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Entering the Communities

"I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me,
Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord" (Psalms 122:1)

Coming into these "Houses of the Lord" is more than just entering three African-American religious buildings. For me, entering these church communities has been an opportunity to learn more about the complexities of literacy within an African-American community institution that is unrivaled in the historical and cultural value it holds within African-American communities. Becoming part of the communities of each church allowed me to see how their personalities have been shaped by their histories, their denominational philosophies, and their ministers' personalities, philosophies, and histories. And it is this kind of contextual information that is foundational to seeing how literacy works within these church communities. This chapter sets the context for a closer exploration of literacy, literate texts, and literacy traditions in the three Chicago churches through a biographical discussion of the ministers and a description of the churches.¹ Situating the stories of each minister and church, which is a primary goal of this chapter, also brings into focus the dialectical tensions described by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990). These tensions are more immediate in this closer look at the characteristics of each minister and church.

¹Much of the historical and biographical data reported in this chapter was reported first in my dissertation, *The Black Sermon as a Literacy Event* (Moss, 1988) and reported later in "Creating a Community: Literacy Events in African-American Churches" (Moss, 1994).

ENTERING REVEREND M.'S CHURCH COMMUNITY

*In the Heart of the Community . . .
Ever Seeking to Win the Community's Heart²*

As already detailed at the beginning of this book, my entrée into this research had elements of divine inspiration. What I did not reveal is that those divine moments occurred when I was attending Reverend M.'s (the manuscript minister) church. At the point that I began to react as a researcher as well as a worshipper, I knew that my role had changed in Reverend M.'s church. That was the beginning of my negotiating not an entry into the community but an intellectual and emotional reentry into that community. That reentry began when I started to take note mentally of the uses of oral and written language during the service. I wondered how much this minister used writing in his sermons, particularly because he did not sound or look as if he were reading. Then, I wondered what kind of influence this minister's sermons, specifically the way this preacher used language, might have on his congregation. It was at that point that I knew that a research question and accompanying project had been born.

This minister, whose sermons had planted the seed of a research idea in my mind, became the first minister in my study. When we met for the first time (I had attended the church for some time, but I had never met this minister) and I explained my project, I received my first surprise—he preached from a written text. This surprise was mostly the result, I think, of my academic training, specifically my experience with many academic lectures that sound like written language when they are read. In the academic arena, especially English studies, the written text dominates so much so that even the oral presentation sounds like a written text. This was not the case with this minister. I discovered during the course of the study that many members of his congregation were unaware that he preached from a complete manuscript. Through my initial conversation with Reverend M. (as he is referred to from now on), I began to think about the relation between oral and written language in African-American sermons.

²The quotations that appear at the beginning of each introduction to the ministers and their churches appear on the front cover of the church bulletins of the three churches in this study. Those statements provide some insight into the personalities and identities of each church, each minister, and each congregation.

REVEREND M.

Reverend M., a charismatic man who is in his early 50s, licensed to preach at 17 years old and ordained 8 years later, has been a pastor since 1972. He is the son of highly educated parents. His father was a minister in Philadelphia, and his mother received a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania at a time when it was rare to see an African American, especially an African-American woman, on campus in any role other than one of service. Reverend M. has followed in his parents' footsteps in regard to education. He has a bachelor's degree in English, a master's in literature, a master's in history of religions, a Doctor of Divinity degree, and several honorary doctoral degrees. In addition to his academic training, he has studied music and foreign languages, served in the Armed Forces, and traveled around the world. As is evident in the following chapters, all of his training and experiences have influenced his sermons.

Reverend M. states that his seminary training focused on academic scholarship rather than preparing to preach. He explains that this kind of training had an influence on what he preaches and, specifically, his understanding of how the Black religious tradition fits within the context of world religions. As I illustrate later, Reverend M., often in his sermons, provides information about how a particular ritual in the Christian African-American worship tradition is similar or dissimilar to an African religious ritual. Also, deeply committed to addressing political and social issues as well as religious issues, Reverend M. includes in his sermons many illustrations that concern politics from the local to the global level: criticisms of Chicago politician Ed Vrdolyak, former U.S. President Ronald Reagan and South Africa's former president, P.W. Botha. He does not shy away from relating Biblical politics to world politics nor does he shy away from criticizing politicians from the pulpit. As highlighted in the previous chapter, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) suggested that when an African-American church is concerned with the political and social concerns of its members and of society, that church leans toward the "communal" and "this-worldly" ends of the dialectical continuum (see chap. 1). I do not suggest that there is not an emphasis on the members' spiritual and eternal lives; there is that concern. Yet, there is no separation of this-worldly from other-worldly. Privatistic concerns are not emphasized over communal matters.

Reverend M. also educates his congregation about different cultures, telling them about the cultures of the people in the countries that he visits, particularly the cultures of peoples of color. He constantly introduces Hebrew, Arabic, and African concepts to the congregation in the context of a particular sermon's message. Again, his background in world religions and his fluency with languages provides him with a

broader perspective about religion than many other clergy. His focus on the bonds between peoples of color is one of the traits that sets Reverend M. apart from the other two ministers in the study. Reverend M.'s vita, several pages long, reveals that he is also a scholar, having published several articles and a book. Through conversations with him and observations of him, I found that he is also an insatiable reader and lover of music. In his sermons, he often refers to books he is reading, and many times on entering the sanctuary, I would see him playing the organ or piano. In fact, several years ago, when Reverend M. preached a week-long revival at the church I currently attend, each evening that I entered the sanctuary, he was playing the organ. Reverend M.'s knowledge of music, world religions, and languages is on display for his congregations.

PREPARING THE SERMON

The ethnographic interviews I conducted yielded a wealth of information about what this minister believes and the way he works, particularly how he views himself as a preacher. I asked the minister to describe the process he goes through to prepare his sermons from choosing a topic to delivering the sermon in the pulpit. How he prepares his sermons reflects this preacher's style and training. He states that the process of preparing a sermon varies "depending on how the inspiration comes sometimes." The minister explains that the process is different when he is preaching a series of related sermons (as he was doing at the time of the interview) as compared to times when he is not preaching a series. I was fortunate enough to collect three sermons that were part of a series and two that were not.

For Reverend M., preparing a sermon that is part of a series requires that he think through what direction he wants the sermon to take, what he wants to cover in the series, how many Sundays the series will cover, and so on. He must "sit down and think and meditate." He does long-term advance planning. Once all of the necessary decisions have been made, the series becomes easier for him to prepare. For however many weeks that the series covers, the topics are selected. For example, during the time of my fieldwork, Reverend M. preached a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer. He knew that he would preach sermons on the first six petitions of the Lord's Prayer:

- (1)Our Father, (2)hallowed be Thy name, (3)Thy Kingdom Come,
- (4)Thy Will be Done. (5)Give us this Day our daily bread, and
- (6)Forgive us our Debts as we Forgive our debtors

His topics, therefore, were picked for the next six Sundays.

When Reverend M. is not preaching a series, he must select a new topic each week. Where do they come from? He says that his topics can come from anywhere, while he is driving in his car, in the middle of another sermon, during a conversation with someone, or from something that he reads, which he does consistently and constantly. He says that "preparation for the next sermon usually begins after the benediction of the present sermon." Reverend M. describes the mechanics of his process as follows: Leading up to Thursday of each week, the day he writes his sermons, he does reading, praying, listening, meditating. He says that he reads "insatiably." He reads the Bible, devotional material for his own personal life, theological journals of a wide range (from right-wing conservative to left-wing liberal), scholarly books (at the time of one interview, he was reading scholarly material on the Old Testament), biblical textual criticism, and "always books by and/or about Black people." One of the more interesting comments he made was that sometimes he gets an idea from a novel. During the time of one interview, he was reading fiction by Black women. He pointed out that he does not read to find a sermon, but in that reading process something might "hit him or hit where the people [his congregation] are." Sometimes his reading yields him an illustration for a sermon. He generally tries to read three books a week, one from the religious/theological field, one from the Black history area, and one fictional piece by or about Blacks. All of this usually takes place before Thursday.

On Thursday he tries to block out time for writing. It generally takes this manuscript minister from 16 to 20 hours to do the actual writing of the sermon. Reverend M. explains that the model he uses for preaching, that of Dr. Gardner Taylor, noted African-American preacher and theological scholar, says that "for every minute you preach, you should have spent 1 hour preparing." He generally spends 4 to 6 of those 16 to 20 hours thinking, listening, and meditating. He must decide what structure an idea will take, how he will open and close a sermon, what illustrations he will use, and so on. He jots these items down in note form. Then he spends 6 to 7 hours actually writing the sermon. At the end of Thursday evening, this minister's draft is usually 85% to 90% completed. Reverend M. is a one-draft writer who occasionally adds or deletes something. From sermon to sermon, there were very few editing or revision marks on his manuscripts.

After I collected manuscripts and tapes and compared them to each other, I was struck by how detailed the manuscripts were and by how closely the manuscript and the oral transcripts matched each other. The oral performance rarely deviated from his written text. How does this minister-writer compose such a detailed sermon in one draft? This one draft in one sitting suggests that Reverend M. knows what he is

going to write when he sits down to start drafting each sermon. Actually, he does a great deal of prewriting and planning before he starts to write. He explains that he “jots down some notes and thoughts which seem to have been formulating over the previous 4 or 5 days”; then, he starts to draft the manuscript. Reverend M. says that when he sits down to write the sermon, he hears it in his head. This means that not only are the words and “The Word” (from the Lord) in his head, but so is the rhythm. He hears how the sermon is supposed to sound. That would also suggest that this minister’s written texts likely include features that reflect oral language traditions.

The audience influences, to an extent, some stages of the sermon preparation. What role does the congregation play? Reverend M. answers that question by stating that the congregation is an integral part of his sermon planning, and his concept of audience is quite telling. He imagines himself sitting in the first pew looking up at the pulpit. He views himself as a person with needs, questions, troubles. He asks himself, “What do I need to hear from heaven this day?” This conscious effort to see himself as part of the congregation/audience, not to separate himself, he says, means that when he preaches to himself, inevitably he will touch on something that strikes a chord with the congregation. He seems to try to identify those common elements that bind him and his congregation together as African-American men and women. This minister is very concerned that his sermons are relevant to his congregation. Therefore, he tries to be familiar with the contemporary issues affecting them. By working hard to maintain his communal link with his congregation, he is more apt to prepare sermons that are relevant to them.

Finally, after the preparatory stages just explained, Reverend M. is prepared to deliver the sermon. He is not a chanter, that is, he does not display the sing-song rhythm for which many Black preachers are noted. Yet, he does display a rhythmic quality in many parts of his sermon that sometimes adds emphasis to the message (this topic is addressed in more detail in chap. 4). While Reverend M. is in the pulpit preaching, he rarely moves around, possibly because he has his text on the podium before him. Although he is fairly stationary, he relies, often, on hand and facial gestures, in addition to words, as a means of communicating. He does not move from the pulpit until he is in the midst of his climax. At that point, he steps down in front of the pulpit where he metaphorically “opens the doors of the church.” This opening the door of the church is the moment at which people are invited to join his church. Some churches refer to the act as “walking the aisle” because that is the literal action that one takes—walking down the aisle to the front of the pulpit—to signal that you want to join the church.

REVEREND M.'S CHURCH

Some churches are a reflection of their denomination's teachings, some are a reflection of the congregations' wishes, and others are a reflection of their ministers' visions. This church seems to fall into the latter category. Many of the programs that exist in this church are a result of Reverend M.'s philosophy and ideas brought to fruition. As stated in chapter 1, this pastor's church just celebrated its 31st anniversary, and Reverend M. has pastored this church for 22 of those years. His effectiveness as a pastor can be measured by the growth of the congregation and the church's programs since his arrival. The membership has grown from fewer than 100 members to approximately 5,500 members and is now one of the largest United Church of Christ congregations in the country, an interesting fact given that the United Church of Christ is a predominantly White denomination.

During the time that the data were collected, this church was always full, with standing room only. Worshippers arrived 50 minutes before service started so that they could get seats in the sanctuary. Those who arrived late (30 minutes before service) had to stand along the walls if there was space or sit in an overflow room and watch the service on a big screen monitor. At the time of the study, there was an 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sunday service. Now, in addition to the two morning services, there are also a Sunday evening service, a Wednesday evening service, and a Saturday afternoon service. To accommodate this growing ministry, this church has built (since the completion of this study) a new worship center. This worship center includes a much larger sanctuary, classrooms, church offices, a cafeteria, a restaurant, and more.

The church is unique because of the extensive programs it offers its congregation and the community. It has a federally approved credit union; a reading, writing, and math tutorial program; a day-care center; a legal counseling service; a large pastoral counseling staff; an educational program that concentrates on educating the church membership about their religious and cultural roots as an African people; broadcast ministries; and much more.

The ideology that permeates throughout this church is evident in most every aspect of its operation from the language used in the services to the types of organizations. Reverend M. stresses to his congregation that they should be "unashamedly Black and unapologetically Christian." This statement is part of the oath that the congregation takes when accepting new members into the church every first Sunday. By clearly identifying themselves as Black Christians, the members of this church stress their commitment to their culture. That commitment can be seen throughout the church, for example, in the African garb the choir wears occasionally, the African songs they sing,

the traditional spirituals and gospel songs they sing. These practices, among others, clearly mark this church's cultural roots. This commitment exists also in the youth organizations—"Building Black Men and "Building Black Women"—which are organizations where African-American women and men help young African-American girls and boys, respectively with their transitions into adulthood.

Again, Lincoln and Mamiya's (1990) categories come to mind. They described churches with liberation theologies as having prophetic functions, functions that focus on political and social action. Reverend M.'s church certainly has a liberation theology. In addition, Lincoln and Mamiya described African-American churches that "affirm their own cultural heritage" within a White society as leaning toward a "resistance" orientation rather than an "accommodationist" orientation. Reverend M.'s church, which is perceived by many inside and outside the church as operating from Afrocentric principles, is certainly one that affirms its cultural heritage, thus identifying it with a resistance orientation.

Among many African-American communities in Chicago, the congregation of this church is also viewed as middle class. One long-time native of Chicago who once belonged to a Black nationalist organization described a large portion of this church's members as "ex-nationalists turned middle class who seek a church which is very political and very Black." This is the church. However, the minister views his congregation as a mixed group, not predominantly middle class. He takes pride in the diversity of the congregation. While the members of this church represent a range on the socioeconomic ladder, there are a large number of members who are viewed as "professionals." There are judges, lawyers, doctors, educators, businesspeople, entertainers, and so on. A TV documentary on the roles of large and small urban African-American churches, which aired nationally, featured Reverend M.'s church and addressed the perceived "middle-classness" of this church ("Keeping the Faith," 1987). It is a church that stresses education but does not make the less formally educated feel uncomfortable. Yet, the apparent upward mobility of its congregation makes this church appealing to those who identify with the middle class. Interestingly, many members of this congregation live in the suburbs but drive to the heart of the Chicago's southside to attend this church. This church's dedication to the African-American community attracts members who, although they may not live in the community, want to maintain their ties within that community.

Despite the middle-class identification of this church, it is rooted in the tradition of the Black church (as discussed in the introduction and developed throughout this book), and the minister is rooted in the tradition of Black preachers. My interviews with this minister confirm

what I had observed previously: Reverend M. takes great pride in being identified as "in the tradition of Black preachers." He believes in making connections between the traditional African-American church and the contemporary African-American church; therefore, he uses the language of the African-American community in his sermons (this topic is addressed in the following chapters). Reverend M.'s careful use of language establishes a sense of community, communicating ideas and attitudes about Black people, and it also promotes certain community values. At the center of the sermon as a literacy event are the activities that surround language use in this church.

LITERACY EVENTS SURROUNDING THE SERMON

As in most churches, in Reverend M.'s church, prior to the sermon, there were numerous literacy events in which the congregation participated. These events involved the use of different types of oral and written texts. Typically, as soon as one entered the sanctuary, he or she was given a church bulletin. The Sunday bulletin at Reverend M.'s church, averaging twelve 8 x 11-inch pages per Sunday, provided the Order of Worship, the monthly Bible memory verse, the lyrics for the opening hymn, the scriptural responsive reading, the Scripture for the sermon, plus church-related and nonchurch-related announcements. Periodically included in the bulletin were editorial essays from Reverend M. concerning what he considered pressing issues for his African-American congregation.

Church-related announcements included a list of sick and shut-in members, a day-by-day listing of church-related activities (programs, meetings, etc.) for the upcoming week, and announcements about special programs or projects. Nonchurch-related announcements included employment opportunities, apartment advertisements, announcements about cultural and political events in the city, and reminders about important dates (e.g., voter registration deadlines). Clearly, for the congregation, the bulletin is an important method of disseminating information to the membership. Before service started, most members of the congregation could be observed reading the lengthy bulletin page by page.

While the reading of the bulletin itself is a major literacy event, it is one that is individual in nature. That is, each member can choose to read it, take notes within the bulletin, or converse with others about information contained within it, thus engaging members in literate acts. Yet, the congregation's participation in those literate acts is not necessarily in unison. There were, however, a few literacy events that took place within the service that did engage the congregation as a whole. The responsive reading, the memory verse, and the scriptural

reading are all events, printed in the bulletin, which serve as opportunities for the congregation to learn biblical Scriptures, which becomes important knowledge shared by Reverend M. and the congregation (I address the concept of *shared knowledge* in more detail in chap. 3 and chap. 4). The responsive reading, in particular, is a moment when the community reads aloud together. Everyone is expected to participate. In the responsive reading, which occurs early in the service, a deacon and the congregation read alternating verses from a biblical passage (the deacon reads a verse, the congregation reads the next verse). These passages are also printed in the rear of the hymnals. Following is a responsive reading from one of the services I attended. The bold print designates the parts that the congregation reads.

THE MODEL PRAYER

Luke 11:1 Matthew 6:5-15

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Luke 11:1

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:5-15

The memory verse is a Bible verse assigned monthly and printed in the bulletin each Sunday of that month. Each Sunday before the altar prayer, the congregation is asked to recite that verse from memory. The scriptural reading is the Scripture lesson that Reverend M. reads to his congregation at the beginning of his sermon. It is the Scripture on which the sermon is based. Although the congregation remains silent during this literacy event, they are asked to read along in their Bibles or the Bibles provided by the church. Beginning with the bulletin and the literacy events that the bulletin highlights, it is obvious that Reverend M. and his congregation are engaged in numerous literacy events throughout the service. Value is placed on reading, memorizing, and reciting. Value is also placed on community participation. The Responsive reading, scriptural reading, and memory verse all function to make the community—the congregation—more familiar with the Bible as a text. The sermon moves the congregation from memorizing the text to comprehension and application.

REVEREND M.'S TEXTS

Of the five sermons I collected from Reverend M., the latter three were part of an eight-part series on The Lord's Prayer. The second sermon was a Mother's Day sermon. That leaves the first sermon as the only one whose topic was not dictated by a "special" day. Although the topics were affected by an occasion such as Mother's Day or the preaching of a series, the lengths and the structures of the sermons did not seem to be affected.

One of the more notable characteristics of Reverend M.'s sermons is the consistency in the physical features of the sermon. This consistency is seen in various aspects of his written texts, particularly size and organization. The written sermons average approximately 3,800 words. The following reports the number of words per individual sermon and the titles of those sermons:

- Sermon 1: "Living in the In Between"—3,540 words
- Sermon 2: "A Real Mother"—4,192 words
- Sermon 3: "The Lord's Prayer Pt I"—4,110 words
- Sermon 4: "The Lord's Prayer Pt II (His Kingdom and His Will)—3,578 words
- Sermon 5: "The Lord's Prayer Pt III (Our Daily Bread)—3,507 words

There are 685 words separating the longest from the shortest sermon, a difference of almost two and one-half pages or approximately five

handwritten pages (in the manuscript minister's handwriting) on 5 x 8 inch paper. Each of the manuscript minister's sermons was handwritten on the same size paper, using the front and back of the paper. His oral performance also appears to be fairly consistent in length of performance, rarely going over 30 minutes.

This consistency continues with other aspects of the sermons. As mentioned earlier, each of the five sermons is framed by a Scripture reading at the beginning of the sermon and an invitation to join the church accompanied by a hymn of invitation at the end of the sermon, a practice common in most churches. Each sermon seems to have three major parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. The conclusion is more commonly known in the African-American church as the climax. In the introduction, the minister introduces the subject of his sermon, connects it with the Scripture and basically sets up a context for the sermon. When the manuscript minister was preaching the series, much of the introduction was devoted to highlighting the previous Sunday's sermon and building a bridge to the current sermon. The body is the major text or explanation of the subject using sacred and secular examples. And the climax usually includes some kind of personal testimony and appeal to the congregation to join the church. Even though the minister preached the same sermon at the 8 a.m. and the 11 a.m. services, he did change the endings of each sermon and, therefore, the hymns of invitation also changed at each service. In his manuscripts, this minister wrote out both versions of his 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. endings.

For the purposes of this analysis, I entered each sermon into the computer, but I tried to duplicate as much as possible the physical appearance of the handwritten sermons. The following passage is a page from the manuscript minister's fifth written sermon. Following this passage is the same passage, but reproduced from the transcript of the actual oral delivery.

Written text:

Whenever you've got a Kingdom . . . that means there's a King somewhere . . . and when you make God King . . . you are praying a dangerous prayer . . . because you are challenging the fallacious claims . . . of the State

The State likes to think of itself as all powerful

Witness the State's position on chattel slavery

Witness the State's position on segregation and Jim Crow laws

Witness the State's position on Apartheid and Divestment

Witness the State's position on Constructive Engagement.

Witness Ed Burke, Ed Kelly and Ed Vrdolyak's position on letting a Black man be mayor

Witness . . . somebody was asking me what I thought about the latest conservative racist being appointed to the Supreme Court. . . . A court already stacked by Ford, Nixon and Ronnie And I asked them . . . are you talking about the same Supreme Court which issued the Dred Scott decision??

Oral version (from transcript of delivered sermon):

Whenever ___ says you got a Kingdom
that means
there's a king somewhere
And when you make God King you
are praying a dangerous prayer
because you are challenging the fallacious claims of the State
The State likes to think of itself as all powerful
Witness the State's position on chattel slavery
Witness the State's position on segregation and Jim Crow laws
Witness the State's position on Apartheid and divestment
Witness the State's position on Constructive engagement
Witness Ed Burke, Ed Kelly, and Ed Vrdolyak's position on letting a Black man be mayor

Witness

Somebody was asking me what I thought about the latest conservative racist being appointed to the Supreme Court

A Court already staffed by Ford, Nixon and Ronnie
And I asked them
Are you talking about the same Supreme Court which issued the Dred Scott decision

This minister's text does not look like a typical written piece, particularly his unconventional use of traditional punctuation markers. For example, there are few periods; ellipses are not used to indicate deleted information, but to indicate pauses. (Any use of ellipses in Reverend M.'s texts in this study is his.) At times he uses double question marks and, in some instances, single question marks that seem to signal a rising intonation and not a question. It seems that this minister has established his own visual code using punctuation marks to "mark" his texts for delivery. One can also see that the only difference between the oral and written passages is a few words in the first lines of the passages. Most changes from written to oral texts occur on the sentence level. Rarely did the minister add more than a sentence or change a word in the oral delivery of the written text. Yet, he did speak

of moving away from the text when God moves him to do so. (I report on such an example in chap. 4.)

This consistent pattern also surfaces in the five sermons in the form of repetition. The manuscript minister uses repetition of words, phrases, sentences, and sentence patterns as a regular part of his sermons. It is interesting to note that if a phrase is repeated five times in the oral sermon, it is written down five times in the manuscript. This highlights not only the level of detail in the minister's written texts but also the way that Reverend M. is able to capture his own "voice" in his written text.

ENTERING DR. N.'S CHURCH COMMUNITY

The Church of Faith and Freedom

Whereas my introduction to the manuscript minister and his church was as a parishioner, my introduction to the nonmanuscript minister—Dr. N.—and his church came out of my role as a researcher. I was in search of a nonmanuscript preacher for the original study. I had already been to 10 other churches in the Chicago area when a mutual acquaintance recommended Dr. N., a minister with whom she had worked in a political organization. Just a couple of weeks later, another acquaintance, a member of Dr. N.'s congregation, invited me to hear her preacher. Because I had received two recommendations to hear this preacher, I decided he must be impressive. Thus, my entry into another church was set in place.

My first visit to Dr. N.'s church was in the role of participant-observer. When I walked up to the church, I saw a beautiful, old brick building that reminded me of churches I was familiar with in my home state of North Carolina. When the service began, I was immediately drawn to the booming, vibrant voice of a tall, balding, brown-skinned, 50ish man standing in the pulpit speaking through an unnecessary microphone. I found out a few minutes later that this was Dr. N. I made no contact with him at this service nor during the next two services that I attended. However, during the first service, this minister verified, in the course of his sermon, that he was a nonmanuscript preacher. Before this verification, I had begun to think that he used a written text of some sort because he appeared to look down at a text at the beginning of his sermons as he stood behind a podium in the pulpit. However, this pattern was not repeated during the time that I did fieldwork at this church.

The indirect introduction to Dr. N. by one of the people who recommended that I go to his church proved to be helpful in the initial interview. I seemed to receive instant credibility when I mentioned her name. I arranged this initial appointment to formally meet Dr. N. some 3 weeks after I had been observing him. When I broached the subject of my studying him, Dr. N., like Reverend M., the manuscript minister, was very open to the idea and very cooperative. After the initial meeting, the formal part of the study at this church began. I taped five services at Dr. N.'s church, took fieldnotes, gathered biographical data on Dr. N., and developed relationships with a few members.

DR. N.

Dr. N. is the senior pastor of a north suburban, Chicago-area predominantly Black Baptist Church that just recently celebrated its 126th anniversary. Thus, this is a church with a long history of serving the African-American community. This preacher initially came to this area as a faculty member at a nearby well-known seminary and as a specialist in homiletics and African-American theology. He was on faculty at this seminary for 15 years. During the latter years of his faculty appointment, he also served as senior pastor of this church. He was probably one of the few professors who also pastored a church full time. In his church, he is addressed by his academic title "Dr. ____" instead of "Reverend ____" (thus I refer to him by his academic title in this book). Dr. N. brought to this church not only a traditional training from years of preaching experience mostly in smaller churches, he also brought a scholarly foundation. And although this scholarship includes the study of noted Western philosophers such as Heidegger and Kant, this minister has devoted much of his scholarship and his ministry to Black theological issues. His doctoral study in divinity at a highly esteemed southern university's seminary included homiletics and philosophy. Many academics might be surprised at Dr. N.'s scholarly training given his status as a nonmanuscript minister. For some, nonmanuscript equals illiterate, rather than learned.

Like Reverend M., Dr. N. has a basic philosophy that guides his ministry. That philosophy, printed on the cover of the church bulletin, advocates "faith and freedom for Black people." He says that he is "unapologetically, a race preacher," meaning that his mission as a preacher is to spiritually uplift and guide African Americans. His ideology means that many of the subjects he discusses in his sermons are directed solely to African-American communities. He has dealt with liberating African Americans spiritually, financially, and politically; he has discussed AIDS in the African-American community, African-

American pride, racism, and so forth. He has also been very involved in and identified with African-American political organizations such as Operation PUSH. Obviously, he sees the pulpit as the perfect place to discuss politics. Many times, issues of politics are used as illustrations in a sermon. Tied to political issues raised in the pulpit are social and economic issues. The politically centered discussions focus on their impact on Black people, which is in keeping with this minister's identification of himself as a race preacher. Thus, like Reverend M., Dr. N. embraces the prophetic and resistance functions of Lincoln and Mamiya's poles.

Committed to his people, this minister's philosophy and commitment are evident in almost all aspects of his sermons. Dr. N. credits his experience as a preacher in a southern church and his experiences while in divinity school in the south with playing a major role in his training to pastor to African-American people. Although he was born in a midwestern, fairly white-collar city, it was his experiences in the south that introduced him to the traditional Black worship patterns that so many Black preachers exemplify. He now describes the congregations of many urban churches as full of transplanted southerners who are used to the southern Black tradition of worship, a sentiment echoed by G. Davis (1985), who noted the important influence of the southern Black church tradition on Black churches in general.

PREPARING THE SERMON

According to the preparation stages Dr. N. described, his sermons are planned to a degree "in his head"; yet the actual words in the discourse are unplanned. He says he begins by asking himself "What is the one question that everyone in the congregation is asking?" He tries to locate that question. He says that on the Saturday before the sermon, he usually takes a long walk and thinks and prays about that question. He also reflects on all the things that have happened during the week because they influence what he thinks about while working on the next day's sermon. During this time of reflection and prayer, he asks God if this question he has located is a legitimate question; then, he asks himself where in the Bible the answer is provided. He then looks to the Bible for support.

After studying the Bible, Dr. N. is usually ready to go to bed. He says that the sermon incubates while he sleeps. Sometimes, he does not pick the actual sermon subject until he is on the way to the church on Sunday morning. On two occasions, this minister jotted down notes before the sermon. Each time he did this while in the pulpit just before he was to preach, and each time the notes were written on the back of a

page from the bulletin. One page of notes consisted of three short lines or points; the second set of notes consisted of a reminder to congratulate his assistant pastor on his wedding anniversary and four numbered phrases that were points for the sermon. He also wrote down what proved to be the title of the sermon. He had no notes for the other three sermons that I taped. There seems to be no set pattern for when this nonmanuscript minister uses notes and when he doesn't. Whenever he does use notes, they can hardly be called extensive.

I admit that because this minister writes little or nothing at all, it is almost impossible to measure the degree to which his sermons are planned or unplanned. Yet, the preparation process he described signals a long incubation stage. This minister says that he and other nonmanuscript preachers who are good are good because they listen to themselves; they study themselves and practice and perfect themselves. He says that not using a manuscript frees him from fixed ideas and allows him to be more responsive to the congregation. Obviously, he associates inflexibility or "fixedness" with writing.

His concept of audience has a great influence on his sermons. He says that one of the reasons that he does not like preparing a series of sermons in advance is that he does not want to ignore "breaking" issues that concern Black people, wanting his sermons to be relevant to his congregation. He says that much of his message comes from listening to the congregation during the sermon. As he puts it: "Not only are they in a dialogue with me during the sermon, they are also in a dialogue with God." This minister, who says that he understands the different "Amens" from the congregation, sees these simultaneous dialogues as part of the sermon. In fact, he seems to depend on the feedback of the congregation during the sermon for some of the content of the sermon.

Out of curiosity, I asked Dr. N. what he taught his students to do when he was a professor, use a manuscript or not? He says that the students always had to give one "impromptu" or nonmanuscript sermon, but he generally required that they write their sermons beforehand. He felt that for new ministers, writing the sermons taught them a certain kind of discipline. However, he advised that ministers should do whatever best suited their styles. What best suits this minister's style is not to write his sermons. Yet, the interviews with him indicate that the sermons are not totally spontaneous. Years of experience, reading, and training contribute to his planning and well-preparedness.

Dr. N.'s preaching style is very similar to that of Reverend M.'s in that he remains stationary behind the podium throughout most of the sermon. When Dr. N. moves away from the podium to the center of the pulpit, it usually signals the start of the climax of the sermon. His

booming voice rings throughout the church during the service. His voice might be considered one of authority because it commands attention, and his training in voice (singing) may add to its effectiveness. Again, like Reverend M., the manuscript preacher, Dr. N. also has a background in music. That is not a rarity in the Black church. Many preachers combine great oratorical skills with musical talent. He uses varying intonation patterns throughout his sermons. Again, as with Reverend M., the audience's responses sometimes correlate with the intonation patterns of this preacher's speech. The louder he gets, the louder they get. When his voice indicates excitement, the congregation gets excited.

Dr. N. also relies on physical gestures to communicate. These gestures carry as much meaning as words do, sometimes more. He believes that there is a range in the congregation from the unlearned to the highly educated: "You have to have two languages going, one that talks to emotion, feeling, intuition and the other of the highly intellectual nature." Dr. N. explains that in the Black church he reaches some people with words; he explains, for instance, that "'celestial skies' equals heaven for some." However, he points out that those words mean nothing to people ruled by emotions. But a hand gesture pointing upward and turning his face and eyes upward communicates the notion of heaven to those people who attach less meaning to words. This raises the issue of how much value some congregants attach to words in this setting. It also raises the issue of how this minister and others identify and communicate with the multiple levels of audience that make up their congregations. This minister, as evidenced by his identification of the different kinds of language use people respond to, seems to have a special awareness of this multiple audience issue. More importantly, he seems to meet the needs of his congregation.

DR. N.'S CHURCH

This church is the oldest of the three churches in this study. Its location in a middle-class suburb and its long history suggest that this church serves a rather middle-class Black population. Indeed, many of its members do fit that label. Like the congregation of the manuscript minister's church, this church has a large number of Black professionals. There are teachers, judges, lawyers, doctors, businesspersons, and corporate executives. Additionally, because this church is located very near a major university, there are a large number of Black college students, both on the undergraduate and graduate levels, who attend. It is necessary to point out that this church, unlike the other two churches in the study, is not located in a Black neighborhood. People drive from various distances to get to Sunday morning service. Despite these facts,

the minister indicated that he did not really see his church as middle class although he recognized that there are a large number of professionals and what he calls intellectuals in his congregation. His perception does assist him in not preaching over the heads of those who are limited in their vocabulary and educational levels.

This church's organizations are concerned not only with the operation of the church but also with education and community fellowship. It has an administrative staff consisting of the senior pastor and an executive assistant pastor. There are assistant pastors in charge of special ministries, educational ministries, and youth ministries. There are the traditional deacon, trustee, and usher boards. There is also a library committee and a group who run a precollege seminar for church members who are going off to college. The focus on education reflects one of the priorities of the minister, who champions the value of higher education in his sermons. This church has numerous organizations that promote fellowship among the congregation such as the singles' ministry, the widows' and widowers' club, the bowling league, and the softball team. There is also a church-run marriage counseling program. These organizations and programs show how many diverse groups the church tries to serve. It also emphasizes the church as the center of not only religious activities and political activities but social activities as well. During the summer (when I collected data at this church), many of the activities that occurred were social ones. On one Sunday, members of the softball team left service early to play in a tournament. This role of the church as the center of social activities is important in creating a complete picture of this minister and his congregation. They are a group of people who worship together and fellowship together. This is part of the personality of this church.

LITERACY EVENTS SURROUNDING THE SERMON

The literacy events surrounding the sermon in Dr. N.'s church are quite similar to those in Reverend M.'s church. On entering the sanctuary, worshippers received from ushers a Sunday bulletin that included the order of service, church announcements, names of sick and shut-in (home-bound) members, names and positions of the ministerial staff, church office staff, and officers of the church, and on occasion, forms to fill out (e.g., Vacation Bible school or church picnic registration forms). Rarely did the bulletin, which averaged about seven 5 x 7 inch pages, contain nonchurch-related announcements.

Although there was no assigned memory verse, there was an opening hymn, responsive reading, and Scripture listed in the order of service. Each of these elements resembled almost exactly their

counterparts in Reverend M’s church. However, whereas Reverend M.’s church bulletin included separate handouts of the complete responsive reading and opening hymn, Dr. N.’s congregation looked to the Order of Worship to find where these texts could be located in the hymnal or Bible. Following is a copy of the Order of Worship for an 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. service. Note the many moments in the service (which I indicate through italicizing) where the congregation is involved in reading, reciting, singing, or listening to some type of written texts.

ORDER OF WORSHIP
SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 1987

8:00 A.M.

- Call to Worship.....Dr. _____
- *Processional....."God is Already Here"*
- *Invocation.....Minister*
- Responsive Reading.....Selection 574*
- *Gloria Patri.....*
- *Hymn of Celebration.....Selection 141*
- Announcements & Welcome to Visitors.....
- Tithes & Offerings.....
- *Doxology & Offertory Prayer.....*
- Musical Selection.....Choir
- SERMON.....Dr. _____
- *Invitation to Discipleship.....*
- *Benediction....."Praise God"*

9:30 A.M.

- Sunday School.....Fellowship Hall
- 10:45 A.M.
- Baptismal & Devotional Services.....
- 11:00 A.M.

- Call to Worship.....Dr. _____
- *Processional..... "God is Already Here"*
- *Invocation.....Minister*
- Responsive Reading.....Selection 574*
- *Gloria Patri.....*
- *Hymn of Celebration.....Selection 141*
- Announcements & Welcome to Visitors.....
- Tithes & Offerings.....
- *Doxology & Offertory Prayer.....*
- Musical Selection.....Choir
- SERMON.....Dr. _____
- *Invitation to Discipleship.....*
- *Benediction....."Praise God"*

(*) Congregation Please Stand

DR. N.'S TEXTS

Although the average size of Dr. N.'s sermons equaled the average size of the manuscript minister's sermons, approximately 3,800 words, that comparison is deceiving. There are large differences in the lengths of the individual sermons:

- Sermon #1: "The Power and Blessing of the Fathers Who Can Let Go and Let God"—5,500 words
- Sermon #2: "You Are What You Eat, But It's Good to Know What You're Eating"—2,500 words
- Sermon #3: "Spiritual Presence and the Power of Prayer"—3,115 words
- Sermon #4: "The Power and Meaning of the Lord's Supper"—3,300 words
- Sermon #5: "The Quest of Faith for A New Sense of Self"—4,400 words

Unlike the manuscript minister's texts, there is no consistency in the length of the sermons. The 3,000-word difference between the longest and the shortest sermons translates to a nine-page difference in the size of the transcripts. However, the actual word count only confirms what was obvious during my observations, that the sermons varied drastically in length.

Like the manuscript minister, each of the nonmanuscript minister's sermons opens with a Scripture reading and closes with a hymn of invitation. On special Sundays such as Father's Day and Communion Sundays, the titles of the sermons generally reflect the occasion. The first sermon I taped and analyzed is a Father's Day sermon. The second and fourth sermons are Communion sermons. Even though I list the "titles" of the sermons, Dr. N never lists titles of his sermons in the Sunday bulletins as Reverend M does, perhaps because their sermon preparation differs so drastically.

Each of the five sermons studied includes an introduction that Dr. N. uses not only to introduce the congregation to his subject, but also to explain why he chose it. The body of the sermon, like that in Reverend M.'s sermons, is an explanation of the subject using sacred and secular examples. The climax or conclusion in each of the sermons is an appeal to the members of the congregation to join the church, accept Christ, change their lives, or act in whatever manner the sermon has laid out. Also, in two sermons, this appeal was accompanied by some kind of personal examples of how the minister's life has been changed by God. The overall organization is quite similar to that of Reverend M.'s sermons.

Dr. N.'s sermons are characterized by one dominant theme: African Americans must think more positively, and through God, that positive thinking can occur. The following is an excerpt from a transcript of one of Dr. N.'s sermons:

We only hear a small part of God's power in our lives. When I look at the eyes of our people,
And sometimes I go around the country.
And you know how it is,
You can look at their eyes and see the mark of slavery on us, And that mark says doubts.
Our children start out by saying, "No, I can't." They go to school, And where do they learn it from? They learn it from their parents.

"I can't."

"I cannot spell, I cannot write."

No More!

Even in such a small excerpt, the theme is evident.

Because there is no written text, I cannot comment here about the physical features of the text as I have done in the previous discussion of Reverend M.'s sermons or as I do later in the discussion of Reverend P.'s texts. However, what is striking about Dr. N.'s texts is the shifts in point of view and voice. Even in the short excerpt just presented, his shifts from the group perspective to his individual perspective are clear. When hearing this sermon and listening to it again when I was transcribing, I could hear clearly Dr. N. altering his voice from his confident, worldly voice to the less confident voice of the children with low self-esteem. This shifting perspective is explored later in the book in chapter 3.

ENTERING REVEREND P.'S CHURCH COMMUNITY

*I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

When discussing my project with a friend from graduate school, this friend invited me to come to his church for a visit. Thus, my entry into another church began. This church, a Pentecostal Holiness Church located on the far southside of Chicago in the heart of a lower working-class African-American community, was the smallest of the three churches in the study. Like the previous church in the study, when I saw it I noted how beautiful this big, red brick church was. As I walked up

the steps into the narthex, the outer foyer of the sanctuary, I found myself a little nervous because I was getting ready to enter a Pentecostal Holiness Church. I was bringing all of my "baggage," my previous experiences with holiness churches in the south, with me. In North Carolina, Pentecostal Holiness churches are the most fundamentalist, politically conservative, "holy rollers" denomination that I know of. Of course, I had only been to a few Pentecostal Holiness churches so my views were not necessarily supported by a great deal of evidence. Nevertheless, there I was wondering what I would find on the other side of the door. To my surprise, I found not holy rollers but a small congregation that sang anthems and spirituals. That made me more nervous because I had grown up in a church where gospel music was the standard. I also had walked into a beautiful, large, old church that seemed nearly empty. The quiet was so overwhelming that I felt a little out of place. I settled into a seat and looked around until I spotted my friend and his wife sitting several rows ahead of me. Once the service began, my anxiety died down, and I began to see that even though this church was different from what I had expected, it was a mainline African-American church.

REVEREND P.

I actually went to Reverend P.'s church in search of a nonmanuscript minister. My friend described his minister as one who did not write his sermons. What I found, when I talked with the minister, was that he wrote too much to be considered a nonmanuscript minister (approximately one fourth of his sermon was written), and he wrote too little to be considered a manuscript minister. Yet, this minister placed himself more on the nonmanuscript end than the manuscript end, suggesting that a continuum exists rather than a dichotomy—manuscript versus nonmanuscript. I refer to him as a partial-manuscript minister because of the amount of text Reverend P. wrote and to distinguish him from the nonmanuscript minister. I decided to add this minister and church to the study because they added another layer of diversity to the study that I had not previously thought about. And I suspected that this minister, with his partial manuscript, might be representative of the way a large number of African-American preachers prepare their sermons.

Reverend P., in his early 40s, is the youngest of the three ministers in this study. Although he has the least amount of education of the three ministers, he was very well-educated—completing his graduate work at the time of this study. In addition, he has studied in several special seminary programs that, although they do not offer

graduate degrees, prepare ministers to preach and pastor a church. He even states in one of his sermons that he goes to seminars and takes courses on preaching and the ministry to become a better communicator. What this congregation has in Reverend P. is a role model who is constantly trying to improve himself as a preacher and pastor mostly through education. Like the other two ministers in this study, Reverend P. served in the military. After his honorable discharge from the U.S. Army, Reverend P. became a full-time minister. He pastored his first church in 1974 in Memphis, his hometown.

The members of Reverend P.'s church were very proud of their minister. Although he was far more modest than the other two preachers, his congregation was not modest about him. Member after member commented to me about what a good preacher this minister was. A few of them knew that I was doing research but they did not know the research topic. Others only knew me as a friend of their fellow member. The first time I finally heard the minister preach, one of the members came up to me after the service to say "Can't he preach?" This was a rhetorical question. The affirmative answer was implied in the question. One member who knew that I was doing research was concerned that I was going to evaluate his minister negatively. Although he always laughed when he made comments about my coming in and "writing bad things," his protective streak was evident each time he raised this question. I found this protective streak to be evidence of the high esteem in which Reverend P. is held by his congregation and also to be evidence of the suspicion in which many scholars are held who study aspects of African-American communities.

This minister's preaching style seems to be an extension of his personality. During my observations of and conversations with him, I found Reverend P. to be rather quiet and reserved. He is rather low key in and out of the pulpit. Although low key, his straightforward style is immediately evident. In the pulpit, he, like the other two ministers, remains stationary while preaching, evokes the call-and-response patterns of worship in his sermons, uses voice intonation to add emphasis to statements, and uses hand gestures, as well, to communicate. And even though he has a text, he makes infrequent eye contact with the text and maintains eye contact with the congregation. This minister's effectiveness is measured by his congregation's seeming admiration of him both as preacher and a man. I had the opportunity to socialize with members of this church on one occasion. Any reference made to this minister during that occasion was positive.

Considering how proud this congregation seemed to be of Reverend P. and considering that he had been assigned to the largest church in the denomination (the Chicago church), Reverend P. had

every reason to be brimming with self-confidence. However, I found Reverend P. to be extremely modest, almost self-effacing, about his achievements and abilities. That modesty went along with the reserved personality that I commented on earlier. When describing his sermon style, Reverend P. said his sermons were arranged a certain way because he was not good at other kinds of arrangements, particularly topical arrangements. Yet, he also questions the legitimacy of preaching topical sermons. He described himself as being more of an exegetical preacher that he viewed as the most legitimate type of preaching. Many works on preaching support him (H. Davis, 1958; Thompson, 1981). Exegesis involves close reading of the Scripture as a basis for the sermon; it deemphasizes choosing a sermon from outside the Bible—a practice common for both Reverend M. and Dr. N.

Reverend P. is not as widely travelled as the other two ministers in the study, nor is he as political in the pulpit. He never included any political statements in his sermons during the time that I was in his church. The extent of his political statements was urging people to vote in the upcoming election, a statement that he made during the announcements, not during the sermon. His style is not to mix politics and religion in the pulpit even though he does feel that one of the characteristics of the Black preacher is that he or she feels perfectly free to discuss social and political issues in the pulpit. Although Reverend P. discusses few social and political issues in the pulpit, on one occasion, he did use the pulpit to tell women not to wear pants to any function held at the church because some members had complained about women wearing pants to some of the church programs. This policy suggests the conservative nature of this church. Reverend P. basically sees the pulpit as the place to expound on the word of God. This is reflected in his sermons and his interviews. This minister believes that sermons should be explanations of the Bible. His goal is to explain the Bible to his congregation as best as he can. Thus, in Lincoln and Mamiya's dialectic poles, he would definitely lean toward the priestly, other-wordly, and privatistic functions. That is, this minister and his church are more focused on the spiritual needs of the members and less focused on the broader social and political needs of the members or the larger African-American communities.

PREPARING THE SERMON

It is clear that Reverend P.'s philosophy on preaching is reflected in his preparation. He chooses a book in the Bible from which he will preach; from this book he chooses his subject. He says that he "tries to stick with the text [the Bible] and avoid topical preaching." He believes that

ministers “should not impose a topic on the scripture” but should go from the Scripture to application to the needs of the people. That is, ministers should choose their subjects from the Scriptures and not from something they hear or see or read in a newspaper. Once he chooses the book and passage of Scripture from which he will preach, he then goes through his library and looks for reading material in the form of scholarly commentaries on the books of the Bible. He selects commentaries on the book from which he will be preaching and lays them aside. Then, over the next few days, he prays and meditates over the passage. He says he generally tries to read the passage 15 to 20 times. As he meditates, he asks, “What is this passage saying to me?” It is significant that he uses himself as an audience first before he tries to relate the passage to his congregation. He believes that he must have a strong understanding of the text before he can try to make others understand it.

Reverend P. then compares different translations of the Bible to see that he has a working understanding of the passage. By comparing different translations, he can look for differences that may affect the meaning, not unlike reading different editions of the same literary text. Once this minister has gone through these stages, it is generally Thursday or Friday. On Thursday or Friday of a typical week, he starts to examine the commentaries he set aside earlier in the week. As he studies the commentaries, he prepares a working draft of his sermon. The working draft includes notes from the resource material (the commentaries). On Saturday or early Sunday morning, he prepares the preaching draft, which does not make any reference to the resource material. Contrast this practice of not making reference to the resource material to Reverend M.’s practice of consistently making such references in his text. I would never have known about the working draft and the uses of commentaries had I not asked Reverend P. how many drafts he wrote. This preacher, like so many other Black preachers I have heard over the years, finds that in the Black church, the people do not want to hear “a lot of quoting from a preacher.” He says “Black people look for an element of personal testimony [from the minister].” He does not include quotes from the commentaries in his preaching draft because he feels that his congregation would not really appreciate that practice.

When asked how the congregation affects how he prepares his sermons, this minister answered that he has three goals with each sermon. He wants the congregation “to feel something, remember something, and do something.” These three goals seem to cover several rhetorical aims: expressive, informative, and persuasive. It seems that this text, the sermon, has multiple purposes, and it must reach multiple audiences. This minister describes himself as “a shepherd feeding his

sheep." His sheep, the congregation, are made up of different groups. He constantly asks himself if he has addressed the needs of the elderly who are lonely, or the young professionals who have problems on the job, or the other groups in the church. He says the greatest challenge of a minister is to reach the multiple groups in the congregation. He also says that sometimes he wants to say to the congregation that "I'm preaching this to myself, and I'm just letting you listen." This statement is very similar to the statement that the manuscript minister made about asking himself what he needs to hear. Both of these men see themselves as having as much need of hearing a sermon as the congregation. It makes them part of their congregations.

Reverend P. also talked about the role that his seminary training plays in his sermon preparation. He sees the major influence of his seminary training in how he views the Scripture. He was taught "to be faithful to the text," which here refers to the scripture. As stated earlier, he spends a great deal of time trying to understand the text and trying to make sure other people understand the text. His seminary training taught him to do this through exposition, and he sees his sermons as an exposition of the text—the Scriptures. As discussed later, my analysis shows that this minister's sermons resemble a literary line-by-line explication of a text. This minister, in fact, describes himself as a "plow horse" plowing through the text or passage, a way of preparing a sermon that makes the organization very simple. The sermons are simply organized around the passages. This minister also views his written text as a "blueprint" for his sermon, the oral text. He says that most seminaries encourage ministers "to be involved in some kind of writing process," to write some part of their sermons, and they encourage new ministers to write large portions of their sermons. This minister writes a small portion of his sermon because he believes that this practice frees him to be spontaneous in the pulpit. If an idea comes to him that isn't in his written text while he is in the pulpit, he will use it. He is not tied to the text, a sentiment that is echoed by Dr. N.

REVEREND P.'S CHURCH

The congregation, like their minister, can be described as somewhat low key. Holiness churches generally have the reputation, in the Black church community, as being even more active and expressive than most Black churches. They also have the reputation of "staying in church all day." I even asked my acquaintance at this church how long the service was when he first suggested that I visit his church. He said "it's never more than 2 hours, unlike most Holiness churches." This congregation and its service did not fit the image I had of how their service was

supposed to be, an image that was shaped by my experiences with Holiness churches in the rural south. The low-key nature of the congregation was evident in many ways, most notably in how the congregation proceeded through the service. As in the other churches, the congregation was more active in some parts of the service than in others. Yet, their participation was not as intense or perhaps as verbal as in the other two churches. For example, when the senior choir sang, the congregation generally listened fairly quietly rather than standing or clapping to indicate that they were moved by the song. This could be because the choir sang anthems and spirituals more so than gospel music, and anthems and spirituals, which sometimes move people to tears, do not seem to invite the same kind of vocal responses from the congregation as gospel songs do. There is a gospel choir at this church, but they sing less frequently than the senior choir.

The time that Reverend P.'s congregation was most vocal was during and after the sermon. During the sermon, the congregation participated in the call-and-response patterns that are traditional in the Black church, but the response seemed limited to a few verbal statements. I noted that the congregation rarely showed excitement by standing or clapping during the sermon, even during the climax. Yet, many members, especially men, answered the preacher during the sermon mainly with "amen" and "umm-hmm" or an affirmative nod of the head, and the congregation consistently answered the minister as a group with "yes," "that's right," and "Lord." Additionally, individual voices can be heard over the group responding "preach" along with other comments that were unclear. As in the other churches, the more excited the minister becomes (when he raises his voice), the more vocal the congregation becomes. The more low key this minister is during the sermon, the quieter the congregation. Unlike the other two ministers, however, this minister seems to "wind down" during his climax, and his congregation winds down with him. The congregation's response seems to reflect the minister's preaching style—straightforward and reserved, but not so low-keyed that the service does not resemble a traditionally expressive Black church service. However, I saw few people outwardly carried away by emotion in this church as I did in the other two churches. The congregation was far more verbally communicative after the service.

Because this church was smaller (about 550 members on the official role but only about 100 attending with some regularity) than the other two churches, more members of the congregation knew each other; consequently, they knew when there were visitors even when the visitors did not stand to identify themselves. I was recognized right away as new, and members of the congregation came up to me after the services each Sunday to greet and welcome me, treatment that other

visitors and new members also received. Because few members knew about my research, they saw me as a potential member. I was constantly asked if or when I would join their church. I was surprised that more of the congregation's outgoing personality did not appear during the service.

Although each of these churches and each minister had unique personalities, each church and minister also shared the legacy and tradition of African-American worship. Each church and minister was committed to the African-American communities that they served.

LITERACY EVENTS SURROUNDING THE SERMON

The literacy events that surround Reverend P.'s sermons are quite similar to those in the other two churches. The bulletin is the first piece of text that worshippers receive on entering the church. Like most bulletins, it contains the Order of Worship, church announcements, a list of the ministerial staff, church officers and staff, and names of the sick and shut-in members. It also contains the biblical citation for the memory verse. Unlike in Reverend M.'s church where the memory verse is printed in full in the bulletin, in Reverend P.'s church, the book, chapter, and verse citation was provided, but the congregation had to look up and read the verse on their own time. Additionally, the memory verse changed weekly rather than monthly. Finally, the bulletin included the citation for the day's Scriptures and a space at the end of the bulletin called "sermon notes," a blank space where people could take notes on the sermon.

The worship service opened with a hymn from the hymnal, then a call to worship that was printed in the bulletin. This call to worship, from the Scriptures, resembles the Responsive reading in the other churches, although it is much shorter, usually no more than two short verses and is the second act in the order of worship. There is no Responsive reading in this church's service. There were two Scriptures cited in the bulletin. The first one was usually read by a layperson early in the service, and the second one by Reverend P. at the beginning of the sermon. Again, the literacy events in this church followed the patterns in the other two churches and probably most churches. Reading or listening to texts were common occurrences.

REVEREND P.'S TEXTS

Although the analysis of Reverend P.'s sermons is based on the transcripts of the oral performance, this minister does have written texts.

The size of both oral and written texts are reported here, along with the sermon titles:

- Sermon 1 "King Jesus or King Self"—5,117 (transcript of oral), 1,217 (written)
- Sermon 2 "Marks of a Spirit-Filled Christian"—5,345 (oral), 1,022 (written)
- Sermon 3 "Bottom Line"—4,520 (oral), 1,200 (written)
- Sermon 4 "Prison to Praise"—5,200 (oral), 1,055 (written)
- Sermon 5 "How's Your Conversation"—4,630 (oral), 1,231 (written)

The oral texts average approximately 5,000 words per sermon, whereas the written texts average 1,100 words per sermon, a little more than one fifth the size of the oral texts. There appears to be no correlation between the size of the written texts and the size of the oral texts. That is, a large oral text does not necessarily equal a large written text. For example, the smallest written text leads to the largest oral text. Even though there is no correlation between the size of oral and written texts, the size of the partial-manuscript minister's sermons are quite consistent. There is only a 131-word difference between the largest written text and the smallest written text, and an 825-word difference between the largest and smallest oral texts. When the three ministers' texts are compared in terms of size, it would seem that the two ministers who write portions of or all of their sermons may have more control over the lengths of their sermons than the minister who does not write. That is, the two ministers who write some part or all of their sermons may use the written text to dictate how long their preached sermon will be.

The following two passages are the written and orally delivered versions of the same passage in Reverend P's first sermon:

Written text:

after the dust settles shall it be business as usual
 I continue on my way as ordinary, nominal, nice free
 loading [illegible]
 Generally people don't like free loaders the person tries to get by
 The individual who refuses to carry their weight we despise have
 little patience
 How do you think God feels toward free loading Christians
 Does Jesus demand anything, Does it cost anything to be his
 follower
 I want to speak on the demands of
 discipleship

Oral (transcript) text:

Or is it after the dust settles
 it'll be business as usual
 I'll continue on my way as the nominal ordinary freeloading Christian
 You know generally people don't like freeloaders
 right
 you know there's something about freeloaders
 that you just sorta of
 you think they just kinda rub you the wrong way
 people who never want to carry their share of the load
 if you go out to dinner
 and they always are the ones who don't have any money
 or you need to chip in and get something
 and they're always are the ones who say
 see me next week
 Uh you have a dinner
 and and we sit down and talk about
 you bring the ham
 and you bring the beans
 and they'll say
 I'll bring the napkins
 but it's just generally something about those kind of people
 that generally you find yourself kind of drawing away from them
 because
 you know
 they don't want to carry their weight
 they want to freeload
 they just want to get by
 and we live in that kind of society
 where so many people want to freeload
 they just want to get over
 you know
 if I can stay home with Mom and Dad
 and never give anything never contribute anything
 it might be working
 but if I can get by
 ay that's good
 but oh my friend
 where that stealing is most despicable is in the church of Our Lord Jesus
 Christ
 people come to church
 and they just want to freeload
 they don't want to carry their end of the log at all

but they want you to carry on the whole program
you do it all
and let them come
and sit and enjoy
but does Jesus demand anything of us as his disciples
Does it cost anything to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ
because that's what I want to speak on this morning

The staggered lines in the written text are the minister's spacing. He says the staggering helps him see his text better. Reverend P.'s written text serves as a "blueprint" for his oral text. The oral passage most notably contains elaboration of examples, and that seems to account for the major difference between the two passages and the oral and written sermons in general.

Finally, the basic structure of Reverend P.'s sermons are the same from sermon to sermon and match that of the other two ministers' sermons: Scripture reading, introduction of subject, establishing context, body of sermon, and climax, hymn of invitation. The variation occurs in individual preaching styles.

SUMMARY

The information in this chapter is the backdrop for the picture of the text I paint in the following chapters. As is suggested in this chapter, each minister and church has its own identity; yet, there are many similarities. The services are similar in order. Each church provides the congregation with the opportunity to engage in many literacy activities. Each minister is learned in the Western theological tradition; yet, each minister is as learned in African-American worship traditions. Each minister has a strong opinion about the relationship between his sermons and those who his sermons serve. Yet, there are also obvious differences: the sizes of the church, the personalities of the ministers and congregations, the way each minister prepares his sermons, and so forth. Whatever these similarities and differences, however, these church communities are sites in which literate texts take prominence and where literacy thrives. They are also sites where alternative pictures of literate texts are offered. One such alternative picture is examined more fully in the following chapters.