected. I cannot remember too many conversations about trying out an idea from seminary or the program at a local church. We did not have to take an idea or project to connect to what we studied with what we did during the week at church. So learning seemed like it was in the moment for the course grade. Application of what we learned was not very good.

Sharon:

One of the major issues was I think the breakdown between black leadership between the church and the academy. That seemed to always be an interesting conversation of whose leadership is truly authentic…It was always very split. I don’t know how to explain other than there always seemed to be a tension there.

Juanita:

I think there should be a requirement where anybody that is planning to do any kind of ministry has to have some kind of urban ministry or rural type ministry, where you have be engaged to see the stuff we talk about in the classroom in the community. How do we get stuff to the streets? I mean you got folks sleeping on the porch of the steps of the church. The churches are everywhere, but you got sex workers, you got the dope boy…Needles all over…So that right there just that area alone tells me that there’s a huge disconnect.

Summary: Question Nine

Participants all recognized that there was a split between the Black Church Studies programs and the local African American church. In assessing the relationship between the Black
Church Studies program, the community, and outreach to the Africa American Church program participants felt that the relationship between the Black Church Studies program and the African American Church was limited to churches where theological education was valued. One participant believed the gap existed because of competition between church leaders and leadership in the Black Church Studies Programs.

Participants felt that they had no program structure to assist them in integrating their knowledge from the African American clergy leadership programs with the life of congregations. At Candler, one participant was disturbed about the lack of internships or practica to help participants begin to learn how to make the wisdom of the academy flow to the church. This lack of programs development was seen as contributing to the gap between the Black Church Studies programs and the local church.

Any gap was seen as detrimental because the academy and church needed to work to gather to reach the underserved populations in the African American community. However, some participants thought that participants in the program helped to sustain a relationship between the African American church and the Black Church Studies Program at Candler.

**Findings**

The findings are based on the data presented above. The data was analyzed using thematic coding methods, as prescribed by Dr. Michael Q. Patton. I reviewed all oral history transcripts for the purpose of organizing the responses into categories according to frequent themes. After a review of the transcripts, key language for coding surfaced. Based on both the

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questions in the oral history interviews and coding, the themes that emerged were: program support for participants, flexible learning structure and learning opportunities, faculty mentoring, theological growth, clergy leadership education for program participants invisible women, and bridging the breech. The expanded analysis follows:

Finding One: Program Support for Participants

Participants felt supported in their learning as they used the components of the programs. Aishe from Vanderbilt spoke of a climate of protection and peer support: “I think the Black Church Studies Program creates a bit of a hush harbor…Now it’s under surveillance many times, but at the same time, it creates a place where theophany can happen. It’s not the space that we’re given, and it’s not the regular space at Vanderbilt, it’s the other space that we can recreate out of our own tools to engage God.” Robert spoke about the supportive climate of the same program: “It’s kind of an amazing sacred space where you’re able to share your ideas and thoughts. When we are around each other, we have this common language that allows us to engage each other in a powerful way.” The emphasis on the program as a protective space was evident in comments from participants from both programs about initiating classroom conversations about subjects that were best done with members of one’s ethnic group. Juanita, in speaking of the Candler program, said: “It allowed us to have conversations that we would not have had, had any other ethnic group or any other group been present. So, we were able to have some very candid and dynamic conversations around our issues and whatever we wanted to talk about.” The experience of participants in both programs reflects the historic effort of African American churches to move clergy candidates into small group instruction, thereby encouraging participation in clergy
leadership education. The opportunities for peer interaction in both programs encouraged participants to communicate with peers without self-censuring.

Finding Two: Flexible Learning Structure and Learning Opportunities

The participants in both of the programs appreciated the flexible structure of their program, which offered them many opportunities to pursue topics in Black Church Studies. The overlapping setting of classes, workshops, and conferences offered participants different ways to learn about the field of Black Church Studies. Participants experienced their learning as formative. Alphonso from the Vanderbilt program stated, “Classes have been extremely instrumental in helping to find your voice and identity in ministry.”

Participants from Candler and Vanderbilt were challenged to reach beyond the learning boundaries of the program when they attended conferences sponsored by Black Church Studies programs on the black family, human sexuality and the black church, and politics. Some program participants also attend conferences sponsored by the Kelly Miller Smith Institute in collaboration with other programs, such as the National Black Church Studies Summit or the We Who Believe Conference. Participants also attended the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. Monica from the Candler program used the conferences to evaluate her learning in the program. She explained, “The conferences, they reached beyond the everyday lecture format and brought in new people, so we were exposed to new information. I liked to see if what I learned in class lined up with what I heard in the conferences.”


Finding Three: Faculty Mentoring

Faculty mentoring of participants through class discussions, advising meetings, and liaison work with the local church was considered a major strength of both programs. Faculty participation in the African American church influenced their scholarship and gave them opportunities to link church and academy. Participants used terms such as “compassionate and knowledgeable” in speaking of faculty.

Faculty was described as understanding student struggles. Juanita speaking of Vanderbilt said, “The other thing I would say is that we had a lot of great black professors and I appreciated that…they challenged me….They understood what it meant for me to be there and struggling with some of the things I was hearing in the classroom and how I would be struggling with my own faith and my own hermeneutic.” Faculty engagement of participants helped them to gain confidence and develop opinions. Katrina, from the Candler program, reflected, “If I didn’t have the Black Church Studies program, I would still be oblivious and idealistic. The strength of the program is…they (faculty) really wanted to make us have opinions and take the initiative, as well …They gave me the confidence to be okay with being a Baptist woman and an ordained preacher.” The extensive work and mentoring by faculty caused a participant from Vanderbilt to wonder if their student advising responsibilities were overwhelming.
Finding Four: Theological Growth

The statements of Black Church Studies participants from Candler School and Miller Smith Institute expressed that their general theological thinking had expanded, even if some of their personal theological views have not changed. After studying theology in the program at Candler, William recognized the diverse nature of theological thinking in the multifaceted African American church, saying that such study “gave me a small “c” catholic or universal picture of the black church and the theology of those churches.” The element of risk taking in exploring multiple strands of theological identity as a part of the formation of African American clergy leaders was mentioned. Participants used the terms “empowered” and “excited” in reference to their ability to think theologically and expressed confidence in understanding God and theology in the context of diverse African American churches that were evolving.

However, one participant suggested that there could be challenges to African American clergy leaders to create new theologies for an evolving African American church that might include those previously marginalized or dismissed, such as for those with HIV/AIDS or African American women. A second participant, after learning African American theological thought, faced a challenge as she began to question practices of the African American church that did not reflect the theology she learned in the Black Church Studies program at Candler.

Other concerns about inclusive language as a theological corrective on the subject of patriarchy in the African American church emerged from participants. The opportunity to use inclusive language in the program at Candler felt helpful in dealing with the patriarchy in the African American church for one participant at Candler, because African American clergy leaders in the program had to use inclusive language about God in the program, challenging their use of the male pronoun in theological discourse. Another Candler participant felt as if the
Monica felt the insistence that inclusive language be used in the Black Church Studies program caused some cognitive dissonance when she thought about using such language in the African American church. She stated, “We were made to think that we had to take our knowledge and pull the carpet from under the feet of our parents and grandparent to correct people. We did not have a clear way to make the transition to the church using theology and inclusive language after we left the program.” She did not report that the program offered her tools for accomplishing that task.

The concern about the ability to move liberation theology from the academy to the church bothered William from Candler: “Many African Americans do not have a theological image of themselves in Christ. They kind of accept self-imposed racism and limits in their thinking. The clergy may not know how to take their seminary learning and use it to help the church be more in touch with a theology they can own.” The inability to translate theological learning from academy to church would seem to call for some adaption of curriculum that brings the African American clergy leaders, program participants, and theological scholars into dialogue for a study about the task of making black liberation theology and its companion theologies, such as womanist theology, part of African American congregational life.

Finding Five: Clergy Leadership Education for Program Participants

Participants saw African American clergy leadership education from both programs as a wide and varied field of study. Two participants, one from each program, claimed that African American clergy leadership education was offered in discrete ways, such as in a course, where they examined past and present leaders and their critical thought as tools for dealing with current
issues. However, there were no opportunities for students to learn about personal leadership
development, administration, business, or management. Neither program had had courses
dedicated to the subject of African American clergy leadership education.

There was, in both groups of participants, a disappointment that the topic of African
American clergy leadership education did not receive more attention. In naming the absence of
instruction on the study of clergy ethics, budgeting, the church as a nonprofit organization, and
limited instruction on the problems that African American clergy leaders might face, participants
broadened the definition of the term “African American Clergy leadership education.”

However, the failure to provide a comprehensive curriculum component on African
American clergy leadership education reflected poorly on the stated program objective of the
Kelly Miller Smith Institute program, which states that the Institute promotes “The education of
clergy and laity for leadership in ministry.”319 This is a problematical finding in the case of the
Candler program that has as its goal to prepare “men and women to provide learned, prophetic,
and compassionate leadership in black and multiracial churches.”320

Finding Six: Invisible Women

Among the women in these two programs, the ongoing concerns for African American
clergywomen as leaders remain strong. One participant from the Candler program, Katrina, felt
that the program helped her as a clergywoman. She stated, “If I didn’t have the Black Church
Studies program, I would still be oblivious and idealistic. The strength of the program is…they

319 Kelly Miller Smith Institute, Mission Vanderbilt Divinity School,
320 Program of Black Church Studies, Candler School of Theology,
(faculty) really wanted to make us have opinions and take the initiative, as well ... They gave me the confidence to be okay with being a Baptist woman and an ordained preacher.” The expression of unmet educational needs and guidance of African American clergywomen leaders came from Ashe, a participant in the Miller Smith Institute Program: “There is much more work to be done as far as it relates to women in leadership in the black church. I do know that somebody is out there that needs to be in here to instruct and broaden our horizons about what we do and how we go as women into the twenty-first century.” A participant in the Black Church Studies Program was disappointed that the program had not prepared African American clergy leaders to understand the implications of working relationships between African American clergymen and clergywomen. Cora from Vanderbilt spoken of the awkwardness of such encounters: “Being in a church where my licensing class was fourteen deep, and eleven of those fourteen people were women, I think I’ve learned that a lot of male preachers don’t know how to handle leaders who are female clergy. They don’t understand the dynamics of their interactions.” Monica from the Candler program complained, “It would have been helpful to have conversations about women, discernment, and leadership. I just needed more information about how to find my way as a clergywoman.” These comments point to a gap in the research on the African American church and African American clergywomen as leaders of churches. The academy’s oversight is surprising, since the publications about African American women and insights on racism and sexism have flooded the academy in the past three decades. The Black Church Studies program of Candler, which claims, “to respond to the need for literature in black religion, in particular the need for primary field research on black congregational life,” could take on a project to trace how African American clergywomen navigate partnerships with male
colleagues. The work of Jacquelyn Grant and Delores Williams would be good entry points for the conversations and research on the topic.

Finding Seven: Bridging the Breech

The final finding in the research is concerned with assessing the distance between Black Church Studies programs and the African American church. Participants from the Vanderbilt program and the Candler program felt that both Black Church Studies programs often had a distance relationship with local African American churches. Both programs have as goals relationships with African American churches. Candler states, “The program also seeks to respond to the need for literature in black religion, in particular the need for primary field research on black congregational life.”

The program at Candler, according to Juanita, needs to expand the investigation of congregational life beyond the African American Church in order to assess how “the stuff we talk about in the classroom [works] in the community.”

The Kelly Miller Smith Institute holds as a value the “promotion of dialogue between African American theologians and African American church leaders, and bridging African American church studies and theological education of African American laity and clergy for leadership in ministry.” The programs invite local African American clergy to events they sponsor, such as forums, symposia, workshops, and conferences.

However, participants perceived that the dialogues between African American clergy and Black Church Studies Programs faculty did not take place often enough. They stated that Black

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321 Program of Black Church Studies, Candler School of Theology http://www.candler.emory.edu/programs/denominational-other-programs/bcs/index.cfm (accessed March 1, 2012).
Church Studies faculty and African American clergy needed to be in conversations about the learning needs of those clergy, so that clergy could function more effectively as leaders. Program participants felt that because they were not required to demonstrate their knowledge and ideas in the local church, they had few opportunities to see “how the stuff we talk about in the classroom [works] in the community.” As a result of this gap in practice, participants struggled to maintain connections between what they learned in the Black Church Studies program when leading African American churches.

The concern about the ability to move liberation theology from the academy to the church pointed to a gap between the African American church and Black Church Studies programs bothered a study participant from Candler. He stated, “Many African Americans do not have a theological image of themselves in Christ. They kind of accept self-imposed racism and limits in their thinking. The clergy may not know how to take their seminary learning and use it to help the church be more in touch with a theology they can own.” The inability to translate theological learning from academy to church points to a gap that calls for some adaption of curriculum that brings the African American clergy leaders, program participants, and theological scholars into dialogue the task of making black liberation theology and its companion theologies, such as womanist theology, part of African American congregational life.

The impact of the impairment of African American clergy who cannot translate theological learnings to their congregations is that congregations are hurt by the lack of knowledge about the wealth of the theological resources that affirm them. The African American church, as the primary agency for theological learning in the African American community, cannot afford this gap nor can African American clergy leaders. Providing programs to assist African American clergy to maintain links with Black Church Studies programs and African
American clergy leadership education for the sake of African American churches were seen as a necessity. Such programs would fall in line with the Kelly Miller Smith Institute program goal to promote dialogue between African American church leaders and African American theologians.

The data was triangulated by interviewing Dr. Forrest E. Harris, Sr., Director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on the African-American Church at Vanderbilt Divinity School. Dr. Harris responded to the question of how Black Church Studies programs continue to educate students for leadership in ministry, by stating:

The Black Church Studies program is in place to help students interact with [the] three elements of community, the academy, the church. Our certificate program is geared towards bringing together students with persons in the community: pastors, [and] lay leaders, who are in the trenches dealing with ministry issues, and issues of practice in relation to ministry. Scholars or our faculty or someone we invite in to the interaction deal with issues in prophetic ministry, prophetic preaching, and the prophetic life of the church. We bring all of the elements of ministry together in classes and in certificate weekends. The students can translate what they’re getting in class into the [church] setting. Clergy and lay people use the intensive to learn with the scholar who’s dealing with a topic. We invite clergy, pastoral leaders, and lay people into that setting with students and so that they learn together or interact, which gives them [all], hopefully, another perspective and vision of ministry.

Dr. Harris also responded to the concern that African American women have that Black Church Studies programs do not promote leadership education for them:

I can see that this whole issue of woman’s discourse being subordinate in terms of what a particular black female student might need as it relates to exposure to that scholarship. Here at Vanderbilt, we have strong exposure to womanism in a way that might not be reflected at other schools. We say that every course ought to in some way relate to the different disciplines and different areas of scholarship to make sure that people especially women are engaged.

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323 Telephone conversation with Dr. Forrest Harris, April 2, 2012.
Dr. Harris addressed directly the development of clergy leadership in Black Church Studies programs:

You end up having an absence of leadership in the church, and the absence of leadership is not in a speaker, it’s not in one person. It is in the collective consciousness and collective effort that needs to be present in the church. It is not there because the congregation is not being engaged theologically with the issues. So, the absence of leadership has to do with the absence of education in the church so people engage their surroundings on issues that affect the community. Of course, the pastor is prime leader providing this theological education. I think you have to produce theologians in the pulpit as well as in the pew.

Dr. Harris’s response to the question on how Black Church Studies programs continue to educate students for leadership reflects some of the findings of this study. When Dr. Harris speaks of the weekend intensives, his illustration of the gathering of students, laypeople and clergy for exploration of an issue supports Finding One that underscores the importance of small group instruction and the need for learners from the same ethnic group to meet to discuss issues. Dr. Harris illustrated credibility for Finding Two, which states that participants in Black Church Studies programs appreciated the flexibility of learning context, is illustrated his contention that learning about ministry comes in the classroom and in weekend intensives. He suggests that weekend intensives or workshops give students a chance to translate learning from classes to the church.

Dr. Harris’s remarks on the need for the African American church to be a place where theology is taught by the African American clergy leader or pastor corroborate Finding Four in which study participants felt that African American clergy leaders might be challenged to create new theologies or explore theological thought in order to guide a congregation. His statements present the belief that the African American clergy person is the theological leader of a congregation. Finding Seven, bridging the breech, is reflected in Dr. Harris’s explanation of the
weekend intensives as a unifying learning context for clergy, laypeople, and students, thereby bringing members of the academy and the church together, thwarting the gap that often separates them.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the data collected from interviews of participants from Black Church Studies programs at two university related Black Church Studies programs. This data organized into seven findings that refine research on African American clergy leadership education. Data triangulation is based on a conversation with Dr. Forrest E. Harris, Sr., Director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School. The information in this chapter will inform the concluding chapter that contains reviews of findings, recommendations for the development of a program for African American clergy leadership, and the program proposal for an African American clergy leadership education program at Boston University School of Theology.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation sought to discover the history, status, and future of African American clergy leadership education in the United States with a goal to propose key developments for such a program at Boston University School of Theology. It presented a literature review of the history of models of African American clergy leadership education programs. Furthermore, it detailed the legacy of the creative institutions that offered the educational opportunities these clergy needed. It also traced significant African Americans who influenced the development of African American clergy leadership education. The growth of African American clergy leadership education after the civil rights movement of the twentieth century and the resulting development of Black Church Studies programs was detailed, including the history of the first Black Church Studies program in the United States that offered African American clergy leadership education.

This dissertation also included the history of two university-related Black Church Studies programs that offer African American clergy leadership education. Qualitative data collected from persons participating in the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School and the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology were used to evaluate these programs’ educational structure and methodology for African American clergy leadership education. African American theological thought that informs the curricula of these programs has been traced from the era of African American
slavery through the twentieth century development of black liberation theology and womanist theology.

Based on the history of African American clergy leadership education and findings from the qualitative research, this chapter presents concluding recommendations for the further development of an African American clergy leadership education program at the Boston University School of Theology. Finally, the project seeks to develop an outline for African American clergy leadership education program at Boston University School of Theology, a university-based seminary.

The first finding of the study is that the history of African American clergy leadership education reflects both a consistent and uneven pattern for the education of African American clergy. Efforts at clergy education have been a patchwork of church-based programs that have mimicked the reading of divinity method of clergy leadership education used in the nineteenth century. The founding of colleges, theological schools, and seminaries by 1900 increased opportunities for African American clergy to gain education for leadership. The quality of some of these schools was often in question, based on curricular offerings. Still, African American clergy leadership educators worked and lobbied for better educational opportunities that would enable African American clergy to assist African American people dealing with racism, sexism, and class oppression. However, because of factors such as literacy, the cost of education, the limit on educational opportunities for African Americans, and African American clergy’s bi-vocational status, African American clergy leadership education remained irregular and limited.

With the modern civil rights era and the rise of the black power movement in 1966, African American clergy and scholars called for a theological response to the movement, and
they began discussing the development of curricular principles for African American theological education. African American clergy and scholars sought educational opportunities in mainline seminaries, and they petitioned for those institutions to take seriously the contributions of the African American church to theological education. They were motivated to begin conversations with mainline seminaries to study the African American church, its history, and theology with the understanding that the African American church was a major religious body that had contributed to theological scholarship. The advocacy and scholarship of African American clergy and scholars resulted in the development of Black Church Studies programs. African Americans began to attend mainline seminaries in the United States and to include some study of African American clergy leadership in their Black Church Studies programs. The twentieth-century development of Black Church Studies began a shift of African American clergy leadership education from church-based programs to seminaries and theological schools. This shift made for the development of consistent curricula for African American clergy.

The second finding is that, in general, Black Church Studies programs, as reflected in the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School at Vanderbilt University, and the Black Church Studies Program in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University have followed the pattern for African American clergy leadership education that was set by Colgate Rochester Crozer/Bexley Hall Divinity School in New York in 1969. This prototype program paired African American clergy with seminary faculty from Colgate Rochester Crozer seminary for a two-year program to allow the institution to “gain benefits for the training of future church leaders.”\textsuperscript{324} The program objective of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute states that the Institute promotes “[t]he education of clergy and laity for leadership in

\textsuperscript{324} Gayraud S. Wilmore, “Black Pastors/White Professors: An Experiment in Dialogic Education,” 90.
ministry.”

The Black Church Studies program at Candler states that its goal is to prepare “men and women to provide learned, prophetic, and compassionate leadership in black and multiracial churches.”

The Kelly Miller Smith Institute and Candler Black Church Studies Program follow the Colgate Crozer Rochester program in that both offer African American clergy basic education from the seminary curricula, such as Biblical studies, theology, church history, and other subjects, with some limited attention to Black Church Studies. The second-generation Black Church Studies programs, founded after the Colgate Crozer Rochester program, include in their curricula the leadership education of African American clergy in the context of a Black Church Studies curricula. This curricular shift is important to note because the Kelly Miller Smith Institute and the Black Church Studies Program of the Candler program, in addition to other Black Church Studies programs, were created with the principles for black church studies presented by Dr. Copher in his ATS Report of 1970. They were:

1. The discovery and reclamation of a black heritage that has been lost, unrecognized, or ignored as an entity of little or no value.
2. The development of a sense of dignity and worth, and of pride in the black heritage on the part of black people.
3. The increase of knowledge and the development of skills that will free black people from oppression and dehumanization, and enable them to survive in an unjust society.
4. The informing of white people of the black heritage toward the end of changing attitudes for the better, and of liberating white people from false notions.

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326 Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Program of Black Church Studies, http://www.candler.emory.edu/programs/denominational-other-programs/bcs/index.cfm (accessed March 1, 2012).
(5) The investigation and analysis of the black religious experience toward the end of discerning its liberating and life-sustaining aspects for the benefit of both black people and white people.\footnote{327}

These programs have as their mission the development of subject matter in Black Church Studies as a method to educate African American clergy leaders for the twenty-first century. Therefore, African American clergy leadership education in the context of Black Church Studies is concerned with maintaining a connection with the religious history of African American people, increasing the pride of African American people about that history, building knowledge and skills that lead to greater freedom from oppression and dehumanization for African American people, while educating white people of their contribution to that oppression and creating sustaining practices that promote liberation to enable African Americans to survive in an unjust society.

These programs strive to provide classes and other opportunities for participants in their programs to acquire skills for African American clergy leadership. Program curricula review the history of past African American clergy leadership. Courses provide a thorough discussion of leadership of the modern civil rights era. They apply the strategies of past African American clergy leaders to current issues in twenty-first century America. Participants meet for mentoring with persons identified as exceptional African American clergy leaders and scholars. These programs attempt to increase knowledge in African American leadership education that helps African American clergy leaders to be a vanguard of a people desiring to attain the dignity and privileges that have historically been denied to them. Their mission is to help the African American church survive or perhaps thrive in the twenty-first century.

\footnote{327} C. Shelby Rooks, “Why a Conference on the Black Religious Experience?” Theological Education 6, no. 3 (March 1970), 176.
However, the findings from the qualitative study of the two programs demonstrate that there are gaps in Black Church Studies programs, signaling that African American clergy leadership education in the context of general Black Church Studies has faltered. It has failed to offer up-to-date curricula in clergy leadership education that African American clergy feel they need. The findings signal that there are gaps in providing African American clergy with education on developing leadership skills in administration and management.

There has been little attention paid to reviewing current leadership styles and helping participants to understand leadership theory within and outside of the local church context. Curricula on leadership offered most frequently to participants in these Black Church Studies programs has as its focus reflection on African American leaders from the past. The history review serves as a tool for understanding the leadership legacy that participants must embrace as African American clergy. In these programs, the focus is on identifying with model African American clergy leaders and scholars in order to form an identity as a sustainer of the legacy of African American leadership.

Participants in the two Black Church Studies programs studied here wanted more than learning skills about leadership in the fragmented experiences offered by courses and workshops. Participants were searching for leadership experiences, classes, and practica directly focused on general leadership theory, organizational development, financial management, administration, management, and problem solving for African American clergy. These findings reflected participants’ desire for additional mentoring that would teach them how to offer their leadership to the African American church and community as well. African American clergy wanted to develop the ability to create and share visions for the future of the church with the laity of the church. They were seeking to be competent in leading the African American church in that they
wanted to be effective administrators and good fiscal managers in order to sustain the church. They wanted to be competent at organizing and orienting the African American church, so that the church might continue to be a resource to the community and the world that face social problems such as poverty, addiction, hunger, and disease.

Based on findings, some participants in these programs felt underprepared to be theological leaders in their congregations, because they felt that they have not been equipped to bring the rich theological gifts of black liberation theology and womanist theology to the local church. One participant noted, “We did not have a clear way to make the transition to the church using [black and womanist] theology and inclusive language after we left the program.”

Some participants in the study noted that their ability to transfer theological knowledge from their Black Church Studies program to the African American church was impaired by a lack of training. William from Candler spoke of this, stating, “[African American] clergy may not know how to take their seminary learning and use it to help the church be more in touch with a theology they can own.” Based on this comment and others in the study, it would seem that the participants have gained theological confidence, but not enough theological competencies to serve the African American church. There seemed to be no educational exercise that would help participants to analyze how theological trends in the academy might clash with theological practices of African American churches or to deal with the lack of theological conversations on the internalized racism of some members in the local church. African American clergy who learned theology in Black Church Studies programs want to be competent in teaching the heritage of African American theological thought and to offer the liberation principles of black theology and womanist theology to congregations. They want to use theological systems to help African American congregations deal with racism, sexism, class, and internalized racism. They
need to be competent in helping congregations to negotiate the ever-changing social and cultural context of African Americans using Christian theology to shape their worldview in the United States.

The impact of the impairment of African American clergy who cannot translate theological learnings to their congregations is that congregations are hurt by the lack of knowledge about the wealth of the theological resources that affirm them. The African American church, as the primary agency of theological learning in the African American community, cannot afford this gap nor can African American clergy leaders. There must be an effort to remedy the problem for these leaders. Such an effort would fall in line with the stated goal of the Kelly Miller Smith Program at Vanderbilt to promote “dialogue between African American theologians and African American church leaders.”

The findings reflected the disappointment of women participants with the lack of attention to their need for specialized clergy leadership education because of their experiences of sexism in the church, the lack of female mentors, and the lack of models for working with African American clergymen. They are not represented in the history of African American clergy leadership education. This is surprising to note, given the presence of womanist theology in the theological academy. Womanist scholars in the academy have furnished many texts and articles on the needs of African American women. However, on closer review, African American clergywomen have only recently been mentioned in the historical research on Black Church

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Studies. This omission may be a result of the only recent arrival of African American women in the pulpits and theological academies in the United States. The history of African American clergy leadership has been, from the time of slavery, a history of male leadership. There was a call for the training of male leaders by Dr. Benjamin Mays and other African American scholars of religion and theological studies in the 1930s. As the civil rights era emerged, African American women became visible as community leaders, but not in the ranks of the African American clergy leaders of the movement.

The most prevalent finding to emerge from this study is that African American clergy leadership education, as it is defined in this study, is not strongly promoted in Black Church Studies programs. These programs have as a priority the study of the black Christian church in relationship to the world. Black Church Studies is concerned with the evolution of the black church in the United States, its religious activities, and practices. It does not have at the core of its agenda the development of African American clergy leaders, but rather the history, present state, and future of the Black Church. This means that Black Church Studies programs are underequipped to offer African American clergy leadership education.

This is disheartening because African American communities are always in need of effective leaders. African American congregants, caught in the chaotic changes of American life, are relying upon African American clergy leaders to represent stability while offering knowledge and wisdom, just as their foremothers and forefathers did after the Reconstruction era and the Great Migration. In the twenty-first century, racism, sexism, and class still haunt African American people, in spite of educational and economic gains. The results of this research support

329 The study by Delores C. Carpenter, A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen (Chalice Press, 2001) is also recommended, as is the book by Carol Marie Noren, The Woman in the Pulpit (Abingdon Press, 1992).
the idea that African American clergy leadership education must be an emerging field in Black Church Studies programs and the general theological curricula.

Taken together, the history of African American clergy leadership education and these findings suggest a role for a university-related seminary, such as the Boston University School of Theology, in promoting a new African American clergy leadership program. Based on my research, I would like to make recommendations for the development of such a program.

My first recommendation is for the development of a stronger partnership between African American clergy and the Boston University School of Theology in the interest of African American clergy leadership education. The history of clergy leadership education reflects the constant search for African American clergy leadership education by African American clergy. African American clergy historically have been tasked with representing the African American community at its best, problem solving with that community when at its worst, and caring for the constituents of the African American church at the same time. African American clergy leaders deal with the challenge of being religious and theological leaders of African American Christians living with classism, racism, and sexism as part of their daily lives. African American clergy leaders have additional tasks that include, but are not limited to, caring for those who experience violence, the erosion of family, poverty, poor delivery of health and community services, and the effects of discrimination.

The complexity of issues that African American clergy leaders face calls for a substantial cadre of leadership skills that no African American clergyperson can hope to learn in the short time of the seminary experience (if seminary is even required). Therefore, I recommend the development of a stronger partnership between the Boston University School of Theology and African American clergy leaders. This partnership would offer opportunities for a university-
related seminary such as the Boston University School of Theology to support African American clergy while gathering information on African American clergy leadership to inform both general research on the twenty-first century church in America and the seminary curricula. Theologian Dr. Gayraud Wilmore has suggested that “the Black religious experience offers theological education a unique and unparalleled opportunity for interdisciplinary approach to the curricula….Theology, church history, biblical studies, the experiential and utilitarian aspects of theological education—all these could be the beneficiary of new life with the infusion of the Black experience.”

African American clergy leaders would benefit in the relationship by having a program that is dedicated to supporting their development as part of the commitment to a diverse theological community of scholars, learners, and practitioners who are pursuing excellence in service to the church. The partnership would signal that they are indeed members of the theological academy who are worthy of support. The partnership with African American clergy could benefit them as they work with mentoring relationships with clergy candidates who may be pursing licensure or ordination.

My second recommendation for an African American clergy leadership education program for African American clergy at Boston University School of Theology is the development of a program with curricula focused on African American clergy leadership. The first semester’s program would gather African American clergy in small groups with faculty in order to discuss such gaps in their leadership skills as their inability to identify leadership styles, assess strengths and weaknesses, and their need for skills in business, management, or administration. In the remaining semesters of the program, African American clergy, who are

called upon to respond to so many issues in their communities and need help developing and strengthening their leadership competency, would study African American clergy leadership studies materials.

African American clergy leadership studies include subject matter on leadership theory, leadership research, styles of leadership, leadership practices, the use of power, decision-making, administration, the implications of leadership, burnout, and clergy ethics in church and community. Educational materials and workshops would be offered on group needs in the local church, institutional change, and crisis management. The program would establish a comprehensive bibliography on clergy leadership in order to help clergy build a resource library for their use. 📚 African American clergy leadership studies would include the history of African American clergy leadership in the United States, the development of African American clergy leadership in the post-civil rights era of the twenty-first century, and the global future of the African American church. The use of case study analysis would ground theory for real world application of knowledge gained about African American clergy leadership studies. A number of these initiatives replicate structure and methods of past programs. The small groups or cohorts have been used by denominations and churches to educate African American clergy, as did the Colgate Rochester Crozer program. The Colgate Rochester Crozer program used case study methodology with African American clergy.

The third recommendation for an African American clergy leadership program at Boston University is to utilize the existing resources of Boston University. The development of African

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331 Examples of books that might be used include: Jackson W. Carroll’s *As One with Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993) and *God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006). See also, Jeffery L. Tribble’s *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
American clergy leadership education must be expanded in a university-related seminary such as the Boston University School of Theology, because a university-related seminary is uniquely positioned to offer a rich mix of resources to promote African American clergy leadership education. The partnerships between African American clergy leaders and university-related seminaries such as Boston University School of Theology need expansion in order to take advantage of the resources of the university, such as the School of Medicine, the School of Social Work, the School of Public Health, the African American Studies department, and the Center for Global Christianity and Mission.

The faculty of these schools, departments, and centers would be invited to work with the African American clergy leadership program faculty on bringing the university to the African American clergy person in order to present leadership in the context of a large learning community. This interdisciplinary effort would offer information to the African American clergy leader whose role in church and community requires skills and information beyond the narrow confines of theological studies. African American clergy require information to serve a constituency with multifaceted needs that extend beyond theological concerns. For example, faculty from the School for Public Health and School of Social Work or School of Medicine would make presentations for African American clergy on African American clergy leaders as intervening agents in congregations facing the effects of health disparities. Some research about African American clergy as intervening leaders in congregational health studies has already taken place. Further exploration of African American clergy leadership in matters of health could offer learning opportunities on theology, ethics, and medicine. This is particularly

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important to African American clergy serving African American churches that have parishioners who struggle with health issues based on their frequent overrepresentation in at-risk medical populations. Since the challenge for clergy of dealing with HIV/AIDS has been mentioned in the findings of this study, approaches to handling that disease among parishioners might be a starting point for such program development.

In addition, the problem of environmental racism, environmental pollution, and asthma in African Americans could be addressed within the African American clergy leadership program. The high incidence of some cancers in African American populations might also be a part of the conversation. Program and seminary faculty could contribute knowledge about health issues and concerns based on their theological guilds. Preparing African American clergy leaders for global leadership would require meeting with the faculty of the African Studies department and the Center for Global Christianity and Mission. Other topics that could be addressed might be religious diversity and interreligious dialogue in the African American community. Faculty affiliated with the Center for Global Christianity and Mission would provide presentations on the skills necessary for interreligious dialogue, while informing African American clergy leaders about the changing demographics of American Christianity.333

Strengthening the transfer of theological knowledge by African American clergy leaders is the fourth recommendation. African American clergy leadership programs that serve the academy need to continue to build opportunities for not only sharing theological scholarship with the African American church but also equipping African American clergy to aid the academy as facilitators in the distribution of that scholarship to the church. The hard practice of hammering

out a theological position for the academy is not valuable unless it serves the people who need its clarity. The inability to translate black liberation theology and womanist theology from the academy to the African American church calls for the development of focus groups of both African American clergy leaders and theological scholars, who would enter into dialogue about the task of making black liberation theology and womanist theology a part of African American congregational life. The outcome of the discussion would be ideas for the development of educational materials that African American clergy leaders could use to guide African American church populations to a better understanding of the power of theology to influence their daily lives.

The challenges of the African American church to seek sophisticated theological resolutions in order to deal with issues of internalized racism have been neglected. Here Bishop Henry McNeal Turner’s published article entitled “God Is a Negro” might be a good starting place for study. Theological challenges abound as African American clergy deal with the weakening of the theological voice in the African American community, the challenges of hip-hop culture and youth, and multiple religious identity in the African American community. The rise in the incarceration of African American men and boys threatens family, community, and weakens the African American church. African American clergy need help in addressing theological challenges of dealing with the church's neglect of women, the church, and sexuality, and the issues of disease, especially HIV and AIDS.

As leaders, African American clergy must be instrumental in setting up new sacred spaces or hush harbors for theological reflection by parishioners, where they might foster

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language and create tools for reflection. These clergy leaders must be supported in this work before they can themselves guide members of African American churches. This theological strengthening is an ongoing vocational need for African American clergy because of the changing needs of the populations served by the church.

The concerns of African American clergywomen were seen as neglected, according to the findings in this study. Therefore, the fifth recommendation is the improvement of clergy leadership studies and mentoring for African American clergywomen. Certainly, African American clergywomen are underrepresented in the history of African American clergy leadership education. The numbers of African American women who have attended seminary and pursued ordination has increased. They have been damaged by racism and hampered by sexism in the African American church. African American clergymen often shun them and fail to support them or admit these women into their circle of influence. Often they find themselves without female mentors. A call for leadership education of African American clergywomen in training is consistent with the call for African American clergy leadership education.

In this light, I make the following recommendations for an African American clergy leadership education program that would have as a major component focused mentoring of African American clergywomen. This mentoring program would include small cohorts of African American clergywomen who would meet regularly for a two-year cycle for discussions on the African American church, leadership, and women. It would also have a dedicated

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bibliography on issues of African American clergywomen and leadership to fuel discussions.\(^\text{336}\) The development of a national conversation on African American women in clergy leadership roles would serve African American clergywomen by providing them with a large forum for conversation about their needs and concerns. The program would offer conversations with senior clergywomen leaders, such as Bishop Vashti Mackenzie and the Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake, acting as mentors. Womanist scholars, such as Drs. Cheryl Gilkes, Stacey Floyd-Thomas, and Linda E. Thomas, could contribute to a national conversation on the state of African American clergywomen, since they are scholars who also interact regularly as leaders in African American congregations. Beyond conversations, there must be a one-year mentoring program that pairs African American women with one another for a dedicated meeting for prayer, spiritual reflection, Bible study, and worship focused on their needs. As each woman finished the year, she would be required to complete a portfolio on women and leadership that would include a leadership style paper, a Bible study series on women in leadership, and two sermons on the same subject. The portfolio requirement would include her development of a cohort of laywomen and laymen with whom she had met for conversations on Christian women and leadership. This exercise is designed to help these clergywomen develop allies in her congregation. They would need to trace leadership patterns in their families, churches, and communities as non text-based resources. An additional requirement would be research on African American women leaders in

the nineteenth century and in the civil rights movement. Women would be required to produce one talking point paper on a woman leader from the African diasporas. The final work required for this program would be the development of a leadership profile paper. The Anna Howard Shaw Center would be a resource for this part of the clergy leadership program.

My sixth recommendation is the improvement of relationships between African American clergymen and African American clergywomen. In light of concerns about their working relationships in the findings of this study, I recommend that the African American clergy leadership education program launch a study to investigate how African American clergywomen and their male colleagues work or fail to work together in the African American church. This study would be a critical step toward helping African American clergywomen and clergymen to be heard on this issue.

This study would lead to another program for African American clergywomen and their male colleagues on shared leadership development for the African American church. The significant amount of literature in black liberation theology and womanist theology would help African American clergywomen and clergymen to begin to develop language for expressing their concerns about African American clergy leadership. It would be required to have such readings done by both groups. However, attention must be paid to how the discussion of womanist theology and black liberation theology do not always result in larger opportunities for African American clergywomen. The program would require meetings between African clergymen and clergywomen in the Boston area for conversations and celebrations of their leadership. They


would be required to develop one Bible study and sermon that they would present together at their local congregations. This program for African American clergywomen and clergymen would hold one annual breakfast with one clergywoman and one clergyman who have participated as speakers in this module of the program.

The recommendations in this dissertation make the case for the development of a critical field of study in university-related seminaries: African American clergy leadership education. Based on these recommendations and the findings of this study, I will offer the following outline or plan for the development of such program at Boston University School of Theology. African American clergy leadership education is defined as specialized curricula that guide African American clergy in the knowledge and practices of leadership theory for the African American church, including research on clergy leadership, ethics, management, administration, and business. This is an interdisciplinary field of study that applies research from a variety of fields, such as social work, medicine, and public health, along with research from theological studies to the issues of the African American church to help African American clergy link church and academy in a partnership for the betterment of the African American church. The study of African American clergy leadership education involves teaching the history of African American clergy leadership in order to exhibit lessons on leadership from the past, while equipping African American clergy leaders to guide the church in the present in order to envision a future for the African American church.
Program Proposal for an African American Clergy Leadership Education Program (AACLEP)

The purpose of the African American Clergy Leadership Education Program (AACLEP) is to offer African American clergy leadership education for African American clergy serving the African American church in the global context. It supplies curricula and promotes research so this distinct clergy group can develop knowledge and skills to strengthen their ability to lead the African American church and creatively deal with the pressing contemporary religious and social issues of African American Christians.

Findings and Recommendations with Proposed Program Components

There are six components of the program that are supported by the findings and recommendations of this study. They are: the program development component, program structure component, the curriculum development component, the component of faculty mentoring, and the African American clergywomen and leadership component, and the African American Clergy Leader Partnership component.

1. Program Development Component

The Leadership Education Program for African American Clergy at Boston University School of Theology is a two-year program for African American clergy who are in leadership positions in African American churches. It provides instruction for African American clergy leaders in clergy leadership theory and promotes practices that enhance clergy expertise in church and community leadership. African American clergy leadership requires skills beyond
those of the field of theological education so the departments and schools of the University will make critical contributions to the field of African American Clergy Leadership Education.

The program will recruit clergy from the metropolitan Boston area. Eight African American clergy leaders will be admitted to the program each year. The program offers continuing education credits that lead to the Certificate in African American Clergy Leadership Education for participants who complete the two years of study and all program requirements.

1.1 This component is based on “Finding One: program support for participants” and Finding Seven: bridging the breach” from earlier in this chapter. Finding One recognizes African American clergy leadership education programs as necessary protective space for African American clergy leaders. Finding Seven revealed that African American clergy leaders in Black Church Studies programs felt that they were not required to demonstrate the knowledge they acquired in those programs in the local church. As a result of this gap in practice, participants struggled to maintain connections between what they learned in the academy when leading African American churches.

1.2 This component is supported by Recommendations One and Two presented earlier in this chapter. Recommendation One supports the development of a stronger partnership between African American clergy and the Boston University School of Theology in the interest of African American clergy leadership education. Recommendation Two is for the creation of an African American clergy leadership education program for African American clergy at Boston University School of Theology. The creation of this program will enable African American
clergy leaders to acquire additional knowledge to strengthen their ministry practice in the local church.

2. Program Structure Component

The program will meet in ten weekly seminars for each semester of the two-year program. Each seminar will last for three hours. The evening will begin with a light meal and a fifteen-minute bible study led by a member of the program’s clergy cohort. The remaining two hours will include presentations from program faculty on topics listed in the syllabi on African American clergy leadership and will include clergy leaders in informed discussion of materials. The final thirty minutes will be reserved for individual participant feedback on case studies, or readings.

The final two sessions of the first year will be used for Cohort Presentations on significant learnings in African American clergy leadership education. The cohort presentation must include one research on aspect of the history of African American clergy leadership. This presentation will be one of the entries in the Leadership Portfolio that is required for completing the program. The Leadership Portfolio is a record of the significant learning experiences of participants in the program. It serves as evidence of the participant’s collection and integration of learning experiences from the two-year program. The Leadership Portfolio is an effective product for this program in that it offers tangible evidence of the work of African American clergy leaders and African American theologians called for in “Finding Seven: bridging the breach,” that calls for closing the gap between African American clergy leaders and the academy. The portfolio also serves as reminder of the theological growth of participants in the program. Evidence of theological growth, interpretation of liberation theologies and teaching that
theology in the local congregation was important to African American clergy leaders in Finding Four.

A two-week summer intensive session at the end of the first year will offer time for additional reading in African American clergy leadership education and time to work on the Leadership Assessment Document for African American clergy leaders. The Leadership Assessment Document must include an overview of the roots of participant’s leadership identity, reflection on leadership strengths and weaknesses, a review of the call to preach, the call to ministry and the call to leadership. It must include an analysis of leadership of church and community institutions, with attention to the analysis of gender relationships in the African American Church. The theological analysis on African American clergy leadership that must include an interpretation of theology, racism, sexism, and classism is required. Participants must also submit two sermons and a bible study on leadership.

The second year of the program the African American clergy leaders will meet with program faculty and faculty from university schools and departments to discuss topics such the community and church interventions for health and welfare, religion and medical ethics, and interreligious dialogue. They will meet with program faculty to continue readings in African American leadership education. At the end of the first semester of the second year, participants will submit a plan for a Leadership Project that will focus on a leadership issue that is of concern to them. This project will require that the clergy participants to use program materials and faculty presentations to highlight a leadership issue for African American clergy leaders in the African American church and the community. Participants will present an analysis of the issue and develop an informed response to the issue. Participants in the program must attend one conference or workshop on ministry hosted by the Boston University School of Theology or any
Boston Theological Institute school during the two-year period. Attendance at one professional clergy conference is required.

The final semester of the program participants will present components of their Leadership Portfolio. This proposal will be submitted as part of the Leadership Portfolio. The Leadership Portfolio must include a Bible study on leadership, Cohort Presentations, Leadership Assessment Document, Leadership Project, the Conference Attendance Report and two sermons on leadership. The participants will present one element of the leadership Portfolio in the AACLEP Symposium. Each AACLEP symposium will include a worship service with a sermon by a renowned African American Clergy leader or African American Clergy leader educator. This symposium is open to clergy and laity from churches of participants, area churches, area seminaries, and university faculty and students.

2.1 This component is based on “Finding Two: Flexible learning structure and learning opportunities” and “Finding Seven: Bridging the breach.” Finding Two states that participants in Black Church Studies programs appreciated the flexible learning structure of their programs that offered provided opportunities to pursue topics in the overlapping setting of classes, workshops, and conferences. Finding Seven revealed that African American clergy leaders in Black Church Studies programs felt that they were not required to demonstrate the knowledge they acquired in those programs in the local church. This gap in practice was troubling as participants struggled to maintain connections between what they learned in the academy when leading African American churches.
2.2 Another aspect here is for an African American clergy leadership program at Boston University is to use the curricular resources of Boston University. The development of African American clergy leadership education must be expanded in a university related seminary such as the Boston University School of Theology because the university related seminary is uniquely positioned to offer a rich mix of resources to promote African American clergy leadership education. This interdisciplinary effort would offer information for the African American clergy leader whose role in church and community require skills and information beyond the narrow confines of theological studies. African American clergy require information to serve a constituency with multifaceted needs that extend beyond theological concerns.

3. Curricula Development Component

For the African American Clergy Leadership Education Program at Boston University School of Theology, the two-year interdisciplinary program includes curricular offerings from theological studies and other university departments or schools such as the African American Studies department, the African Studies department, The Anna Howard Shaw Center, The Center for Global Christianity and Mission, The Danielson Institute, the School of Social Work, the School of Medicine, and the School of Public Health, and the School of Management. It will offer courses in general leadership theory and principles including leadership development, organizational change, critical thinking for leaders, and topics on clergy leadership ethics in church and community, conflict management, and the church as a nonprofit venture. Program studies will include the history of African American clergy leadership in the United States, the development of African American clergy leadership in the post civil rights era of the twenty first century and the global future of the African American church.
Ongoing topics to be addressed include the integration of pastoral leadership and congregational development, understanding group needs in the local church, institutional change, and crisis management. A comprehensive bibliography on African American clergy leadership will be distributed. The use of case studies analysis will ground theory in real-world application of knowledge gained about African American clergy leadership studies.

3.1 This component is based on “Finding Five: clergy leadership education for program participants” and “Finding Seven: bridging the breach.” Finding Five concludes that African American clergy leaders wanted leadership experiences, classes, and practica that were directly focused on general leadership theory, organizational development, financial management, administration, management, and problem solving for African American clergy. They wanted to be competent at organizing and orienting the African American church, so that the church might continue to be a resource to the community and the world that faces social problems such as poverty, addiction hunger, and disease. Finding Seven on bridging the breach concludes that participants in this study felt that because they were not required to demonstrate their knowledge and ideas in the local church in Black Church studies programs. As a result of this gap in practice, participants struggled to maintain connections between what they learned in the academy when leading African American churches.

3.2 Recommendation Two is for an African American clergy leadership education program at Boston University School of Theology. Recommendation Three for an African American clergy leadership education program at Boston University is to use the extensive resources of Boston University beyond the Theology School.
3.3 Recommendation Four is the strengthening of the transfer of theological knowledge by African American clergy leaders who need to continue to build opportunities to review theological scholarship with the African American church and act as facilitators of the distribution of that scholarship to the church. African American clergy need help in addressing theological challenges of dealing with the church's neglect of women, the church, and sexuality, and the issues of disease especially that of HIV and AIDS. The inability to translate Black Liberation theology and Womanist theology from academy to the African American church calls for the development of focus groups of African American clergy leaders, and theological scholars who will enter into dialogue about the task of making Black Liberation theology and Womanist theology part of African American congregational life.

4. Faculty Mentor Component

In addition to teaching, AACLEP faculty will act mentors to assigned program participants and they will visit the congregations of their mentees three times in the first year of the program and three times in the second year. In the second year of the program, these program faculty/mentors will observe the AACLEP participants presenting one sermon on leadership. Then program faculty will meet with the AACLEP participant and lay people in the church for a brief discussion on the implications of the sermon. The faculty person/mentor will also observe the African American clergy leader teach one adult Bible study. Both the sermon and Bible study must include two talking points on black liberation theology and womanist theology.
4.1 Finding Three on faculty mentoring demonstrated that faculty mentoring of participants through class discussions, advising meetings, and liaison work with the local church was considered a major strength of Black Church Studies programs. The findings reflected participant’s desire for additional mentoring that would teach them how to offer their leadership to the African American church and community. Faculty participation in the African American church influenced participant scholarship and gave participants opportunities to link church and academy.

4.2 Finding Seven on bridging the breach was important because program participants felt they had few opportunities to understand how they could apply classroom knowledge to the needs of the local church and community. Faculty who assist African American clergy to maintain links with learning while serving church and community are valuable.

4.3 Based on Finding Four on theological growth, African American clergy leaders did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to transfer black liberation theology and womanist theology to the local African American church. The sermon and Bible study give the clergy leaders opportunities for learning these skills.

4.4 Based on Recommendation Three, the faculty of the program will be invited to work as faculty from university schools, departments, and centers in order to bring the university to the African American clergy person in order to present leadership education in the context of a large learning community.
5. African American Clergywomen and Leadership Component

The African American clergy leadership program at Boston University School of Theology will have two years of mentoring on African American clergy leadership with African American women for a cohort of eight African American clergywomen leaders. The two-year program will have ten sessions each semester and one two-week summer session. The evening will begin with a light meal and a fifteen-minute bible study led by a member of the clergy cohort who has been admitted to the program. The remaining two hours will include presentations from program faculty on topics listed in the syllabi on African American clergy leadership and will include clergy leaders in informed discussion of materials. The final thirty minutes will be reserved for individual participant feedback on case studies, or readings. The final two sessions of the first year will be used for Cohort Presentations on significant lessons in African American clergywomen’s leadership education. The cohort presentation must include one research on aspect of the history of African American clergywomen and leadership.

As outlined above in Component 2, the final two sessions of the first year will be used for Cohort Presentations on significant lessons in African American clergy leadership education. The cohort presentation must include one research on aspect of the history of African American clergy leadership. This presentation will be one of the entries in the Leadership Portfolio that is required for completing the program.

Again from Component 2, a two-week summer intensive session at the end of the first year will offer time for additional reading in African American clergy leadership education and time to work on the Leadership Assessment Document for African American clergy leaders. The Leadership Assessment Document must include an overview of the roots each participant’s leadership identity, reflection on leadership strengths and weaknesses, a review of the call to
preach, the call to ministry and the call to leadership. It must include an analysis of leadership of church and community institutions, with attention to the analysis of gender relationships in the African American Church. The theological analysis on African American clergy leadership that must include an interpretation of theology, racism, sexism, and classism is required. Participants must also submit two sermons and a bible study on leadership.

Women will need to trace leadership patterns in their families, churches, and communities in order to create a Leadership Legacy Paper. They will complete research on the history of African American clergywomen leaders. Each clergywoman must do a research on African American clergywomen leaders in the nineteenth century, in the modern civil rights movement and the twentieth century. Women would need to produce one talking point paper on a woman leader from the African diasporas.

The second year of the program the African American clergy leaders will meet with program faculty and faculty from university schools and departments to discuss topics such the community and church interventions for health and welfare, religion and medical ethics, and interreligious dialogue. They will meet with program faculty to continue readings in African American leadership education. At the end of the first semester of the second year, clergywomen participants will submit a plan for a Leadership Project that will focus on a leadership issue that is of concern to them. This project will require that the clergy participants to use program materials and faculty presentations to highlight a leadership issue for African American clergywomen leaders in the African American church and the community. Participants will present an analysis of the issue and develop an informed response to the issue. Participants in the program must attend one conference or workshop on ministry hosted by the Boston University
School of Theology or any Boston Theological Institute school during the two-year period. Attendance at one professional clergy conference is required.

The final semester of the program participants will present components of their Leadership Portfolio. This proposal will be submitted as part of the Leadership Portfolio. The Leadership Portfolio must include a Bible study on leadership, Cohort Presentations, the Leadership Legacy Paper, Leadership Assessment Document, Leadership Project, the Conference Attendance Report and two sermons on leadership. The participants will present one element of the Leadership Portfolio in the AACLEP Clergywomen Consultation in the local church every year will permit African American clergywomen in the program to make presentations of their Leadership Portfolios. As noted in Recommendation Five, senior clergywomen and womanist theological scholars will be invited to these consultations to work with participants. The culminating event for this program is the African American clergy Partnership Breakfast were African American clergymen and clergywomen will meet to discuss leadership.

5.1 Finding Six on invisible women takes into account the women in Black Church Studies programs investigated in this study who had concern about African American clergywomen and leadership. There was disappointment about the unmet educational needs and guidance of African American clergywomen leaders in such programs.

5.2 Recommendation Five supports the development of a major component focused on mentoring of African American clergywomen. This mentoring program would include small
cohorts of African American clergywomen who would meet regularly for a one-year cycle for discussions on the African American church, leadership, and women.

6. African American Clergy Leader Partnership Component

The African American Clergy Leader Partnership component provides for dialogue between clergywomen and clergymen about African American clergy leadership. Clergywomen and clergymen participants will meet for one week in three sessions for discussions about the history of leadership of African American clergywomen and clergymen in the United States, gender analysis, and the issue of sexism in the African American church. Readings for this component will be articles on leadership styles of men and women, and on womanist and black liberation theology. Pairs of African American clergymen and clergywomen will be required to develop one adult Bible study on women’s and men’s leadership that can be presented in an African American congregation. The culminating event for this program is the African American Clergy Leader Partnership Breakfast. One African American clergywoman and clergymen who have participated in this program will speak at the event.

Supporting Findings and Recommendations:

6.1 Finding Six supports this component. Black Church Studies programs have not prepared African American clergy leaders to understand the implications of working relationships between African American clergymen and clergywomen.

6.2 Recommendations Five, Four, and Seven support this component. Recommendation Five supports the development of a major component focused on the mentoring of African American
clergywomen. Recommendation Six calls for the improvement of relationships between African American clergymen and African American clergywomen. Recommendation Seven is focused on working relationships between African American clergymen and clergywomen. It is recommended that the AACLEP launch a study to investigate how African American clergywomen and their male colleagues work or fail to work together in the African American church.

Concluding Remarks

This program design is the culmination of this Doctor of Ministry project. The project sought to discover the history, status, and future of African American clergy leadership education in university related theological schools and seminaries in the United States. The project presented a literature review of the history of models of clergy leadership education programs for African American Protestant clergy in communities, churches, colleges, theology schools, and seminaries. The review reveals the growth of African American clergy leadership education after the Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century and development of Black Church Studies programs. It explored the Africans American theological scholarship that undergirds programmatic and pedagogical curricula of Black Church Studies programs.

Three specific Black Church Studies programs were reviewed: the Black Church Studies Program at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, New York, the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. All the information from the study was used to develop
an outline for African American clergy leadership education program at Boston University School of Theology, a university based seminary.

This research had some limitations. I only studied African American clergy leadership education programs at university-related seminaries in the United States. A second study could be done on African American clergy leadership education programs at freestanding seminaries to determine how they address leadership education. I did not attempt to review African American church-based clergy leadership education or denominational clergy leadership education programs, nor did I attempt to compare those programs to the ones I studied. There does need to be quantitative and qualitative studies of larger groups of participants in African American clergy leadership education programs. African American clergy leadership education programs are not yet fifty years old and need more evaluation. Further work on the perceptions of faculty toward African American clergy leadership programs is in order. African American clergy leaders need additional research on the changing composition of the African American church and its leaders because of influx of African diaspora migrants to the United States. All of this research is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Finally, as a woman educated in church-based leadership programs, the academy and the seminary, I have labored to become a leader of leaders. My sense of responsibility and dedication to training leaders for the African American church has fueled my passion for this research. As African American clergy, we carry the great legacy of African American clergy leadership in our hands, but we who serve the African American church must not let it slow us down. Instead we must reshaped that legacy so that it renews our commitment to the present and the future of the African American church in its diasporic manifestations.
APPENDIX A

IRB RESEARCH APPLICATION
Two copies of the completed, typewritten, and signed research application should be submitted to the Institutional Review Board, 25 Buick St., Boston, MA, 02215, with two copies of the full grant proposal (including appendices but excluding budgets). Any documents pertaining to the review of the research by another IRB should also be included. Two copies of an informed consent form, and assent form if applicable, must accompany the application.

Attached are synopses of selected parts of the federal regulations governing the use of human subjects in research, which may be useful in preparing applications. Included are important definitions, criteria for IRB approval, and general requirements for informed consent. Two appendices are also included. Appendix A describes categories of research exempt from further review by the Board.

Questions concerning this application or the application process should be directed to the Coordinator for the Board at (617) 353-4365.

1. Category of review (enter N/A if no claim is made):
Exempt: Applicants may claim exemption from further review if the research is in accordance with Appendix A (see attached); applicants must cite the applicable regulation.

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

THIS CATEGORY DOES NOT APPLY TO CHILDREN IN MANY CASES. See 45 CFR 46.401(b) for further guidance.

2. Project Title: Historical and Critical Review of African American Clergy Leadership Education Programs

3. Principal Investigator (include title, department, university address, email and telephone number):

Imani Sheila Newsome-Camara
Boston University School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Ma.
inewsome@bu.edu
617-353-3055

4. Co-Investigators and Staff: None

5. Granting Agency and Date of Submission: None

6. Expected Duration of Study: 6 months

7. Description of Project.
A. Describe the proposed research briefly, with attention to objective(s) and expected outcome(s):

Response:

1. The objective of this research is to gather information about educational programs for African American clergy in university related theological schools and seminaries. The history of the development of these programs since the 1970s has limited documentation. Such documentation of the strengths and weakness of such programs over the last 30 years will provide information on further development of such programs for African American clergy in university related seminaries. Therefore, the research question seeks to ask how participants of these educational programs for African American clergy in university related theological schools and seminaries, have gained knowledge of the strengths and weakness of such programs.

2. This research design is qualitative in nature. The collection of oral histories from 10 persons from each university related theological school and seminary named in the study is required.

3. Materials and procedures, with particular attention to those involving human subjects. (Two copies of all interview questions, which will be used in the project, are attached to the application.)

There is no survey instrument used in the study.

B. Describe the criteria for the selection of subjects (age, sex, etc.), the method for identifying subjects, and the anticipated number of subjects in each identified subject category.
Include a description of any involvement of prisoners, of institutionalized persons, of persons with acute or severe physical or mental illness, or of pregnant women as subjects. Also, describe any involvement of subjects who are students, employees, patients, or clients of Boston University or other hospital or institution.

Response:

As the primary investigator for this research, I will use targeted recruitment to identify participants for my research. Directors and faculty from each of the African-American clergy leadership programs at Vanderbilt Divinity School, and Candler School of Theology and Emory University will be identified from respective websites. I will then ask permission to recruit subjects from their present and past participants in their programs. I anticipate that directors and faculty from each of the three programs will be able to provide at least 15 names and contact information of current and past program participants from their respective programs. Based on this number, I plan to recruit participants from this pool of 45 individuals. I plan to enroll 10 persons from each of the three African American clergy leadership education programs therefore, 30 persons will be participants in the study.

After I interview these 30 people, I will have established enough data from representative populations, reaching a saturation point.

There will be no involvement of prisoners, of institutionalized persons, of persons with acute or severe physical or mental illness, or of pregnant women as subjects. There will be no involvement of subjects who are students, employees, patients, or clients of Boston University or other hospital or institution. No minors will be involved in this study.
C. Describe the information that will be provided to the subjects about the research. Include two copies of any ads, posters, or recruitment letters to be used.

Response:

For the recruitment process, I will send an email directly to the pool of past and present participants of each program. If the director/faculty would like to use a different method of recruitment, I will ask that they forward a recruitment flyer asking present and former students in their programs to participate in the study. A copy of the e-mail flyer that I will be using to recruit the participants for the study can be found below.

D. Describe the circumstances under which informed consent will be obtained from subjects, including how, when, and by whom consent will be obtained.

Response:

Informed consent forms will be sent to persons invited to participate by email or mail; they will be returned to the researcher signed by the participant and forwarded by US mail or email. See copy of the Research Consent Form letter below.

E. Describe any expected benefit(s) for the subject from participating in the study and describe any benefits to others, including society. In addition, describe any financial compensation to be provided to subjects.
Response:

Participants in this study will be involved in reflection on educational experiences that may lead to their understanding of themselves as contributors to the history of a particular component of theological education in the United States. No financial compensation will be presented.

F. Describe any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subjects arising from participation in the research and any measures to prevent or minimize such risks. This includes physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks or discomforts.

Response:

There are no known physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks or discomforts involved in the collection of oral history data in this study. The possibility of unforeseen risks is possible, but is unlikely in the collection of oral histories.

G. Describe what steps will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of records identifying the subjects, including measures to restrict access to such records and to preserve the anonymity of subjects in publication or reports regarding the research.
Response:

All information will be held in strict confidence and may not be disclosed, unless required by law or regulation. Oral history questionnaires and questionnaire data will be stored in locked files and destroyed at the end of the research. Audiotapes of oral histories will be stored in locked files and destroyed at the end of the research. Any e-mail lists and communication by email or mail used to distribute the oral histology questionnaires will not be shared with others. They will be kept completely confidential, and will be destroyed after the research is concluded to ensure confidentiality. Participants will be asked to create a pseudonym that may be used in the body of the study. Institutions will also be listed by pseudonyms. Only the PI will know the identity of participants and their institutional affiliation. Results of oral histories will be published in brief summaries in the appendix of the study.

8. Informed Consent Form(s).

Two copies of each proposed informed consent form, and assent forms for minors when applicable, must be included with each application. The content must be consistent with the basic elements of informed consent as defined by Federal and University policy (see attached). Please note this represents the minimum information to be given a potential subject. The IRB may waive the requirements to obtain informed consent in some circumstances. If a waiver of any requirement for informed consent is requested, please consult with the Coordinator of the Board.

Response:
I accept responsibility for assuring that this study will be carried out in accordance with all applicable federal state and local laws and regulations and in accordance with the policies of Boston University, with respect to the protection of human subjects participating in this study.

Imani Sheila Newsome-Camara

_______________________________________________________________

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

This application has been reviewed and approved for submission to the Charles River Campus IRB.

_______________________________________________________________

Chairman/Director of Department, Date
APPENDIX B

RESEARCH RECRUITMENT FORM
RESEARCH RECRUITMENT FORM

Dear (Name);

Your name was given to me by Dr.__________, the director and/ or faculty member at the African American clergy leadership program at___________. My name is Imani Sheila Newsome-Camara. I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Boston University School of Theology. I am researching the role of seminaries and theological schools in producing educational opportunities to African American clergy through leadership education programs.

I would like to invite you to contribute your knowledge of the African American clergy leadership program at _____________School of Theology at ________ University to my research project. You must have participated in the African-American clergy leadership program at ____________________________ for least one year in order to participate in this study. You will be one of 10 persons who participate in this study at your institution.

The interview will be a semi-structured oral history questionnaire focused on the African American clergy leadership education program at _____________School of Theology. Your risk for participating in this study will be very low. If you agree to participate in the study, you will participate in an interview for approximately one hour.

There are no known costs to you for participating in this research study except for your time. You will not be paid to participate in this research study. Your information may be used in publications or presentations. *However, the information will not include any personal information that will allow you to be identified.*
Please contact me by email (Inewsome@bu.edu) or phone (617.353.3055) if you are willing to participate in my study. Your participation in my project will help me in my work as explore an under-documented historical component of theological education in the United States. I look forward to hearing from you.

Name of PI (Printed): Imani Sheila Newsome Camara
APPENDIX C

EMAIL SCREENING FORM
EMAIL SCREENING FORM

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the study entitled “An Historical and Critical Analysis of Leadership Education of African-American Protestant Clergy within University-Based Black Church Studies Programs.” Please complete this Screening Form and suggest times that we may meet or talk by phone.

I, __________________________________________, affirm that I participated in the African American Clergy Leadership Program at (name of university) for one year.

Time to call or visit; __________________________________________
APPENDIX D

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Historical Review of African-American Clergy Leadership Education Programs

Principal Investigator: Imani Sheila Newsome Camara

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the development of Clergy Leadership Education programs for African Americans in university-affiliated seminaries in the United States. This study is designed to trace the history of the development of African American clergy leadership education programs in order to gain a better understanding of those programs. Imani Sheila Newsome Camara, Candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Boston University School of Theology, is the principal investigator for this research.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have participated in the __________________________ Program at __________________________ for at least one year. You are one of _____ individuals asked to participate in this study. As a participant in this study, the principal investigator will interview you in order to obtain oral history data about your participation in the program. The interview will be based on an oral history questionnaire and take no more than one hour. The interview may be done by telephone or in person, whichever is more convenient for you.

The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. There will be no link between you and the information you give to me. You will be assigned a pseudonym when you present your oral history data.
Taking part in this study is voluntary. If you choose to be in the study, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may refuse to answer any question that is presented to you by the researcher. Participating in this study does not mean that you are giving up any rights. There will be no compensation for your participation. There are no known costs to you for participating in this research study except for your time. You will not be paid to participate in this research study.

There is little risk to you for participating in this study. The collection of oral histories allows you to disclose information that you feel is relevant to the research topic presented. Your comments may have an influence on the development of clergy leadership programs for African American clergy in university related seminaries.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Imani S. Newsome Camara by email at inewsome@bu.edu or by telephone at 1617 353-3055. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Dana Robert at 617 353-3050. The Boston University IRB has approved this research. If you have any questions about the your rights as a research subject as part of this research study, contact the Coordinator of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research of Boston University, at 617-358-6115 or at irb@bu.edu.

**Statement of Consent:** You have read the above information and have received answers to any questions. You consent to take part in the research study for the collection of oral history data about clergy education programs for African Americans at university related theological schools in the United States. You have reviewed and received a copy of this consent form for your own records. You are also indicating that you have been given the opportunity to ask
questions about the study and all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you have read this consent form or it has been read to you. By signing the consent form, you are indicating that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

___________________________________________
Participant’s Name

___________________________________________ Date _______________________
Participant’s Signature

___________________________________________
Imani Sheila Newsome Camara
Person obtaining consent Name

___________________________________________ Date _______________________
Person obtaining Consent Signature
Audio Tape Release Form

I, ________________________________ agree to be audio taped as part of my participation in the study, An Historical and Critical Analysis of Leadership Education of African-American Protestant Clergy within University-Based Black Church Studies Programs conducted by Imani Sheila Newsome Camara. I understand that the audio taped will not have my name on it and will only use my chosen pseudonym, and the date of the interview for identification purposes.

I understand that the audio taped and any transcription will be kept in a secure, locked location and then destroyed according to the Boston University IRB requirements. Information collected as part of the study will be used in the compilation of a thesis as well as in other future publications and professional presentations prepared by the principal researcher, Imani Sheila Newsome Camara. The audiotapes used to gather data will not be published, as the tapes are for the sole purpose of ensuring accuracy in the data collection process.

I grant the principal researcher, Imani Sheila Newsome Camara, doctoral student at Boston University School of Theology, with a concentration in Church History, permission to audiotape me during participation in the interviews. I understand that I will receive a copy of this signed formed Consent Form for my records.

_________________________________      __________________________________
Participant’s Printed Name                  Participant’s Signature

_________________________________
Date
APPENDIX E

ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS AT SEMINARIES AND THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS
ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CLERGY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS AT SEMINARIES AND THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

What is your race/ethnicity?

How old are you?

What denomination you are affiliated with at this time?

Are you ordained or licensed in ministry?

What roles in ministry do you now engage in as a clergyperson?

What kinds of learning experiences were most helpful to you as a learner in the Black Church Studies program?

Does the program offer you access to learning experiences about African-American clergy leadership?

What were some of the theological knowledge or general concerns you have identified as you have worked in this program?

What are the strengths of this program?

What are the weaknesses of this program?

What have you learned about the relationship between this Black Church Studies program, the community and outreach to the Africa-American Church?
APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL LETTER ____[}
IRB Protocol #2294X

Title: “Historical Review of African American Clergy Leadership Education Programs”

Imani Sheila Newsome-Camara
School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215

December 22, 2010

Dear Ms. Newsome-Camara,

The IRB has reviewed your IRB submission and has determined that it is Exempt from Federal Regulation 45 CFR 46 as Not Human Subject Research. This project is an oral history, which does not meet the Federal Definition of research being designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

Although this project is not subject to 45 CFR 46, as a student at Boston University, you must still follow University policy regarding ethical conduct of research. Your consent and recruitment information has been approved and stamped by the IRB.

No further submission is required to the IRB unless further changes are made to the protocol. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB at 617 358-6115.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Sonia Chawla Wright
IRB Analyst, CRC IRB
Boston University
APPENDIX G

STUDY PARTICIPANTS
STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Participants are listed by name, race/ethnicity, denomination, and role in Christian Ministry.

Kelly Miller Smith Institute, Vanderbilt Divinity School

Aimee Johnson, Black, Apostolic Church, Youth Minister

Alphonso Hendrix, Black, Baptist, Community Outreach, and Intergenerational Ministry

Karen Redd, African American, African Methodist Episcopal, Youth Minister (Licensed minister in preparation for ordination)

Joan Hall, African American, Baptist, Youth Minister, and Outreach Minister

Mercedes Pruitt, African American, Baptist, Assistant Minister

Robert Jones, Black, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, Licensed Minister

Joseph Jenkins, African American, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, Director of Innovation (media) ministry

Coreen Waters, African American, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, Christian Education, and the Social Political Action Minister

Cora Jeffries, Black, Baptist, Licensed Minister

Black Church Studies Program, Candler School of Theology

Catherine Wilson, Black, Missionary Baptist, Ordained full-time assistant pastor

Loretta Loving, African American, Church of Christ, college administrator, not active in ministry

Sharon Duncan, African American, AME, Associate Minister, Minister of Christian Education

Alexis Wening, African American, Baptist. Founder and CEO of Nonprofit Arts Ministry

Georgia Travelers, AME Zion, Itinerant Elder and Minister at the local church
Monique Rushing, Black AME, Reserve Army Chaplain and Young Adult Minister

William Walker, African American, United Methodist, College Chaplain
REFERENCES


Bowen, Boone M. The Candler School of Theology: Sixty Years of Service. Atlanta: Emory University, 1974.


Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Program of Black Church Studies, http://www.candler.emory.edu/programs/denominational-other-programs/bcs/index.cfm (accessed March 1, 2012).


———. “Calling the Oppressors to Account for Four Centuries of Terror.” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31, no. 3 (June 2004): 179–88.

———. “God and Black Suffering: Calling the Oppressors to Account.” *Anglican Theological Review* 90, no. 4 (September 2008): 701–12.


