

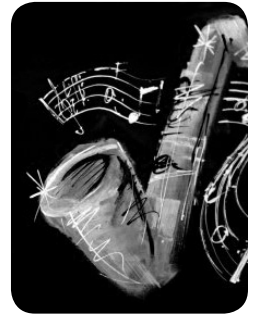
His-Story

Church history and why it matters to me

THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA

I. Jazz & Christian Spirituality

I was watching BET one night, and they were interviewing a man about jazz music. He said jazz music was invented by the first generation out of slavery. I thought that was beautiful because, while it is music, it is very hard to put on paper; it is so much more a language of the soul. It is as if the soul is saying something, something about freedom. I think Christian spirituality is like jazz music. I think loving Jesus is something you feel. I think it is something very difficult to get on paper. But it is no less real, no less meaningful, no less beautiful. The first generation out of slavery invented jazz music. It is birthed out of freedom. And that is the closest thing I know to Christian spirituality. A music birthed out of freedom. Everybody sings their songs the way they feel it, everybody closes their eyes and lifts up their hands. —Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*



II. Part 1: General overview (more an objective perspective)

A. American colonies (pre-Revolutionary War)

*From colonial times, the issue of slavery had troubled the conscience of many. As independence approached, there were those who voiced the opinion that the new nation should be born free of such as evil institution. However, in order to present a common front against Great Britain, such voices were silenced, and the United States, while calling itself the land of the free, continued practicing slavery. Several denominations took a clear stance against it. In 1776, the Quakers expelled from their midst all who insisted on holding slaves. The Christmas Conference in 1784 that organized African Methodist as a separate church also banned slaveholding among its members. And many Baptist, although lacking a national organization that could take similar measures, did take a stance against slavery (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2. page 250).*

B. A New Nation (post 1776)

1. Early denominational positions modified through the passage of time
 - a. Anti-slavery feelings still strong in both the North and the South, and in 1817 the American Colonization Society was founded
 - Purpose of buying slaves, freeing them, and returning them to Africa
 - This effort was one of the biggest impacts in forming the Republic of Liberia
 - “Liberia was founded, established, colonized, and controlled by citizens of the United States and ex-Caribbean slaves as a colony for former African American slaves and their free black descendants. The American Colonization Society (ACS) was formed in 1817 to send free African-Americans to Africa as an alternative to emancipation in the United States. In 1822, the society established on the west coast of Africa a colony that in 1847 became the independent nation of Liberia. By 1867, the US society had sent more than 13,000 emigrants” (from www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/liberia.htm)
 - b. Methodists and Baptists softened their positions of slavery to attract slave holding whites of the South
 - c. 1818 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church: while opposing slavery as something against the Word of God, nevertheless deposed a minister for his advocacy of abolition
 - d. *By 1843 over a thousand Methodist ministers and preachers owned slaves (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2. page 251).*

Notes

2. The North
 - a. Abolition of slavery grew stronger (slavery less of an economic impact)
 - b. Majority of churches maintained their convictions that slavery was not of God's will
 - c. Many in the Methodist church fought to restore the denomination's former position against holding slaves
3. The South
 - a. Slavery continued (economic system based on slave labor)
 - b. Churches began preaching that slavery was an institution sanctioned by God – and how the blacks benefited from it because they had been rescued from pagan cultures and now heard the Gospel
- C. **A church divided (not to mention a nation divided)**
 1. Methodists:
 - a. 1844: Methodist General Conference condemned one of its bishops (in Georgia) for owning slaves
 - b. The church split; formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church
 2. Baptists: Southern Baptist Convention formed (1845) when it broke away from the Baptist church over views on slavery
 3. Presbyterians: 1861 Southern presbyteries broke from the Presbyterian Church to found their own denomination (the *Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America*)
 4. The nation split — Civil War (1861-1865)
- D. **Post Civil War (“Reconstruction”)**
 1. Northern military occupation
 - a. Fostered hatred and prejudice against Northerners
 - Carpet baggers
 - *The South became an economic colony of the North (ibid. pg. 251).*
 - b. Popular sayings: “Those #%@! Yankees!,” “The South will rise again!”, etc.
 2. Fear and hatred
 - a. Southern whites, unable to vent their anger on the North, turned it towards the black population... Fear of blacks was fostered from many southern pulpits, and when that fear led to the founding of the Ku Klux Klan there were preachers who openly supported its activities (*ibid. pg. 251*).
 - b. Hatred for the North led many in the South to adopt anti-intellectual and conservative views (since all the great learning centers were in the North and were therefore “suspect”)
 3. Prejudice against blacks increased
 - a. Blacks given positions of responsibility by northern controllers, which fueled the flames of racism by southerners
 - b. When the Reconstruction period came to an end, white southerners made moves to limit the rights and power of the blacks
 - c. 1892: Supreme Court approved segregation with the understanding that blacks were to be treated as “separate, but equal”
 - d. “Jim Crow” laws introduced
 4. The formation of black churches
 - a. Before and during this time, black congregations were formed
 - b. *Soon black churches became one of the principle institutions of black society. Since the only prestigious position to which blacks had relatively free access was the ministry, for a century most black leaders were also pastors. Some black churches advocated submission to present injustice while awaiting a heavenly reward. In others, more radical words of justice and black dignity were heard. But all contributed to the sense of identity and cohesion among blacks that a hundred*

years later would be the backbone of the struggle for civil rights (ibid. pg. 253).

Notes

D. Where we are today

1. How has history shaped today's (Christian) understanding of north versus south relations? Black versus white relations? etc.
2. 2015 Resolution at the General Assembly of the PCA (see page 7)

III. Part 2: The Black Church (more of a subjective perspective)

A. Prayer from Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879): member of the First African Baptist Church of Boston (from *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*)

"O, thou sin-forgiving God, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Lord, I am sick, and full of diseases. If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Though my sins have been as scarlet, thou canst make them as wool; and though they be red as crimson, thou canst make them whiter than snow. Were it not that there is a sufficiency in thy blood to atone for the vilest, the view of my past sins and transgressions would sink me in despair. But thou hast said, him that cometh to thee, thou wilt in no wise cast out. Lord, I come, pleading alone the merits of my Redeemer; not only for myself do I plead, but for the whole race of mankind; especially for the sons and daughters of Africa.



Bless thy churches throughout the world. Clothe thy ministers with salvation, and cause thy saints to shout for joy. Grant that the time may soon come, that all may know thee from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

And now Lord, what wait I for? Dispel every gloomy fear that pervades my mind, and enable me to hope in thy mercy, and to thee will I ascribe praises everlasting. Amen."

B. Coming of blacks to America

1. The slave trade in America brought blacks to America
2. Samuel Sewall (1652–1730)
 - a. A judge and businessman in the Province of Massachusetts Bay
 - b. Wrote a famous essay, *The Selling of Joseph* (1700), criticizing slavery
"Joseph was rightly, no more a slave to his brethren, than they were to him, and they had no more authority to sell him than they had to slay him."

C. Conversion of the slaves

1. Under the First Great Awakening
 - a. The Great Awakening very influential in bringing Christianity to the slaves
 - b. George Whitefield had the greatest influence on slaves to establish Christianity; he argued that blacks have souls (Whitefield became a hero in the African American culture)
2. Samuel Davies, "Apostle of Virginia" (1723–1761): Presbyterian pastor in Virginia
Writing to a friend in New England: "There are also a number of blacks [in my congregation]. Sometimes I see a hundred and more... I have baptized about forty of them within these three years upon such a profession of faith as I then judged credible... I have had as satisfying evidences of sincere piety from several of them as I ever had from any person in my life, and their artless simplicity, their passionate aspirations after Christ, their incessant endeavors to know and do the will of God have charmed me. But alas! While my charge is so extensive I cannot take sufficient pains with them for their instruction, which often oppresses my heart."
3. Carter Woodson (1875–1950): African-American writer and historian known as the *Father of Black History*
Woodson was the second African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard, after W.E.B. Du Bois. Known as the "Father of Black History," Woodson dedicated his career to the field of African-American history and lobbied extensively to establish Black His-

tory Month as a nationwide institution. He also wrote many historical works, including the 1933 book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (from www.biography.com/people/carter-g-woodson-9536515).

Notes

D. Missions endeavors to the blacks

1. Charles C. Jones (1804 -1863) of Liberty County, Georgia
 - a. A Presbyterian minister troubled by slavery
 - b. Jones a slave owner himself, but worked within the system to minister to the blacks; called the "Apostle to the slaves"
2. John Lafayette Girardeau (1825–1898) of Charleston, SC
 - a. Presbyterian minister with a huge heart for the blacks
 - b. Ministered in the Gullah language
 - c. Girardeau's heart remained in the Low Country of South Carolina... where the black population, far more numerous than further inland, had fewer opportunities to hear the gospel, and where there was a great deal more ignorance and the practice of Voodoo... He regularly preached to a large congregation of white people in the morning, and to blacks in the afternoon. He also systematically preached to the slaves on the surrounding plantations, often on the porches or inside the homes of their masters. He did not insult the intelligence of the slaves, and used the same order of service for both. He taught them good psalms and hymns, refusing the view that the slaves' own simple chants were good enough for them. Girardeau clearly believed that the goal was to lift the blacks' understanding, not leave them at a level of ignorance. Then he was called to a new work. Second Presbyterian Church had begun in Anson St. in Charleston for the slaves of the city. A building seating 600 had been built by the slaveholders and opened in 1850... By 1854, when Girardeau took up his ministry there, there were thirty-six members; and by 1860 there were over 600, with a regular Sunday attendance of 1500. This was an extraordinary ministry, obviously blessed by God in its fruitfulness... (from <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2015/john-l-girardeau-minister-to-the-slaves-of-south-carolina/>).

E. Black churches in the south

1. The Invisible Institution: secret black churches that met in the south
In the season of slavery, historians defined the Black church as the "invisible institution." The name was given because Blacks assembled to worship under a shroud of secrecy because such gatherings were outlawed by those who had the mind to know if a slave had a filled spirit, it would be a matter of time before he/she came into a sense of self. To clear their conscience of reducing African Americans to three-fifths of a human being, our enslavers had to claim we didn't have a soul. But, the unquenchable passion of our fore parents to feel close to God sparked an innovative flame that produced sanctuaries in swamps, chapels in cotton fields and temples under trees far beyond earshot of their oppressors.
—By Rev. Jamal Bryant (www.afro.com/the-invisible-institution/).
2. Blacks were more attracted to Baptist and Methodist churches
3. George Liele (1750-1820)
 - a. African American and emancipated slave who became the founding pastor of First Bryan Baptist Church and First African Baptist Church, in Savannah, Georgia
 - b. Became the first American missionary, leaving in 1783 for Jamaica (roughly 30 years before Adoniram Judson left for Burma)
 - c. Liele became the first Baptist missionary in Jamaica
4. Andrew Bryan (1737-1812): Liele's successor in Savannah and of the old Calvinist order
5. John Jasper (1812-1901): Reverend John Jasper is arguably one of the most famous black ministers of nineteenth-century Richmond, Virginia, who gained popularity for his

electrifying preaching style and his ability to spiritually move both black and white Baptists. He began his career in the early 1840s, preaching at funerals of slave and free black parishioners and giving occasional sermons at the First African Baptist Church. His popularity grew quickly and not only among Richmonders; after giving a guest sermon to the Third African Baptist Church in the nearby city of Petersburg, Jasper was invited by that congregation to preach every Sunday. Jasper's accomplishments are even more remarkable given the fact that he was a slave in the tobacco factories and iron mills of Richmond during the first 25 years of his ministry work during a time when Virginia law expressly prohibited blacks from preaching (from www.blackpast.org/aah/jasper-john-j-1812-1901).

Notes

F. Black churches in the north

1. African Methodist Episcopal founded in 1816
 - a. Formed by Rev. Richard Allen (1760-1831)
 - b. Opened first AME church in 1794 in Philadelphia, PA – called “Old Mother Bethel”
2. Daniel Pain (born 1811 in Charleston, SC) led the expansion of the AME in the south after the Civil War

G. Black Calvinists

1. Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833)
 - a. Black Puritan on the Northern Frontier
 - b. Orphaned in Vermont; adopted by a white family (named him Lemuel, which in Hebrew means “Belonging to God”)
 - c. Ordained and served as a black pastor of a white congregation:
In 1785, he became the first ordained African American minister. After a courtship with Elizabeth Babbitt, white school teacher, the couple married and had ten children, Haynes remained in Granville until 1787, when he accepted a call at the West Parish congregation in Rutland, Vermont where he remained for the next thirty-one years (from: www.blackpast.org/aah/haynes-lemuel-1753-1833).
2. John Chavis (1763-1838)
 - a. First African American to graduate from a college or university in the United States.
 - b. Presbyterian preacher and educator in the Antebellum South
 - c. Studied privately under the tutelage of John Witherspoon
 - d. 1799: Chavis licensed to preach in the Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Virginia upon his graduation from Liberty Hall Academy (which would become Washington and Lee University).
 - e. “In 1808, John Chavis opened a private school in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he taught black and white children. Chavis specialized in Latin and Greek, and his school soon gained a reputation for excellence. Before long, however, white parents protested the presence of black pupils, and Chavis re-arranged his school, teaching white children during the day and African American children by night. Despite their insistence on segregated classrooms, some of North Carolina's most powerful whites sent their children to Chavis to be educated. Chavis educated a generation of young North Carolinians including the children of Governor Charles Manly” (from: www.blackpast.org/aah/chavis-john-1763-1838).
3. Samuel Eli Cornish (1795-1858): Presbyterian minister, social reformer, and editor of the first black newspaper
4. Theodore Wright (1797-1847): graduate of Princeton Seminary (1828) and pastor of the First Colored Presbyterian Church, New York City

IV. Part 3: Character of American Black Christianity

A. The Bible: central to the black church

B. **The Preacher and the Message**

1. "Black preaching is not a preacher-led, isolated, excursion into the world of the Bible, but a group tour, full of sights, sounds and experiences."—Leslie N. Pollard
2. "Black preaching, like black religion, is wholistic. It engages the whole person. The black preacher has to get outside himself, or, in church language, let the Spirit take control. In order for people to judge the preacher's calling to the ministry authentic, at some point in the sermon he has to lose his cool, because he isn't supposed to be in charge anyway."—Earl Miller
3. "Black preachers used to have a formula for delivering a sermon. Start low, go slow, get high, strike fire, retire."—Gardner Taylor

C. **The Songs and worship**

1. Emotional, passionate, rhythmic
2. The "Negro Spiritual"
2. "...Blended voices swelled rich and sad into the soft, depthless evening, singing of heaven and being tired."—William Faulkner, *Sanctuary*

- D. **The Theology:** "The basis of black theology is two-pronged: unabashedly Christocentric in its statement of ultimacy in theology, yet Afrocentric in its preoccupation with making the Gospel relevant to the realities of black people."—William H. Bentley

Luke 24

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Jedus Da Libe Gin

24 ¹ Real aaly een de maanin de fus day ob de week, befo day clean, de ooman dem take de spice wa dey done beena mix op an gone ta Jedus tomb. ² Wen dey git ta de tomb, dey see dat de stone wa done beena kiba de door ta de tomb done been roll baak. ³ So dey gone eenside, bot dey ain't find de Lawd Jedus body. ⁴ Dey da wonda bout wa done hap-pen, wen all ob a sudden, dey see two man come stan op by um. Dem man habe on bright clothes wa da shine. ⁵ De ooman been real scaid, an dey bow dey hed down ta de groun. Bot de man dem tell um say, "Oona ain't oughta look yah mongst de ded people fa a man wa da libe, ainty? ⁶ Jedus ain't yah. E done git op from mongst de ded, an e da libe gin! Oona memba wa e done tell oona wen e been dey wid oona een Galilee.

⁷ E say, 'Dey gwine grab hole ta de

Chapter 24

¹ Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

² And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

³ And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴ And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

⁵ And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

⁶ He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

⁷ Saying, The Son of man must be delivered

De tomb
empty



**De Good Nyews
Bout
Jedus Christ
Wa Luke Write**



The Gospel according to Luke

Personal Resolution on Civil Rights Remembrance

Whereas, last year and this year mark significant anniversaries in the Civil Rights movement: 2014 was the sixtieth anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* and the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Act and Freedom Summer, and 2015 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and the Selma-to-Montgomery March; and

Whereas, many of our conservative Presbyterian churches at the time not only failed to support the Civil Rights movement, but actively worked against racial reconciliation in both church and society; and

Whereas, the 30th General Assembly adopted a resolution on racial reconciliation that confessed its covenantal, generational, heinous sins connected with unbiblical forms of servitude, but failed to deal with the covenantal, generational, heinous sins committed during the much more recent Civil Rights era (cf. Daniel 9:4-11); and

Whereas, the 32nd General Assembly adopted a pastoral letter on “the Gospel and Race” that was produced under the oversight of our Mission to North America committee, but that also failed to acknowledge the lack of solidarity with African Americans which many of our churches displayed during the Civil Rights era; and

Whereas, our denomination’s continued unwillingness to speak truthfully about our failure to seek justice and to love mercy during the Civil Rights era significantly hinders present-day efforts for reconciliation with our African American brothers and sisters; and

Whereas, God has once more given our denomination a gracious providential opportunity to show the beauty, grace and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ by showing Christ-like love and compassion towards the greater African American community;

Be it therefore resolved, that the 43rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America does recognize and confess our church’s covenantal and generational involvement in and complicity with racial injustice inside and outside of our churches during the Civil Rights period; and

Be it further resolved, that this General Assembly recommit ourselves to the task of truth and reconciliation with our African American brothers and sisters for the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel; and

Be it finally resolved, that the General Assembly urges the congregations of the Presbyterian Church in America to confess their own particular sins and failures as may be appropriate and to seek to further truth and reconciliation for the Gospel’s sake within their own local communities.

TE Sean M. Lucas

TE J. Ligon Duncan III