



PREACHERS AND CONGREGATIONS

VOLUME 4

1924-1931

document
RECORDS
DOCD-5548

The Complete Recordings of
Sister O. F. Franklin
Brother Fullbosom
Rev. H. C. Gatewood
Bishop Grace From
The Holy Land
Evangelist R. H. Harris
Rev. J. L. Hendrix
Rev. M. H. Hoff
Hooten & Hooten · Cora Hopson



This compilation of preachers and congregations features three female preachers, two sets of sermon parodies, the sole prewar recordings of the charismatic Daddy Grace, and three intensely emotional congregations from different locations. Altogether, they demonstrate the diversity of black folk preaching in the prewar era.

The first female preacher to appear in this series, **SISTER O. F. FRANKLIN** assisted by William Christopher on piano and vocals, is somewhat more effective at preaching than she is at singing, as the shrill introduction to "**The Twenty-Third Psalm**" makes painfully evident. For some unknown reason her two issued titles were recorded about a week apart in the cities of New York and Chicago.

The black preacher was often parodied on the stage of the minstrel show and this comic figure made several cameos on cylinder and disc years before any authentic black sermons were recorded. Caricatures like "Deacon Jones" and "Sister Fullbosom" (the former in "Army Mule In No Man's Land", the later in "The Elder's He's My Man" on two titles by Coley Jones, for example – see DOCD-5161) were religious stereotypes that apparently had a history that pre-dated their appearance on records. A "Brother Fullbosom" figures in Jazz Baby Moore And Company's burlesque sermon "Morning Prayer" (see DOCD-5559), and the name of this folk caricature was appropriated by the "preacher" on Pm 13078.

The independent black label Meritt was operated by the Kansas City, Missouri promoter Winston Holmes, and the label issued seven discs during their three years existence. Some time in 1926, they had a moderate hit with two sermons by Rev. J. C. Burnett on Meritt 2203. When Columbia lured Burnett away from Meritt to fill the void left by their failure to sign Rev. J. M. Gates to an exclusive contract, Meritt apparently looked to **REV. H. C. GATEWOOD** to repeat Burnett's success. Two other masters from this session appear to have been purchased by Paramount and were released on that label and on Herwin. The mention of the "Church of God" in "**The New Birth**" is evidence that the "Faithful Worshippers" of Gatewood's congregation were most likely members of one of the holiness sects.

The legendary charismatic appeal of **BISHOP CHARLES EMMANUEL "DADDY" GRACE** is not manifest on either of his titles released on Pm 12397. Grace was the founder of the United House of Prayer for All People, a sect of the holiness variety which placed considerable emphasis upon the collection of money, primarily for the benefit of Daddy Grace, who died a multi-millionaire in 1960. He and his congregation also recorded an album (Harlequin HQ 702) around 1955 at one of his churches on 125th Street in Harlem.

Black Patti 8013 by "**EVANGELIST R. H. HARRIS** Of The Pentecostal Mission, The Lady

Preacher" seems to have been labelled with an eye toward emphasizing the novelty of a female preacher. Novelty aside, the preaching is rather tepid, and it is not surprising that Evangelist Harris recorded only two sides. Although the standard discography lists guitar accompaniment, it is actually a piano, and Tom Tsotsi speculates that the pianist is Percilla Hill and that Hill and Willie Packard are among the "Pentecostal Sisters". The correct date of the session is March 16, and Willie Packard (who is most likely female), recorded the unissued "Lord Have Mercy" (matrix 12646) on that date with Hill accompanying on piano.

Intense sermonizing and perverid congregation interaction characterize the four titles by **REV. J. L. HENDRIX**. *Blues & Gospel Records 1902-1943* suggests that the "proximity of recording sessions" may indicate a connection between Rev. Hendrix and Rev. A. W. Nix. Rev. Nix did record in Chicago circa October 31, 1930 (matrices C-6468 through C-6471), and again in Chicago on 28 March 1931 (matrices VO-153 through VO-156). Both sessions are within days of Hendrix's second and fourth appearances in the studio.

On "Jesus Is Getting Us Ready For That Great Day" (the introductory song to **REV. M. H. HOLT's** sermon: "**The Beaver**"), the unmistakable voice of the great gospel singer Bessie Johnson is evident. The presence of Lonnie McIntorsh and Will Shade during the Victor field trip to Memphis at which the Holt titles were recorded further supports this contention. Johnson recorded with Elders McIntorsh and Edwards in December 1928 (see DOCD-5072), and was accompanied by Shade in the Memphis Sanctified Singers in October 1929. Holt's "**The Live Cat On The Line**" is a spin-off of the popular "Dead Cat On The Line" sermon (see for example Rev. Gates: DOCD-5469).

EUGENE and **ANNA HOOTEN's** comic sermon skits are redolent of the vaudeville stage. "**Brother Low Down's Prayer**", which repeatedly invokes the "Almighty Dollar", has a similar theme to **BROTHER FULLBOSOM's** "**A Sermon On A Silver Dollar**".

The Paramount label attempts to recreate the atmosphere of the "old brush arbor" camp meetings in the two part "**Ante Bellum Sermon**" by **CORA HOPSON**. I would venture to guess that this is a reminiscence of events described to Hopson by her parents or grandparents, although camp meetings of this day seem to thrive in a contrived time-warped setting.

Acknowledgements: Robert Dixon and John Godrich, *Recording The Blues* (1970). E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church In America* (1963). Paul Oliver, *Songsisters & Saints* (1984). Tom Tsotsi, "Gennett Champion Blues - Part 4", *78 Quarterly* No. 6.

Ken Romanowski, June 1997

SISTER O. F. FRANKLIN

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|---|-------------------|-----|------|
| 1. The Ten Commandments | E-22749-Br 7019 | (A) | 2:32 |
| 2. The Twenty Third Psalm (The Lord Is My Shepherd) | C-8267-Br 7019 | (B) | 2:58 |
| BROTHER FULLBOSOM | | | |
| 3. A Sermon On A Silver Dollar | L-866-1-Pm 13078 | (C) | 2:59 |
| 4. Moses Go Down To Pharnoland | L-867-1-Pm 13078 | (C) | 2:57 |
| REV. H. C. GATEWOOD | | | |
| 5. Regeneration | 507-Meritt 2204 | (D) | 3:17 |
| 6. The New Birth | 508-Her 92010 | (D) | 3:16 |
| 7. The Well Of Salvation | 509-Meritt 2204 | (D) | 3:07 |
| 8. Well Of Salvation | 510-Her 92010 | (D) | 3:27 |
| BISHOP GRACE FROM THE HOLY LAND | | | |
| 9. You May Be Healed | 2731-1-Pm 12397 | (E) | 3:16 |
| 10. Resurrection Of The Friend | 2732-1-Pm 12397 | (E) | 2:58 |
| EVANGELIST R. H. HARRIS | | | |
| 11. Jesus Is Coming Soon | 12644-A-Ge 6148 | (F) | 3:14 |
| 12. Judgement Day | 12645-Ge 6148 | (F) | 3:02 |
| REV. J. L. HENDRIX | | | |
| 13. Mother's Love | C-6410-Vo 1595 | (G) | 2:58 |
| 14. Let Your Light Shine For Jesus | C-6455-Vo 1595 | (H) | 3:06 |
| 15. Father We Need Thee | VO-157-A-Vo 1669 | (I) | 3:04 |
| 16. Have Mercy, Oh Lord | VO-158-A-Vo 1669 | (I) | 3:01 |
| REV. M. H. HOLT | | | |
| 17. The Live Cat On The Line | 62511-1-Vi V38604 | (J) | 2:53 |
| 18. The Beaver | 62512-2-Vi V38604 | (J) | 2:51 |
| HOOTEN AND HOOTEN | | | |
| 19. Brother Low Down's Prayer | 81557-2-Co 14014 | (K) | 2:59 |
| 20. Brother Low Down's Sermon | 81558-2-Co 14014 | (K) | 3:12 |
| CORA HOPSON | | | |
| 21. Ante Bellum Sermon Part I | 2536-1-Pm 12372 | (L) | 2:45 |
| 22. Ante Bellum Sermon Part II | 2537-1-Pm 12372 | (L) | 2:29 |

NOTE: 2 titles by Rev. Hendrix (Christ On His Way/Song Of The Angels, on Br 7217), and 2 titles by Rev. Holt (Funeral Sermon/The Burial Service, on W 23417) remain unlocated. The slip on no. 14 is on the original 78 r.p.m. disc.

PERSONAL:

- A: Sister O. F. Franklin, vcl/speech; assisted by William Christopher, vcl response/pno. _____ New York City, c. 19 April 1927
- B: Sister O. F. Franklin, vcl/speech; acc. unknown, vcl response/pno. _____ Chicago, 27 April 1927
- C: Brother Fullbosom: Sermons with singing, acc. unknown, pno. _____ Graham, Wis., c. April 1931
- D: Rev. H. C. Gatewood (D.D.I.M.B.A.), assisted by the Faithful Worshipers:
 Sermons with singing _____ Kansas City, c. 1927
 Bishop Grace From The Holy Land: Sermons; unacc. _____ prob. New York City, c. October 1926
- F: Evangelist R. H. Harris Of The Pentecostal Mission, and Pentecostal Sisters: R. H. Harris, female vcl on 12/preaching on 11; acc. poss. Percilla Hill, pno, unknown, chimes. _____ Chicago, 16 March 1927
- G: Rev. J. L. Hendrix: Sermons with singing by congregation. _____ Chicago, c. 1 October 1950
- H: same as for G. _____ Chicago, c. 27 October 1950
- I: same as for G. _____ Chicago, c. 31 March 1951
- J: Rev. M. H. Holt And His Congregation: Sermons and singing, with five female (incl. Bessie Johnson) v. three male v. _____ Memphis, Tenn., 26 May 1930
- K: Hooten And Hooten: Eugene Hooten, comic sermons; Anna Hooten, responses;
 acc. R. H. Bowers, org. _____ New York City, 14 February 1924
- L: Cora Hopson, sermons; unacc. _____ Chicago, c. April 1926

Original recordings from the collections of Joe Bussard, Prof. David Evans, Roger Misiewicz, Johnny Path, Ken Romanowski.