

"AND THEY MADE HEAVEN REAL"

Chaplain Lathrop P. Utley

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## INTRODUCTION

The work of reconciliation between Black and white cultures in the 20th century has top priority in the American military establishment. The Army Chaplain is deeply conscious of this priority in the exercise of his ministry to the military community. He has been tasked with the responsibility to make a significant contribution toward the reconciliation of these cultures. In short, the U.S. Army will strive to set the example; the Chaplains will be the agents for its accomplishment.

Arnold Guyot, the Swiss-born geographer and scientist, emigrated to America in 1848. From 1855, he was professor of geography and geology at Princeton. In 1873, he published a work entitled, "Physical Geography," in which he prophesied:

"America, with her cultural and progressive people, and her social organization, founded upon the principle of the equality and brotherhood of all mankind, seems destined to furnish the most complete expression of the Christian civilization; and to become the foundation of a new and higher life for all races of men."<sup>1</sup>

Equality, the brotherhood of all mankind, a new and higher life for all races of men! Guyot reflected the hopes and aspirations of an American society just beginning to feel the impact of an industrial revolution, one of the chief determinants of the modern western way of life. The expansion of human possibility that followed in the wake of an accompanying technological advancement is well documented. It dominated the will and purpose of the American society to the present day. For

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<sup>1</sup>Arnold Guyot, "Physical Geography," in Christian History of the Constitution, comp. by Verna M. Hall (San Francisco: The American Constitution Press, 1960), p. 4.

"Man as Victim of Technology has emerged as one of the most insistent themes of our time. The theme is hardly new; men have always felt an irresistible urge to master nature . . ."2

And yet, for all of this technological progress, an anxiety has gripped our nation. There is a separation between what exists and what the society perceives it ought to be. Max Ways goes to the heart of the problem when he says, "We have awakened to the fact that we are long overdue in becoming sensitive to social ills that should have troubled us all along."<sup>3</sup> Guyot's prophecy has not come true. The truth is that it was ignored!

American society has closed its ears to the crisis of a people who, for the past 300 years, have known nothing but dehumanization, and who have longed to enter the mainstream of American economic and social life. It is a fact that no one seemed to be feeling and listening to Black America.

But a new day has dawned! Black and white cultures have begun to feel empowered to verbalize and act out their feelings and frustrations towards each other and the inhumane environment which has robbed them both of their humanity. The Black Man endows the word "Man" with meaning. The reality of Black Experience is that they are treated as children and are involved in the powerlessness of children vis-a-vis the larger society.

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<sup>2</sup>Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education, (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Max Ways, "O Say Can You See? The Crisis in our National Perception," Fortune Magazine, October, 1968.

Restoring the centrality of "Man" in humanity is the central theme of the twentieth century. The work of reconciliation between the Black and white cultures is essentially the task of restoring personal identity to each. The military chaplain in his unique realm of responsibility becomes a key figure in this reconciliation process. It is to this ministry of the U.S. Army Chaplain that I now direct the reader's attention. I choose to stress that facet of the process in which the white chaplain reaches out to effect a meaningful relationship with the Black community.

## PART I: THE BLACK SOLDIER

### Chapter I: The Black Soldier's Religious Experience

The Black soldier in the military community today displays a great sensitivity to spiritual realities. Black scholarship during the past fifteen years has accomplished the amazing task of putting the Black Man in touch with his religious history that originated in Africa, was modified in America while in slavery, and is seeking expression and relevance in this day and age. I would concur with Dr. Grant S. Shockley when he points out,

"There are two points of view with regard to the origin of the Black religious experience here and now. On the one hand, some sociologists point out that there is not a single institution in all of Black American culture that has not been deeply affected by its African backgrounds . . . On the other hand, there are sociologists who say that the Black African culture was so nearly destroyed by the experience of slavery that there is little or nothing left of it. The truth probably lies somewhere between these two extremes."<sup>4</sup>

It is not the purpose of this paper to delineate and evaluate this Black African religious history. We shall acknowledge its existence. Rather to say that the total religious history of the Black Man has clearly produced a people with a deep religious sense. Dr. Shockley calls it "a religious bent, a religious proclivity or inclination, which carried over to America. In spite of the fact that cultural ties had been cut, in spite of the fact that very few cultural vehicles were available, Black

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<sup>4</sup>Grant S. Shockley, Dr., "Early Black Religious Experience," Military Chaplains' Review, I (April, 1972), 13.

religiosity did survive."<sup>5</sup> This generation of the Black Soldier is most deeply aware of the fact that he has only to recall the teaching and instruction of the slavery days to be in touch readily with himself and his religious feelings, manifesting itself in and adapting itself to Christianity. It was not that the Christian Church made the Black man religious, but, rather, a very Black religious culture which found it possible to survive in and through the Christian Church. This is the source of religious sensitivity resident in the Black man in the U.S. Army today. His American ancestors were able to "keep alive", through a dynamic religious tradition, meaning, purpose, and hope in the midst of a world that has done much to dehumanize them. The critical question, it seems to me, is whether the Black experience is tied up inextricably with Christianity, or is the Muslim religion only a bogus alternative (as I seem to believe)?

Black religious sensitivity was kept viable through a full-blown story-telling tradition of folk tales, through the unique form of religious music the Negro spirituals, and through fundamentalistic Bible teaching by the Black Christian preacher in the Black pulpit. These three avenues enabled the Black man to express himself religiously and spiritually. Let us examine the importance of these three phenomena.

Richard M. Dorson, a well-known authority of American Negro folk tradition, who has literally traveled country-wide, collecting and verifying folk tales from American Negroes, concluded that "the New World Negro repertoire falls into two groups of stories, one pointing toward

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

Africa and one pointing toward Europe and Anglo-America. The story-stocks draw from multiple sources."<sup>6</sup> The folk tale becomes essentially the first attempt of the American Black culture to write its own history and their earliest literature of self-portraiture and social protest. These stories become the corpus of literature known as folk history, B.A. Botkin points out that this was "history from the bottom up, in which the people became their own historians, they directly concern the cultural historian, fully aware that history must study the inarticulate many as well as the articulate few."<sup>7</sup>

These folk tales dealt with reality as the Black man saw it and felt it. His soul often would speak and breathe through the telling of these tales. Folk theology was contained therein. Through this phenomenon, we see this whole folk tradition as the attempt of a culture to sustain and preserve itself, that is, a humanizing process amid a dehumanizing world.

The Negro Spiritual is a unique form of music. What the folk tradition did to preserve the "secular" history of Black culture, the Negro spiritual did to preserve and communicate the "sacred" history of Black culture. Father Clarence J. Rivers speaks significantly to this fact:

"The emotional, for instance, has not been considered the opposite of the spiritual. Quite the contrary ... a singer who performed without feeling "lacked soul." Not fearing the emotional,

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<sup>6</sup>Richard M. Dorson, American Negro Folktales, (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1956), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>B.A. Botkin, Lay My Burden Down, Phoenix Books, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 84.



blacks haven't feared highly rhythmic music, or the tendency to improvise musically."<sup>8</sup>

Probably the oldest type of music in the United States is the slave song, or spiritual, which takes its origins from the plantations. Many of these songs were religiously oriented. There was abundant allusion to Christian ideas of salvation and to life after death. The significant fact is that while publically singing a Christian hymn, the Black man would do so reticently. But, when by himself, he would revert to his own rhythmic styles and forms. The songs were sung with deep conviction. They possessed the most fundamental of all musical forces -- emotional creation.

Then, too, the spirituals were not wholly otherworldly. They "tell of hard trials, great tribulations; or wanderings in some lonesome valley, or down some unknown road, a long way from home, with brother, sister, father, mother gone."<sup>9</sup>

"To a degree these songs expressed the desire on the part of the black people to escape the hardships of their lives and to experience life in the Promised Land. These people saw no hope for improved living conditions. It was through their music that they were able to envision ultimate happiness."

"The religious music of black people, most often represented by the spirituals, was essentially a new creation. Although it drew to some extent on the African religious music, and the earlier work songs, it represented an amalgamation of diverse strains. Like most of the Negro music, it was a product of the circumstances under which the people lived, and the songs have persisted into the present time, no doubt because of their

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<sup>8</sup>Clarence Jos. Rivers, Father, "Black Worship", Military Chaplains' Review, I (January, 1972), 44-45.

<sup>9</sup>Sterling A. Brown, Arthur P. David, and Ulysses Lee, eds., The Negro Caravan, (New York: Dryden Press, 1941), p. 419.

relevance to the continuing struggles of the Black American."<sup>10</sup>

The third and final factor in the Black Soldier's sensitivity stems from the influence of the church and the "Black Preacher" tradition during slave days. Regardless of what the slave master might have required in terms of faith and practice, the Black man seems to have possessed his own interpretation of Holy Scriptures. His understanding of salvation never was limited to the next world. To a people who felt under the yoke, liberation, in this world was a must. The children of Israel and the Black man had much in common. Moses was a man they knew very, very well; their hope of deliverance involved more than some pie-in-the-sky thoughts.

The Reverend James A. Thomas, Sr. speaks informatively at this point:

"For the most part, religion and the church were all the blacks had; society beyond their own black world was closed to them. They could not become members of the country clubs or other social organizations provided for their white peers. Therefore, they joined the one institution they could join, namely, the black church. There they could do their own thing. They could assume positions of leadership and could feel important. During this same period, anyone observing blacks in this country, young and old, could not have helped concluding that they were religious, dedicated, and faithful."<sup>11</sup>

Though Thomas is speaking of the Black man in the 20th century, his observations convey similar religious circumstances that have not changed since the days of slavery. The Black man was forced to go to Church and to be a Christian until he was a free man. From the time that the Constitution outlawed the institution of slavery, the Black man chose to band

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<sup>10</sup>Alphonso Pinkney, Black Americans, (Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 142.

<sup>11</sup>Rev. James A. Thomas, Sr., "Black Youth and Religion", Military Chaplains' Review, I (January, 1972), 35.

together in the church for the purpose of preserving his identity. In the church he could express his feelings and frustrations and keep "in touch with himself," the self that he knew his Creator loved and would care for regardless of the external circumstances.

We may conclude from this brief discussion of folk tradition, Negro spirituals, and the church, the Black soldier's religious sensitivity is essentially one that has its roots embedded in slavery, namely, the American experience of the same. Though much has been written relative to the evil use of the Black man by the church during the slave or Colonial period until now, the fact remains that not all of the experiences with Christianity during the slavery period were evil. The folk tradition, the spirituals, and the Bible teaching and preaching reflect quite another story.

When the Black man came out of slavery, he came out deeply committed religiously to the practice of the Christian faith. Though the folk tradition, spirituals, and Bible preaching reflect and speak of a people desperately holding on to their self-identity, and clearly articulating their social protest, at the same time we see clearly a vibrant spiritual dimension, a love and understanding of "The Lawd", who gave them deliverance from their bondage . . . Let us not run away from a paradox. Let us set the record straight. The Christianity that seemed to provide the rationale for the perpetual enslavement of the Black culture is the same Christianity that assured and prepared them to cope with their world upon release.

I am persuaded that the Black man brought to this continent a spiritual dimension profoundly mature in the things of God, a soul-consciousness

that enabled him to plum the depths of Christianity, and a belief which would not only maintain his communication with God, but would enrich his personhood, though it was "in chains".

However, it has become very evident in my five years as an active duty chaplain that the Black soldier finds it very difficult to express this religiosity in the wide variety of traditional and formal chapel services conducted in the military today. When I speak of Black soldier, I am not referring to an anonymous type. Rather, the enlisted soldier in the bottom ranks, those whose Army experience has been of short duration. The senior enlisted personnel, the Non-Commissioned Officer type, whose Army experience extends over many years in some cases, do attend chapel services with some frequency, and have been expressing their Black religiosity with great vitality and fervor. The contrast will prove significant in due course.

The junior enlisted personnel enter the military community directly from the contemporary environment. He can be called a true representative of it. This environment is pluralistic and, thus a chaplain can be fairly certain that, though many have experienced much in common as a culture; that is, a slum, ghetto environment, his Christian religious background remains a hidden entity, not only to himself, but also to that segment of the military community to which he is assigned. It has been my experience that many of our Black soldiers enter the Army, coming from a family unit in which religious life was alive, visible, and viable. However, upon entering the military environment he becomes "turned off." Why?

The young soldier entering the military for the first time has what modern psychology calls many "mind-sets." It seems to be an accepted fact that as far as 'character' is concerned, the individual is essentially fully "shaped" by the time he reaches his 17th birthday. There are areas in one's life where growth stops. But the "mind-set" seems to be a categorization that has been assigned to the individual's social attitudes, how he sees society and chooses to relate to it. Not long after entering the military, the young soldier discovers he is among those whose "mind-sets" are much akin to his save in one area, that of religion. It is in this one area of his life that we might say he has his "mind open."

I think it can reasonably be said that a soldier between the ages of 18-25 years is putting what religious awareness that he has to the test for the first time in the Army. He soon senses that the Christian way of life (1) appears to be for the weak rather than the strong; (2) if he were to express his feelings publicly, could he be sure that he would be understood and trusted by his peers; and (3) the militancy movement, the counter-cultural phenomenon of the 20th century, seems to catch him up and overpower a sensitive and essentially untried and untested religious awareness.

The counter-cultural movement is understood differently by members of Black and white culture respectively. However, what appears to me to be germane to our discussion thus far is the fact that American Black history, though largely a history of slavery, was also a history of coping with this state of life, the strength to do so coming essentially from the Christian experience. For many of the families from which our young Black soldier comes, the religious history proves to have been accepted and transmitted; the slave history recalled and a continual attempt

was made to overcome it. In the final analysis, the religious experience and the slave experience are dominating realities among the members of the Black culture today. Though our young Black soldier has chosen to identify himself with the latter experience, I am somewhat persuaded that the former experience lays closer to his conscious awareness, particularly if his family background has stressed it in his growing years.

It is time to recall the fact that many of the Black senior enlisted personnel, the non-commissioned officers, reflect the significance of the religious history of Black culture in America. They are not prepared to cast it aside in today's world. Though they are fully aware of the total significance of the slave history and fully committed to overcoming it in any form in this century, they seem to be stressing the strength that can come from their religious-oriented heritage. In this way, they can restore a true Christian humanism for themselves and the troops they are committed to serve.

The appeal to the Black soldier's religious history and sensitivities introduces us to a dimension in the work of reconciliation, the full significance of which society and the church has yet to realize. The true vision of the definitive role the chaplain can play in this work begins to take shape.

Chapter II: Stop, Look and Listen!

What is the basis of this presupposition? Does it have any validity? It has been my privilege and good fortune to see the results when this appeal as mentioned above was applied, particularly in the counseling setting. Invariably, the one being counseled, after a period of involving a lengthy ventilation of thoughts and feelings, would be very receptive to consideration of the possibilities for the resolution of his problem being found within the spiritual dimension. It was possible to discover, in the not too distant past, experiences similar to those causing present difficulty, in which Christian answers were sought, found, and applied. A number of these experiences persuaded me of the validity of my approach, and the wealth of religious resources that lay just beneath the conscious experience of many of the Black soldiers in the military.

I was able to identify three phenomena resulting from my approach and appeal to the Black soldier's religious experiences as a younger man that enabled him to overcome hurdles in the past. First of all, he was able to recall a meaningful Christian experience as a younger man that was determinative in his life prior to this. Second, I began to sense that the soldier began to feel a strength he was quite aware of having once possessed. It seemed to be a strength associated with having identity, of being somebody worthwhile, of having a value in his own right. And third, the soldier, following several more counseling sessions perhaps, after reflecting on the significance of his discoveries, would become a healing influence amid an oftentimes tense racial climate. The soldier would return to his unit and, in his own style and at his own

speed, begin to transmit an image of self-confidence and assurance that began to make a definitive impact on other soldiers with whom he would come in contact. We shall see in a few moments that this did not assure immediate chapel attendance; however, a soldier who is able to latch hold of his religious roots, able to get "in touch with himself" at this point, will attract others and point the way for them. So often what one chaplain begins another will be able to build on. The future work of reconciliation between Black and white peoples belongs to chaplains who are sensitive and aware of the Black soldier's religious heritage and sensitivities. If the military chaplain is to relate and effect a work of reconciliation between Black and White cultures, he must initiate a self-discipline that will enable him to evaluate where the Black soldier is "coming from". By self-discipline, I mean a concerted effort must be made to listen to where the Black soldier is, to see him as an individual and to see what his community is thinking, saying, and doing. These insights need to be stressed in the chaplaincy.



## PART II: THE BLACK SOLDIER TODAY

### Chapter III: An Awareness of Black Consciousness

It will become readily apparent that the Black soldier is profoundly aware of belonging to a collective entity. His relationships with other Black soldiers is strong and essential to his daily existence. Seldom is the Black soldier found by himself. In the barracks he seems to prefer rooming with other Black soldiers. In the Mess Hall, he will choose to eat with his Black peers. On duty, or off duty, at work or at play, a fellowship of Black soldiers is always a reality. Togetherness, though a very much overworked concept, best describes this social phenomenon.

What might we glean from this social grouping? As a chaplain, I chose to attempt to understand and relate to this Black fellowship. I did just this and came to some conclusions which are crucial if the military chaplain is to understand the Black soldier and his culture.

First, one is immediately impressed with the "soul-brother" consciousness. Though there are many outward signs and symbols to express this, my effort to understand as completely and deeply as possible, enabled me to sense and catch a glimpse of what it meant to be a "soul-brother" to another person. It seemed to be more than just a response to a hostile environment with all of its injustice and prejudices, more than for survival in such circumstances, though this was certainly involved. But as I shared and listened, it soon became apparent that there was a love and communion between the "brothers" that could only be understood in terms of the "soul". It was there! It could be felt! This would

not have been so remarkable were it not for the fact that seldom did this kind of "soul" fellowship seem apparent among the white soldiers in comparison. All this I experienced outside the traditional chapel setting.

Second, the soul-brother fellowship enabled the Black soldier on the one hand; indeed, required of him on the other hand, to act collectively maintaining secrecy, a non-communicativeness with non-Blacks. This fact of the Black fellowship seemed to serve as a vehicle for differentiation and identity maintenance. For many non-Blacks this proved to be quite threatening. But it was not so when seen from the above perspective.

Third, it was very obvious that the soul-brother fellowship served to retain a cultural community in the midst of a larger military community.

For as I began to think through these three facets of Black culture patterns and insights, I soon became intuitively aware that the "soul-brother" fellowship was manifesting a deeply religious awareness. I did not help but be impressed on numerous occasions with the profound non-verbal communication that was being carried on between the members. I was deeply disturbed and affected by the fact that so much of what the military chapel program was intended to be in the way of fellowship, and concern for one another, was being clearly evidenced and defined by a community of persons who could not find this need being met or expressed in the traditional chapel setting. As has been true throughout the history of Black people, religious sensitivity was part of the daily experience between persons. Compassion, love and understanding between the brothers, was shown to me to be more than an idea talked about, but rather

to be lived. "Soul-brother" is the key concept. Becoming a soul-brother with the Black man is what it is all about!

Thus, the military chaplain finds himself ministering within a rather complex social environment, that is in a community within a community--distinct, well-defined, and established. Historically, as far as the military institution is concerned, this might be considered a very unusual social phenomenon. Black soldiers have always been found in the military ranks. Then, too, history records the existence of so-called Black units within the military structure. However, nowhere can the scholar find the sense of "community and power" that is resident among the Black military personnel today. This brief summation is by way of stating that the time has come for the military chaplain to recognize the existence of this viable Black-culture-community within the larger military establishment. And the work of reconciliation will involve the building of a bridge of trust across which the cultures can freely travel on their journey to mutual understanding of one another.

It is essential that the chaplain acknowledge and accept the fact of the dual community within his area of responsibility. It is a given datum! His ministry involves reaching out to the members of this Black military community with all of its history, religious and secular, its frustrations, prejudices, and sensitivities. The chaplain will have to come to grips with this cultural phenomenon and try to surmount the temptation to understand it in terms of counter-culture, resistance movement, in any way negative response as primary, though in some of its rationale this is true, but rather to acknowledge the existence of a heritage through

time and space, a community of persons who -- at last -- have gotten in touch with their past, have found a significance in the same for the present, that have enabled them to establish guidelines for the future. It is interesting, and at the same time somewhat frightening to realize, that while 20th century white culture has seen fit to deny its past by essentially not referring to it, denying its relevancy in understanding and interpreting the present and future, Black 20th century culture finds it of utmost importance. What does this say to the individual chaplain at this hour? At the least, the military chaplain cannot delay in "getting in touch" with the Black community at a most profound level as it journeys to self-realization, namely, humanization.

The ministry of the chaplain to the Black community cannot be for the purposes of integration. Far too long has the Black community been dehumanized and faceless. To perpetuate this attitude and approach will find no bearing of fruit. In the ministry of the chaplain, the Black soldier and community must be able to find identity and be strengthened in self-concepts. The chaplain must set the pace in assisting the Black community to be itself and to be encouraged to contribute to the betterment of the larger human community. The implications for the "civilian community" are far reaching in significance.

Finally, the ministry of the chaplain involves the responsibility of understanding Black religious history and how it seeks expression in the life of the Black soldiers today. It is going to require more than Black studies programs. This is to say, that we must allow the Black soldier to shoulder the responsibility himself. But, rather the military chaplain

immersing himself, via observation, participation, reading in and about Black culture, such that he will be able to convey an openness, a responsiveness to the profound direction of the Holy Spirit that lives and breathes in the Black community today. There are two areas of special import that can be mentioned here for the chaplain to begin to grasp Black community life and its meaning, avenues of approach for the chaplain to begin in the search for tools for his work of reconciliation.

1. One of the most significant avenues of approach is the musical. It provides the Black soldier with that internal reality of community solidarity. Beginning with the music that he has been able to recover from Africa, continuing with that unique medium of the spiritual, and closing with jazz and the present and varied forms as heard on records and via live instrumental groups, Black culture, identity, is recalled and nourished. It is primarily through this medium that the Black man reminds himself that he is somebody.

This medium of music has come to be labeled as "soul music". This type of music helps considerably to maintain this viable objective of recall and nourishment. Soul music is not easily understood by members of non-Black cultures. It is an experience! Its pulsations come from "way down deep" and on this level can understanding be derived. Roberta Flack's recording of "I Told Jesus" is a good illustration of 20th century Black soul music.

2. A second most significant avenue of approach resides in the realization that the Black soldier strongly identifies with successful Black people who have "made it in the world". One immediately grasps the import

of this insight when the increasing number of eminently successful sports figures of the Black community succeed in winning laurels for their excellence in athletic pursuits. Among other endeavours, his pursuit has proven to be one of the roads the Black man has traveled in gaining entrance into the mainstream of American life. Incidences of such endeavours are recorded in military athletic pursuits as well. In the theatre, their record speaks for itself.

3. Music, sports, drama and entertainment serve to assist the Black man to recall, nourish and sustain himself. One example is left -- the worship experience. This avenue of approach affords the Black man to express himself. The final portion of this paper will deal with this aspect of the Black culture in detail. For our purposes at this stage, it is essential for the chaplain to realize that the Black worship experience involves the entire person -- the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Clapping, body movements, etc., are important vehicles of expression. The chaplain will need to investigate the "how" of Black worship and begin to make provision for the same in his chapel program.

#### Chapter IV: The Work of Reconciliation

Our discussion thus far has concerned itself with a basic analysis of rapidly developing and significant religious history of Black culture. This history involves the exposure of the reader to folk talks, spirituals, and Bible preaching from the Black pulpit. Our discussion has also attempted to summarize the extent to which this religious history is being actualized and provides meaning and purpose in the Black military community today. The third and final phase of our discussion, calls for an investigation into the Black worship experience. This is the way by which the Black and white cultures will realize the restoration of humanity that is so urgently sought after in our time and which is the Christian ideal for community. This is another way of saying that the resolution of the racial conflict is a problem only the religious avenue of approach will prove conclusive.

The road to reconciliation begins and ends with an understanding of the Black worship experience. The Reverend James B. Forbes of Richmond, Virginia, in speaking to the members of the 1973 Career Course of Chaplains, singled out three fundamental motifs that are present in every Black worship service. These motifs are:

1. Liberation
2. Celebration
3. Jubilation <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>David Riesman, with Nathan Glazer and Reual Denney, The Lonely Crowd, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. XL.

These themes represent the "soul" of Black worship. It is of utmost importance that we understand something of the meaning for the Black worshipper.

The writer will assume a basic understanding of the impact of the slave experience in the life of the Black man. It was a profound emotional wrenching in the life of every member of the Black culture. This is to say that he was not only emotionally deprived of personhood but dehumanized legally. Can anyone who has never been enslaved really understand the impact on the personality that is subject to a law that makes it a crime to be a person? This was the form that slavery took in America. Think of being subject to such depersonalization for 300 years! This recall or remembrance is "a given" at every worship experience. It is at the heart of Black religious sensitivity. It is part and parcel of "soul consciousness."

We have previously noted that during these 300 years of slave experience, the Black man was able to bring to slavery and viably retain a spiritual dimension that immunized him from being completely destroyed as a human being. It was during the American phase of the slave experience that Christianity was able to introduce the promise, the assurance, of release upon which longed-for LIBERATION would one day become a reality. The Black slave was in person-to-person contact with God. Again the spiritual dimension is significant. It was "De Lawd" that has made the promise! St. Paul's words add to the splendor of the promise. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty!" One needs to understand that the Black man experiences "internal" liberation at this point long



before he is able to experience, even anticipate, "external" liberation. So it is that Black worship must be a "soul" experience. To worship the Lawd is to have the soul set free; is to be free indeed!

The motif of CELEBRATION is understood as thanksgiving. The ejaculatory responses that may be heard throughout the service all have their dominant note -- gratitude -- for all the good their great and good God kindly has done for them as a people and as an individual. The experience of liberation is the cause for thanksgiving. Once with the Hebrews, I had to experience slavery, though now, I have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou, O Lord, art with me. It is essential that the reader understand that the outpourings of freedom and gratitude take their genesis from this reality-experience of the Lord, what he has done and what he continues to do for his people. As we go one step further, it is possible to see that the heart of the celebration experience seems to be centered in the realization that there is a greater power than the power to take life away. It is the Power to give life. The Black man knows what it means to be dead. The Christian experience put him in touch with LIFE again. Celebrate!!

Finally, the motif of JUBILIATION is present at every worship experience. The essence of this worship expression is addressed to the fact that the Black worship experience is a community event. The fellowship one with another, is deeply felt. The Black man belongs to a body of believers, those who have been through this together. Jubiliation is a community affair. Rejoice in the Lord together!

The Black worship experience embodies a profound awareness of a spiritual dimension that transcends the temporal dimension. The participant is rapidly caught up in an atmosphere of prayer and praise. Such is accomplished by the use of many vehicles of expression to include the voice, musical instrumentation, the rhythmic clapping of hands and feet, all by way of saying that the Black worship experience is all-inclusive with regard to the participant. Intellect, emotion, and body are all engaged in an uninhibited devotion to a transcendent reality that at the same time affords the soul an internal recognition of completeness, worth, and identification. The Black worship experience has always enabled the worshipper to understand and "be in touch with" his humanness and afford him a vision of the way the world and mankind ought to be. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called it a "dream."

Few would disagree that the world in which we live today is experiencing much confusion and chaos. Many have been able to articulate and ably record their diagnosis of the cause or causes of society's ills. Black culture has been trying to say that it has never known a time when it has not been full of confusion and chaos for them. Far too many have "tuned out" at this point and in so doing, have failed to hear another message that the members of the Black culture have been trying to tell. While in slavery, the Black man was, in one sense, dead "to this world." Yet, he was alive in another world. The total experiences of Black culture through time and space has contained a viable and dynamic spiritual dimension which the Western World to a large extent has possibly ignored,

but certainly, has failed to understand and use in the transmittal of the Christian heritage through our three American centuries.

This paper cannot incorporate the expansion of this thesis. It will try to summarize and underscore the salient points germane to our discussion. BLACK CULTURE IN AMERICA HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE HEAVEN REAL. David Reisman, author of the book, The Lonely Crowd, puts his finger on an answer why when he says, "The most important passion left in the world is not for distinctive practices, cultures, and beliefs, but for certain achievements -- the technology and organization of the West -- whose immediate consequence is the dissolution of all distinctive practices, cultures, and beliefs."

The history of Black culture testifies to the fact that it was all but destroyed in slavery. When a culture is prohibited from expressing its distinctive practices and beliefs, I would define this state or condition as being "dead to the world". Yet, in slavery, Black culture retained a spiritual dimension that was inherent in their distinctive practices and beliefs, became exposed to Christianity while in slavery, and found it possible to enter another world where it would be itself and keep its culture intact. Meaning was not to be found in this world but in the next.

It becomes a very real possibility, and an opportunity the military chaplain must not overlook. In his ministry to the Black community, he will become exposed to the Black worship experience. Hopefully, he will be able to identify and relate to it by realizing that it has deeply Christian roots and that, the Black culture has to a great extent in America

been shaped by it. If the work of reconciliation of Black and white cultures is to be effective and enduring, the chaplain must begin to raise the level of consciousness of the soldier from this world orientation to a higher world orientation, from meaninglessness to meaningfulness. The Black worship experience can lead the way. This is where many of our Black soldiers are at! It is not always expressed in traditional or orthodox ways, but it is there if we will only look for it. In fact, can we chaplains not see that a large segment of our soldiers from all cultures are in many strange ways, stretching out and reaching for this "heavenly experience?" The Black worship experience can put one in touch with it.

The task that this discussion is recommending deals with the utilization of the Black worship experience in the chapel services throughout the military community. If white culture is to understand Black culture, I am firmly persuaded it must begin in the worship experience. The chaplain's ministry will need to increasingly affirm the Black worship experience, along with the White worship experience. There should be maximum opportunity for cross fertilization.

We must not lose sight of the essential thesis of this paper -- the chaplain as the agent of reconciliation. This involves affirming the Black worship experience. How is the chaplain to accomplish this task? There are four areas of major consideration that need to be examined as possible avenues of approach.

First and foremost, the content and conduct of the worship experience must enable the worshipper to "get in touch" with his religious roots,

such that he will be able to establish spiritual and emotional links with the past. The military chaplain must insure that every service has authenticity. The Military Chaplain's Review, Volume No. 1, January 1972 is very helpful in providing guidelines for accomplishing this task. Our chapel services will require much more in the way of the "expressive."

Second, the worship experience will need to convey to the worshipper the experience of "soul brother consciousness." The love of one another must need become a conscious reality. The first century church found this to be one of the most important avenues of witness. "See how they love one another" became the overwhelming testimony of the Church's enemies at this time. The meeting of the hearts as well as the minds must be evident in the worship experience. There comes as a result an internal cognition of belonging to a body that transcends the individual, though part of the individual. It is a union of "souls", a union much more significant, much stronger, and more binding than the physical. It is a spiritual union. The worship experience must enable all of this to happen.

Third, the themes of Liberation, Celebration, and Jubilation must find concrete expression. The chaplain must restore to his preaching just what it is that salvation saves us from. We are all in bondage of one kind or another. We all experience bondage inside as well as outside. The chaplain must begin to identify with his people, and call them as he sees them. Preaching must be able to reveal what can be done about it! What God has done, is doing, and will do, must become a resounding theme at every worship experience.

Finally, chaplains that are able to reflect the spiritual experiences of the past, will concern themselves with conducting services that will touch the souls of men, that will permit the worshipper to express his entire being in the worship experience, will begin to enable all manner of men to experience the Lawd ality which will enable them to be at one with each other.

The Heaven theme means that the worship event introduces the participant to a dimension of experience that lies beyond the meaninglessness of this world. Yet, at the same time, this worship event should not exclude "this-worldly" human experience so as to spiritualize the concept of heaven, and thus, for the worship event to become subject to all of the sociological criticisms of Black preaching of the past. We are face to face with a fundamental relaity of our time -- the struggle of two cultures for meaning in a dehumanized world.

## CONCLUSION

The struggle is not easy to define. From where the writer sits, two phenomena are able to be identified. 20th century man, obsessed with a technocratic progress and organization of the West, has made for himself a society which lost its humanness. It has essentially lost, or at least considers it of secondary importance, to perpetuate a society that is human. The end result of this process can be understood in terms of what appears to be true in our day. It is easier to define what it means to be "inhuman" than it is to define what it means to be "human." Thus, Western man is experiencing a meaninglessness in his culture. He has rejected the spiritual dimension of his life.

As we pause to examine Black culture, we see a people struggling to find their identity, to find their true humanity in this world. The slave experience, particularly the exposure to Christianity, enabled the Black culture to formulate a "spiritual humanism" and this we see in the day-to-day attempt by the Black man to find a corresponding reality in "this world."

We see the struggle between the two cultures quite clearly from this frame of reference. Western culture, essentially Christian, possessing a doctrine of man and rejecting it, is looked to be a Black culture and unable to find it. It takes the form of the established Church people saying and practicing one thing on Sunday and failing to carry through the remainder of the week. The struggle is complex. Yet, both cultures

are seeking a definition of humanism together.

Thus, the humanization of man (Black and white in America) is dependent upon God's Grace, and not upon man's ability to realize himself. I would regret and reject the "behavioral, manipulative" approach to and for the Black man. Sensitivity training, maturity development training programs are unrelated to where the Black man is and where he must go in reconciliation of the cultures.

The humanism sought in the 20th century must take its origins from the Doctrine of Creation as contained in the Book of Genesis in the sacred scriptures of the Judeo-Christian tradition where the reader is plainly told that man was created in the image of God and not in the image of man. All the effort that is being poured into formulating a Doctrine of humanity divorced from the Biblical reality will come to naught! There can be no reconciliation between cultures until there is a reconciliation with the Creator, the Sovereign Maker of Heaven and Earth. This includes man!

*Lathrop P. Utley*  
LATHROP P. UTLEY  
Chaplain (CPT), USA  
5-16-C-22-73-1



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