

# Revivalism and American Christianity

**Garrett M. Thomas**

According to Alain Locke, noted author and university professor during the age of the Harlem Renaissance, “The position of the Negro in American culture is indeed a paradox. It almost passes understanding,” Locke says, “how and why a group of people can be socially despised, yet at the same time artistically esteemed and culturally influential, can be both an oppressed minority and a dominant cultural force” (Johnson 30). Nowhere is this paradox more prevalent and perplexing than in the predominance of African and Negro culture during the age of revivalism in the First Great Awakening, 1730 – 1760, and in the Second Great Awakening, 1800 – 1830. Because many people of African descent living on American soil during the 17th and 18th centuries were held in the horrid bondage of slavery; being parceled out as chattel and systematically and brutishly constrained in ignorance, it is quite remarkable that they were able to become a dominating, determining and driving force for the cultural milieu of a nation.

Free Africans and Africans enslaved in America who embraced Christianity were able to bust forth from the chains and shackles that sought to deny their place in humanity and emerge as the major impetus and influence of the spirit of Revivalism in America. It was the contributions of African culture which led directly to the style and the success of the Revivals. There is an old adage which says, “Imitation is the highest form of flattery.” White people in America, who have often verbalized

and actualized a distinct hatred and repulsion to Africans, have emulated and imitated them in every walk of life. The Revivals would never have occurred if white preachers had not copied the style of Black preachers. We can see evidence of such emulation in other aspects of American culture. There would have been no such thing as Rock-n-Roll if white singers and musicians had not copied the style of Black singers and musicians. And certainly, American culture as we know it today would not be what it is without the infusion of African culture.

There are many who claim that African culture did not survive the rigors of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. And when by chance it did, it was wiped out and whipped out by the wicked whip yielded by the slave masters. On the contrary, African culture did not only survive the slave trade, it became a major reason that America became the country it is today and the pre-eminent factor for the fruition of the Revivals and American Christianity. E. Franklin Frazier would totally disagree with my thesis. He said that most of the Africans that were captured were young males, who “are poor bearers of the cultural heritage of a people” (9). After the way in which the captives were held prior to departure, after the way in which they were packed in in-humane conditions on the slave ship, along with the strain of the middle passage, and “finally” after toiling on “the indigo, tobacco, and cotton plantations” of the New World, the process by which the Negro was stripped of his social heritage and thereby, in a sense, dehumanized was completed” (10). According to Frazier, very little of the African’s culture survived to see America and not one shred of it survived to influence America.

Culture, defined as “the quality in a person...that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, etc.,” (reference.com), cannot be whipped out of a person because it derives from an inner quality. Culture can however be changed through in

influx of various influences. When different cultures co-mingle, they become amalgamated and new cultures are born. Many factors go into this acculturation process, according to Melville J. Herskovits, such as “climate and topography; the organization and operation of the plantations; the numerical ratios of Negroes to whites; and the extent to which the contacts between Negroes and whites in a given area took place in a rural or urban setting” (111). All these factors must be considered in understanding the emerging culture. Herskovits explains that the life of a slave who must toil on a southern plantation is different than the life of one who must work in a northern factory. The southern slave had a much easier time adjusting to the climate than a slave in the north. Furthermore, the life of a house slave would be quite unlike that of a slave working the fields on the very same plantation. The Africans were forced to adjust to their new surroundings and imposed new way of life; but the inner quality concerning what was excellent as in regards to arts, manners, knowledge and story-telling that they brought with them from Africa remained. It was, however, touched and changed by their contact with white people and with a new world.

Herskovits says, “Acculturation occurs as a result of contact. It is the continuing nature of the contact and the opportunities for exposure to new modes of life that determine the type and intensity of the syncretisms which constitute the eventual patternings of the resulting cultural orientations” (116). It would be dense and short sighted to imagine that whites were able to yield cultural influence over Africans, but the Africans were unable to reciprocate. Many people fail to realize that there was a time when poor whites labored as slaves right alongside Africans in America; the two invariably mixed cultures. Thandeka says that up until the year 1660, “the majority of workers on the Virginia tobacco plantations were indentured servants” (44), both white and Black. Thandeka explains, “With a dwindling pool of prospects for indentured

servitude, and a decline in mortality from diseases in the colony,” Virginians found it a much more profitable investment to purchase Africans for slaves as opposed to purchasing indentured servants (44). But prior to that, “side by side in the field,” Herskovits says, “the white servant and the slave were engaged in planting, weeding, suckering, or cutting tobacco” (130). They ate together, played together, danced together and lived together. Edmund Morgan says that poor whites and Africans working side by side in the field realized that they were in the same boat, “sharing the same predicament;” it was not uncommon “for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together” and to even “make love together” (Thandeka 44). Certainly there could be no closer physical and cultural contact than the making of love. Suffice it to say there was lots of give and take in the acculturation process between Africans and whites.

Plantations were organized and operated on the basis of a shared leadership. Herskovits says American born slaves were responsible for training newly arriving Africans. They taught them their version of English and taught them how to do the work and survive on the plantation. It is a logical deduction that the teacher and student taught each other. “And the same method,” says Herskovits, “of retransmitting and reinforcing aboriginal customs may well have been in force as regards to such other African cultural elements as dancing and singing and the telling of folk stories” (132). With native born Africans being introduced to the plantation, African Americans there were reminded of African cultural behaviors and language. The two cultures continually merged and created a new African American culture that whites were privy to as they relied on the acculturated slaves to help them organize and operate the plantation by training field slaves and working as house slaves in their own homes.

The house slaves and those who were

given other leadership responsibilities by the masters were called “swonga” (133). Herskovits reports “The ‘swonga’ people were the drivers who took their orders directly from the overseer, the house servants who were intimately associated with the master’s and overseer’s families” and “the mechanics who were permitted to hire their own time from their masters and work in” places like “Beaufort or Charleston.” (133). The Swonga were the slaves who ate high off the hog; they were fully acculturated to slave life; they were safe Negroes, whom the master could trust in his home and trust to teach other slaves right from wrong. Not all Swonga should be considered house niggers or Uncle Toms. Not every one of them loved the masters more than they loved their brothers and sisters who worked the fields, but they knew how to navigate between the two worlds; they were like double agents who knew how, as Paul Laurence Dunbar says, to wear the mask:

We wear the mask that grins and lies; it  
hides our cheeks and shades our eyes. This  
debt we pay to human guile; with torn and  
bleeding hearts we smile, and mouth with  
myriad subtleties. Why should the world  
be over-wise, in counting all our tears and  
sighs? Nay, let them only see us, while we  
wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries to  
thee from tortured souls arise. We sing, but  
oh the clay is vile beneath our feet, and long  
the mile. But let the world dream  
otherwise. We wear the mask!

DuBois says that many Swonga and even Blacks today continue to act as double agents; they have a “Double-Conscious mind in which they have to know when to act white and when to act black” (Historical Collector’s Edition Magazine p. 82). The Swonga knew how to talk in the Big House and they knew how to talk in the field; and they had to use that knowledge in order to survive and in order that certain African

cultural aspects could survive and be disguised and sewn in to the tapestry of the fabric that was woven together to make African American culture. Herskovits says that among the Swonga were the slaves of “superior rank or intelligence” who were the Black leaders on the plantation. They were the “the witch doctors and those who could boast of physical prowess” (133). DuBois says that the witch doctors appeared on the plantations early on in the slave trade. They were the priests, medicine men and judges on the plantation who became the preachers and transformed and adapted their so-called heathenisms to Christianity (216). In order to be witch doctors, they had to have maintained some of their heritage from The Motherland.

The use of the word Swonga is itself proof that some of the African cultural heritage survived the slave trade. Sobel says, Swonga means “African magic or power;” they were men of sacral and political power. They served as “holy men for the Africans and foremen for the whites” (34). Sobel goes on to say that “many other comments about the continued use of African languages can be put together to strengthen the contention that a quasi-African identity was maintained” (34). According to Sobel, vestiges of the existence of African language and culture can be seen in the complaints written to the bishop of London by preachers who complained that they were only able to convert few Africans because of the “variety and strangeness of the languages they spoke” (34).

According to Frazier, not only did the African languages not survive, but not one African word survived slavery (12). Lorenzo D. Turner says that African language and culture survived long enough to form a broken English and create a new African-American culture. He says that in the southern United States, several African words are used like: guba for peanut, Kimbudu for Angola, gombo (Gumbo) for okra, and the verb tote for carry (14). Botume, a white

American northerner, says she found it quite foreign, the dialect and the language of the southern slave, "It was months before I learned their family relations. The term 'bubber' (probably Bubba) "for brother, and 'titty' for sister, with 'nanna' for mother and 'mother' for grandmother, and father for all leaders in church and society, were so generally used, I was forced to believe that they all belonged to one immense family" (Herskovits 184). Africans not only retained some of the words of their language, and the new language they created, but they even taught them to whites as evidenced by names for white men such as, Bubba Watson, Bubba Trammel and Bubba Crosby. The African Nanna was one of the Swonga who worked in the Big House and was referred to by the little white children as Nanny, a name that is still used to refer to maids today. It is obvious that most African Americans have no knowledge of the African languages that were spoken by their ancestors. However, this may be a result of the process of Americanization that has also affected European immigrants who can no longer speak their native languages. Africans retained enough of their cultural heritage to form a new culture that was most influential in the success of the Revivals.

It is quite ironic that the fiercest opponent against the retention of African culture among African Americans was an African American. Reticently, Frazier admitted that a few of the Negro Spirituals "reveal some continuity" with African heritage and culture. He said this could be "found especially in what has been called the Afro-American shout songs" that "are so named because they were sung and are still sung while Negro worshippers are engaged in what might be called a holy dance." Frazier says that this is one of the "most primitive and elemental expressions of religion among American Negroes" (20). He acknowledges that the shout songs are originally and indigenously African. But the language he uses to make that acknowledgement

demonstrates a desire to distance himself, and his people, from Africa; it hints of a shame, a self-hatred for the African blood that runs through his veins and for the Africanisms that were bequeathed to him by his ancestors. Abdul Ibn Alkalimat says, "Frazier was a brother who was strong enough to collect a lot of important data, but who fell victim to theory based on the racist, white liberal ideology" (Teele 64). Cox says that Frazier was mis-educated by his white liberal mentors who could never conceive and would never believe that Blacks could be on par with whites (Teele 65). Woodson says that the "Negro's mind has been all but perfectly enslaved in that he has been trained to think what is desired of him" (17). Frazier was trained to believe that Africa was not a place of a desirable culture or heritage. Therefore, he was quite offended that anyone would claim that African Americans in his day had retained anything that had been handed down to them by their African ancestors. The white European culture was more excellent and dignified, in his mind, so he posited the theory that Negro culture began the instant the African was captured and kidnapped by the white man to be brought to America; it was void of any African influence.

African American culture is distinct from all of the African cultures because it is a combination of those diverse African cultures, mixed with the various European cultures here in America. Woodson also says that some "Negroes accept as a compliment the theory of a complete break with Africa" (Herskovits 31). This is because they do not want to be associated in any way with the Tarzan helping, bone in nose wearing, Black Sambo tiger scaring, no clothes wearing, spear chucking, swinging from trees Africans as negatively portrayed in children's books and American cinema. No other culture is ashamed of its past. Woodson declares, "Whites prate considerably about what they have preserved of the ancient cultures of the 'Teutons' or 'Anglo-Saxons,' emphasizing especially the good and saying nothing about the undesirable

practices” (Herskovits 31). Woodson continues to say that when some African Americans are told that their way of praising and worshipping Christ currently differs from the manner in which those of European descent worship because they have combined what they have learned from the Europeans with African expressions, they deem those expressions primitive, elemental and undesirable (Herskovits 31).

Despite the rejection of Africanisms by certain Negroes, African American culture emerged in the new land, with its African roots, to impact the culture of American Christianity in a major way. Africans contributed to the Revivals elements such as ring dancing, shouting, and a preaching style, which continues to exist today, that white preachers mimicked and adopted to revive the way Christianity was accepted in America. Simmons and Thomas say that “Black preaching impacted” the Great Awakenings and the form of Christianity that was “practiced by whites in the colonies,” it is a fact that is “rarely written about during the colonial era” (24). Many Black preachers in the mid to late 1700s, Simmons and Thomas say, used a style of preaching that “can be referred to as folk preaching,” (22) a pejorative term used to “devalue early, later, and current black preaching, most often by those who do not understand or appreciate its nature. Some Blacks were and are ashamed of it. They associate it with the illiterate, poor, and the overly emotional” (22). Not only were some Blacks ashamed of folk preaching and the African mode of worship, but at the outset, some whites detested it as well. The whites brought formal doctrine and decorum to worship. Blacks brought the enthusiasm of the Holy Spirit.

Jonathan Edwards, according to Lyman Beecher writing in 1829, “single-handedly ignited the colonial awakening, fanned its flames with the assistance of the likes of George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent, and labored – though not always successfully – to prevent it

from raging out of control.” Edwards was considered, “the father of the Great Awakening” (Conforti 45). But Edwards himself was not always a staunch proponent of folk preaching and the loudness and enthusiasm that Africans brought to the Revivals in the First Great Awakening. In fact, Edwards “strove to combat ‘vulgar’ preaching and its attendant religious enthusiasm” which he said “gave an occasion of reproach to adversaries” (Conforti 18). New Divinity preacher Benjamin Trumbull also heaped praise on Edwards saying, unlike the preachers of his own era, Edwards, along with Joseph Bellamy and their protégé’s did not achieve “popularity at the expense of religious decorum and clerical dignity. They were not noisy preachers, but grave, sentimental, searching, and pungent” (Conforti 19). In other words, they taught sound doctrine through their method of formal preaching. They did not encourage folk preaching, loudness in worship or any of the other enthusiasms that Africans brought with them.

Ann Taves reports that in the late 18th century, Black worship services and prayer meetings were known to be “noisier” than white ones and “that Blacks were more likely than whites to shout both at class meetings and at preaching services, and that some whites were offended by the shouting (91). Taves says, that “Methodist reformers opposed to noisy worship attributed these developments to the uneducated and especially to ‘illiterate blacks,’ but recognized (and attempted to counter) its appeal to whites as well” (104). William Colbert, a white preacher who was opposed to slavery and was very attentive to the needs of Blacks, says that the Calvert circuit, where he served as an itinerant preacher, was attended by Blacks and whites. Even though, the congregations in the circuit were both racially mixed, Colbert said, they were segregated in some form or fashion. However, as the Blacks increased in membership, the whites decreased because many of the white congregants were not receptive to

the African style of worship (Taves 91). In spite of a certain amount of resistance to the African influence, the whites who remained could not resist the influence of the Holy Ghost. On one occasion, Colbert says, when the Blacks began shouting, falling and wallowing on the floor, “the power of God was manifest in the house” even “among the white people,” some of whom seemed to sit in staunch opposition to all of the noise and commotion and wanted to get away, but were “prevented by a power that came on” them and took hold of them. One white man was so caught up in the Spirit that he had to grab hold of his friends to keep from falling out. One woman, Colbert identifies as “Captain John Hughs’s wife,” began crying aloud and was slain in the spirit, sprawling out on the floor (Taves 91).

Despite the fact that some white folks initially rejected the elements of African culture that were infused into the Revivals, these aspects proved to be very viable to the success of the revivals and caused a great awakening to the presence and the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, who was not known through the order or decorum of formalistic worship but through an “inward sense and feeling” (Taves 17) of enthusiastic worship. According to Taves “From the mid-seventeenth century at least, a ‘formalist’ was understood as one who had the form of religion without the power, while an ‘enthusiast’ was understood as one who falsely claimed to be inspired” (16). “By the early eighteenth century,” those who were reportedly possessed by the Holy Ghost were considered those of weaker minds (29).

Charles Chauncy, according to Albert J. Raboteau, felt that Christians were negatively being influenced by weak minded (white) women, (white) girls and even Negroes, “Who have taken upon them to do the Business of Preachers (129). When Negroes began doing the business of preachers, the power of God through the Holy Ghost was manifested and made known

to cause a revival in the colonies and American Christianity was forever changed. George Whitfield, according to Chauncy, was guilty of using the weaker, Negro style of preaching to cause many whites to have “a low opinion of studied sermons” (Taves 33). Whitfield even wrote in “such a manner, as to lead people to think, he imagined he was under the immediate, extraordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost” (Taves 33) much like the illiterate Negro slaves who, according to Raboteau, claimed that “God revealed his word to them directly in their hearts” (242). They believed that God’s Word had been implanted in their hearts for them to read there. They professed to recognize certain verses of scripture from visions that they had experienced and they “espoused a doctrine of enthusiasm which stressed direct inspiration from God rather than the revelation contained in the pages of the Bible (242). This Holy Ghost inspired Word fueled the fire with which African American preachers delivered sermons and African American laity praised, worshipped and found sanctification and justification. That same fire was spread to white folks, who got caught up in The Spirit, along with the Blacks, and together they fanned the flames of revivalism that spread throughout the American colonies. Taves says that Richard Sneath indicated that the revivals of 1800 in Philadelphia “began at Zoar, ‘The African Church in the Northern Liberties, tho’ chiefly among the Whites, who crowded the place at almost every meeting.’” Sneath also said that at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was founded by Richard Allen, the white people went and “found the Lord” and brought Him back to St. George Methodist Episcopal Church (97).

Devereux Jarrett, an Anglican priest ordained in 1763, was not in favor of the strong emotionalism brought to the revivals by the Africans at first, but he considered it a very delicate subject that required “much wisdom to allay the wild, and not damp the sacred fire” (368) because “where emotionalism” or

Africanisms “declined, the revival also declined” (367). Jarrett at one time even doubted whether an emotional, enthusiastic revival could prove to be lasting and authentic. On May 3, 1776, Jarrett wrote in his journal of a revival service where fourteen or fifteen “received a sense of pardon” (368); he was withholding judgment until he saw the fruits of repentance. On May 7, 1776, Jarrett reports that over eight days “more than forty have been filled with joy and peace in believing” and he had “no doubt but that the work now carrying on” was genuine. Jarrett had done much work in Virginia and North Carolina with Methodist preachers like Robert Williams, Thomas Rankin and Francis Asbury. In fact, before the Methodists “organized as an independent body in 1784,” Methodism was considered a movement within Anglicanism. This early cooperation between Jarrett and the Methodists reached its climax in 1775-1776; it has been regarded as a ‘Methodist phase’ continuing the Great Awakening in the South” (366). It was during this time where white southern preachers had the opportunity to hear pioneering Black preachers like Harry Hoosier and Henry Evans.

Jarrett and the Methodist preachers, who reported to John Wesley back in England, saw the way in which the people responded to the African American style of preaching, worshipping and praising. Though some rejected it, many were drawn to it and responded in a positive way. This style was good for revival; it was good for drawing crowds to hear The Word of God and it was good for drawing people closer to The Spirit of God. So they adopted it and welcomed Black preachers to travel with them, and the Revivals of The First and The Second Great Awakening were largely successful due, in great part, to the influence of African American culture. Many whites who had initially rejected the African style, when they saw white preachers embracing it and more and more white congregants embracing it, they no longer considered it African; they simply

considered it good, found it more and more appealing and embraced it as the American way to hold revival and have church.

Henry Evans, a free African American preacher, once he was allowed to preach, appealed to Christians of every persuasion and of every race. According to Bishop William Capers, Evans, a shoe maker by trade, was born in Virginia and was licensed to preach at a very young age. He set out to relocate to Charleston, South Carolina but found himself in Fayetteville, North Carolina (Walls 24) during the period of the Methodist Phase, continuing the Great Awakening in the south. He began to preach to slaves and other Negroes there but had to flee to the sand hills because angry white mobs chased him out of town, fearing that such profound and powerful preaching would only serve to lead slaves in insurrection (Walls 24). According to the Evansville Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church website, Evans “was resisted, threatened and persecuted...and was imprisoned at least three times, under accusation of being a runaway slave.” After some time, the fears of the white folks in North Carolina were assuaged, more than likely due to the influence of prominent white preachers of the Methodist and Anglican traditions who embraced Evans and his style, and found him useful to the cause of Revival. Among the prominent white preachers of the Methodist and Anglican traditions at the time were Jarrett, Rankin and Asbury. According to The Timeline of Fayetteville, Evans brought Methodism to Fayetteville in the year 1780 and founded the first Methodist Church there, a racially mixed and culturally diverse congregation with a sizable white membership. Capers reports that when Evans preached, the Blacks were crowded out by the whites who came in droves to hear him (Walls 25). Asbury also came to hear the famous Henry Evans preach and accepted an invitation to preach at Evans’ meeting house in 1806, four years before Evans died at a good old age.

Bishop Asbury and other Methodist preachers were also influenced by the preaching of Harry Hoosier, known as “Black Harry.” Asbury, according to Woodson, once instructed Methodist preachers that “the way to have a very large congregation was to give out that Harry was to preach” (57) because everyone, white and Black, wanted to hear him preach and would pack the house to do so. According to C. Eric Lincoln, it was said that whenever Hoosier and Asbury traveled together, people came out to greet the Bishop and to hear Hoosier deliver The Word. The famous Philadelphian Quaker and humanitarian, Dr. Benjamin Rush called Harry Hoosier, “the greatest orator in America;” and Bishop Coke said that Hoosier was “one of the best preachers in the world...even though he cannot read” (Thomas 24). According to Thomas, Hoosier “had the miraculous ability” to remember large sections of the Bible and to retain sermons that he had heard by white preachers and then reproduce them using his own style that was based on the African style of storytelling that employed the method known as call-and-response that encourages sermon hearers to talk back to the preacher; it is an interactive, participatory style of worship wherein God is praised with a loud, joyful noise as opposed to a quiet, mournful silence. Thomas says, “Hoosier was blessed with a musical voice” (24) which he used to enthusiastically deliver and perform rhythmic sermons that were almost sung.

Taves says, many “white itinerants even learned to use the call-and-response style” which was preferred by their white members (98). Undoubtedly, Evans and Hoosier were not the first African preachers to use this oratorical style that was brought to America by indigenous Africans. History does not record the names of the African men who inspired them and white preachers like George Whitefield and James Davenport, who were known for, as Taves says, “a distinctive preaching style” that was “extemporaneous and musically infected” (85) in

which they loudly and noisily performed their sermons with an “unnatural singing tone” (70). The African preachers who first exhibited this style of preaching did so in what has become known as the invisible church. Evans and Hoosier are just two of the first African preachers to be publicly accepted by influential whites.

Raboteau says, the invisible church or “invisible institution” was the “illicit, or at least informal, prayer meetings on weeknights in the slave cabins” (212); it was the church held by slaves in the woods without the knowledge of the slave masters; like the services held in the Sand Hills of Fayetteville by Evans before he was credentialed and accepted by whites. Thomas says the invisible church was led by “slaves whose prime credentials” were “a ‘call’ from God and whose principle learning was common sense and mother wit” (21). The slave preacher, Thomas says, was endowed with a unique ability to use imagination and tell the story in such a way that the hearers could picture the hand of God at work in their lives, even though they were held in bondage; “the mere originality of their preaching emerged from the ability to adapt experiences to the existing needs and circumstances of the people” (21). The invisible church is where the Negro Spirituals were born; it is where Africans first, freely praised The Lord Jesus Christ with ring dancing, shouting and their own unique style of preaching. The invisible church is where the likes of Harry Hoosier and Henry Evans were born; it is the source that gave expression to the version of African American Christianity that proved to empower the Revivals of the First and Second Great Awakenings.

Revivalism would not have been a success if not for the contributions of Africans. Likewise, Revivalism would not have been a success without influential white preachers embracing, emulating and imitating the Africans and their style. We see evidence of the emulation of African style in other aspects of



American Culture. Rhythm and Blues singers Big Momma Thornton and Little Walter sang and labored in virtual invisibility until songs that they first recorded were covered by Elvis Pressley. According to Elvis Australia, author of an article published on the Elvis Pressley Fan Club Web-page, Elvis' music was originally rejected by white America and deemed "Black Music." Once he found acceptance, Elvis was considered by many to be the King of Rock and Roll. Yet, he had a style that appears to be modeled after the style of Jackie Wilson. According to Chris Oglesby, Rock and Roll was considered "Nigger Music" until Buddy Holly embraced it and began to emulate and imitate the African Americans who first sung it. Holly is now considered by many to be a "Rock and Roll Messiah" (<http://www.virtualubbock.com/stoCOBuddy.html>) and one of the pioneers of Rock and Roll Music along with Jerry Lee Lewis.

Not coincidentally, according to Randall J. Stephens, Elvis and Lewis, and even Tammy Wynette, were members of the Pentecostal Church where they were nurtured and nourished with a diet of African American culture and music. Pentecostalism, says Stephens, was preceded by the Holiness movement and began among the marginalized of society, the poor, the uneducated, the Blacks and the slaves; and "because Holiness people were less bound by prevailing social codes than members of mainline churches, their meetings were frequently racially integrated, wild and loud" (9). Wynette wrote in her auto-biography that the Pentecostal pastor would allow them to "bring in

guitars and play rockin' Gospel more like Black Gospel music" (256). Lewis professed a love for the "lively preaching, fast paced music and the antics of ecstatic worshippers," (256) while Elvis says he "used to go to these religious sing-ins all the time. There were these singers, perfectly fine singers, but nobody responded to 'em. Then there were these other singers – the leader wuz a preacher – and they cut up all over the place, jumpin' on the piano, movin' every which way. The audience liked 'em. I guess I learned from them singers" (257). Elvis learned from "them singers" to sing what was deemed by the White Citizens Councils to be "jungle music, congo music, animalistic" (258). Elvis learned the Jungle Boogie in the Pentecostal Church that came out of the Revivals that was influenced by African Americans.

In closing, the words of Alain Locke are worth repeating here because it boggles the mind and is almost incomprehensible and "almost passes understanding how and why a group of people can be socially despised, yet at the same time artistically esteemed and culturally influential, can be both an oppressed minority and a dominant cultural force" (Johnson 30) in driving and determining the religious movement and the culture of a nation who at one time, and still today in some aspects, pretends to openly despise them, while they secretly love them and emulate them in nearly every aspect of popular culture. African Americans and their culture were the major impetus and influence of the spirit of Revivalism in America, directly leading to the style and the success of the Revivals.

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