

## Performing Pentecostalism: Music, Identity, and the Interplay of Jamaican and African American Styles

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A growing trend in contemporary African American gospel has been the incorporation of West Indian influences in performances and commercial recordings. This trend is not particularly surprising, since for decades, music scholars have recognized the transnational ties between Jamaica and the United States. These ties have had a profound impact on the development of sacred and secular musical practice in both locales. Kenneth Bilby, for example, has noted that a significant amount of Jamaican popular music recorded in the 1970s is imbued with a hymnlike quality that suggests the influence of African American church worship on Jamaican expressive culture.<sup>1</sup> This essay discusses African American gospel artists and their music as a dynamically recontextualized, African diasporic phenomenon and focuses primarily on the reception and appropriation of island-influenced gospel recordings among Jamaican churchgoers at home and abroad. I seek not only to emphasize the transnational flows of gospel music from the United States but also to call attention to the ongoing negotiations of identity that occur as a result of these flows. In ways that are understood to be controversial, young Jamaican Pentecostals often strive to make this music by African American gospel artists their own, even as many religious leaders vehemently protest its perceived negative impact on Jamaican youth and the congregations to which they often belong.

Pentecostalism has been developing steadily in Jamaica since the 1920s, thriving along with belief systems such as Kumina, Revival (or Pocomania), and Rastafarianism. In a Caribbean nation where this brand of Christianity is, according to recent studies, now the professed faith of as much as a quarter of

the population,<sup>2</sup> believers see the music through which they articulate their faith as intimately connected to their religious and cultural identities. African American gospel music coming from the United States plays a complex and at times contradictory role in how Jamaican Pentecostals identify themselves in relation to religious and cultural outsiders. While in Jamaica in 2002 and 2003, I became increasingly fascinated with how Jamaican Pentecostals were appropriating music recorded by African American gospel artists. This music is transmitted to the island when U.S.-based gospel groups tour internationally; through Jamaicans traveling to and from the United States; and, most noticeably, by way of global cable networks, such as Black Entertainment Television, and through Jamaica's gospel radio station, Love 101 FM. Among Jamaican Pentecostals, television has traditionally been deemed an aspect of "worldly" living that is to be avoided as church members seek to lead a sanctified life centered primarily on asceticism and spiritual devotion. Although restrictions on television sets have loosened dramatically (since the turn of the twenty-first century), TVs are still viewed with suspicion by older Pentecostals, and it is only since the mid-1990s that radio has emerged as a significant medium for the transnational spread of North American gospel styles.

I therefore find it remarkable that many Jamaican Protestants and Pentecostals with whom I spoke are now drawn to African American gospel music styles and that they often characterize these styles as "black," though not necessarily "Jamaican." For churchgoers living in the urban areas of Spanish Town and Kingston, African American styles provide a means of expressing a "modern" Pentecostal aesthetic while counteridentifying against the "white" hymnody and "white-sounding" imported gospel music that some Jamaican congregations seem to prefer. "Black" styles are associated mostly with contemporary U.S. gospel artists influenced by rhythm and blues and hip-hop, but also with the traditional "clap-hand" choruses and the ska and dancehall rhythms characteristic of contemporary Jamaican gospel music. Whether they emanate from Jamaican or foreign soil, however, I contend that the use of gospel styles experienced as "black" significantly impacts the experiential framework of church "local" musical-social activity.

Gospel concerts in Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora often feature a variety of styles, including traditional hymns and gospel reggae, as well as music recorded by well-known African American gospel singers such as Yolanda Adams, Kirk Franklin, Donnie McClurkin, and Fred Hammond. These events offer youth an opportunity to enjoy a Christian form of entertainment while

socializing with churchgoers outside of their regular congregations. However, gospel concerts are viewed by many older Pentecostals as a recently acquired trend of which true believers should be wary. Thus, there prevails a certain skepticism with regard to any musical practice that is seen as a departure from established tradition.

A fondness for the Jamaica of yesteryear resonates with the lyrics of songs popular among older Pentecostals, many of whom converted during the 1950s and 1960s. These Pentecostals often talk about the way things “used to be,” back when Jamaica was “such a paradise” and when churchgoers took pleasure in singing classic hymns and Jamaican choruses, many of which are unfamiliar to younger generations. Through verbal testimonies and through hymns with titles such as “The Old Time Religion” and “Old Time Power,” believers retell conversion experiences and express nostalgic sentiments brought on by the historical consciousness of past events, as well as through a “re-membling” process that blends lived experience with the biblical account of the day of Pentecost.

The opposition that some Jamaican preachers express toward African American cultural influence takes the form of a scathing critique of contemporary church practices, which, they contend, have strayed too far from the more “authentic” practices of yesteryear. One of the perceived dangers in moving away from traditional practices is that Jamaican Pentecostal identities will be compromised as so-called worldly influences begin to infiltrate congregations. The “modern” musical activities of many Jamaican churches are deemed inauthentic or “artificial” to the extent that they rely on emotionalism and entertainment rather than on the Holy Spirit for their affective impact. Church leaders often express a desire for a return to old times characterized less by “emotional” musical practices that “tickle the ear” and more by the transforming power of God’s anointing. One preacher’s sermon lamented the many changes that he felt have moved the church away from a genuine experience of the Holy Spirit. “What we need today,” he asserted, “is not more music and emotional singing, but we need the old time anointing.” He added, “This generation has to make so much music because they have to create an artificial joy! In the old times, the people . . . didn’t even have a lot of instruments. But when they sang ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus,’ oh my! I don’t need no organ to help me preach!”

The significant point here is that worldliness and “African Americanness” are conflated, at least implicitly, in the discourses of some Jamaican Pentecostals. Indeed, most of the “changes” mentioned by the preacher are experi-

enced by older Jamaican churchgoers not only as more “modern” and “artificial” but also as evidence of African American influence on traditional Jamaican Pentecostal practices.

The preacher’s reference to the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” provides evidence of a Jamaican preference for the meaningful lyrics of traditional hymns and “sober songs” over the “one-liners” and simpler choruses whose appeal derives more obviously from rhythmic or melodic elements. Although hymn singing is practiced by many African American Pentecostals, it is noticeably more prevalent among Jamaican churchgoers. The emphatic statement “I don’t need no organ to help me preach!” refers to the organist’s practice of interjecting percussive chordal attacks in between a preacher’s words during a sermon. This occurs most often when a preacher switches to a singing or “intoned” style of sermonizing, which is more characteristic of African American preachers than Jamaican ones. The use of the organ to complement or “help” the preacher is not commonly found in Jamaica’s Pentecostal churches, although I did occasionally notice it in urban areas such as Kingston and Montego Bay, where churches often attract preachers visiting from the United States.

For many Jamaican churchgoers, island-influenced gospel music is a means of expressing both religious authenticity and cultural distinctiveness. It can even become a way of musically asserting, “Not only am I a Pentecostal Christian, but I am a *Jamaican* Pentecostal Christian.” This type of assertion is most striking among Jamaican Pentecostals living abroad in places such as New York and London, where religious, cultural, and long-distance national identities become a source of personal strength and a foundation for minority group consciousness.

#### **PERFORMING JAMAICANNESS: DONNIE MCCLURKIN’S CARIBBEAN GOSPEL MEDLEY**

To illustrate the way in which Jamaicans express cultural identities through gospel music, I would like to focus on a gospel performance by African American gospel singer Donnie McClurkin, using his recording *Donnie McClurkin: Live in London and More* (2000) to underscore the relation between religious and cultural identity. The recording, which is available in both audio and video formats, is McClurkin’s second commercial release and was a hit among both African American and Jamaican churchgoers at home and abroad. After the CD was released, McClurkin made his first professional trip to Jamaica, performing

a gospel concert at Church on the Rock, a Pentecostal church in Kingston, in October 2000.<sup>3</sup> Since then, McClurkin's popularity in Jamaica has continued to grow. Throughout much of my field research in 2002, one particular track from the recording, "Caribbean Medley," was played almost daily on Love 101 FM.

McClurkin's performance takes place at London's Fairfield Hall before a predominantly African Caribbean crowd of gospel music enthusiasts. A woman emcee introduces him as "a native New Yorker whose second home is London" and expresses pride in the fact that McClurkin has chosen London as the locale in which to make his live recording. McClurkin and his group perform several selections before launching into a series of traditional Jamaican choruses. As this track on the CD begins, McClurkin introduces the medley and makes a verbal appeal to Jamaicans in the audience.<sup>4</sup>

Well, then, we gon' sing us some Jamaican songs. But if we sing 'em, you gotta get outta those seats. And you gotta dance like you're really from Jamaica, or your parents were from Jamaica, or parents' parents were from Jamaica! But I want you to be true to who you are!

McClurkin humorously exaggerates a Jamaican accent, repeating the word *Jamaica* several times and placing emphasis on the second syllable, which is drawn out and melodized to mimic the vocal inflection of a native patois speaker. He uses the idiomatic expression "parents' parents" in an attempt to draw on colloquialisms familiar to Jamaicans in the audience. McClurkin also calls on his listeners to be true to themselves, suggesting that participation in Jamaican-style gospel music and dance is a way for his listeners to assert and confirm their island identities. As McClurkin speaks, the band begins a reggae-style accompaniment, with characteristic keyboard/guitar offbeats. The first piece of the medley is "I've Got My Mind Up." When the vocal melody begins, the bass guitar and bass drum complete the sonic approximation of classic 1970s reggae accompaniment, characterized by what is sometimes referred to as the "one drop" rhythm, marked by a stress on the second beat of each measure.

The second piece of the medley is "Goodbye, World." The keyboards, drums, and guitar continue the reggae-style accompaniment throughout this piece, as the rhythm of the bass guitar changes somewhat to support the new melody and chord progression. From "Goodbye, World," the group moves into "Born, Born, Born Again," which is one of the oldest and best-recognized choruses in the medley. In the middle section of this piece, McClurkin's voice becomes more forceful, taking on a rougher character as he imitates the

“dub”-style delivery of a contemporary dancehall DJ. He cries, “Born of the water, Spirit an’ de blood. T[h]ank God I’m born again!” which is sung four times against an accompanying backdrop that has shifted into the more percussive and syncopated rhythm also employed in contemporary dancehall performances.

Next, McClurkin’s rhythm section returns to the classic reggae groove that underlies a repetition of the first medley piece, “I’ve Got My Mind Made Up.” The recurrence of this chorus establishes it as the medley’s unifying theme. The reggae groove is maintained as the band segues into “I Am Under the Rock,” followed by the chorus “Jesus Name So Sweet.” At this point, the bass line varies once more, switching to a simple arpeggio pattern that, like the previous “one drop” bass pattern, accents the second beat of each measure in typical reggae fashion.

After repeating the chorus’ initial couplet, the rhythm section replays the syncopated dancehall rhythm while McClurkin delights the crowd by adding the short patois refrain “Every rock me rock upon Jesus, Jesus name so sweet!” This phrase does not translate easily into Standard English. However, Jamaican churchgoers explained to me that the repetition of the word *rock* and the idea of rocking “upon Jesus” suggest the idea of “movement” with Jesus—literally, through holy dancing, and metaphorically, through life’s ups and downs. The chorus thus celebrates the “sweetness” of Jesus, who serves not only as a spiritual dancing partner during collective praise but also as a guide and comforter amid the “rocky” road of everyday life. This idea of movement is underscored by the chorus’ additional patois refrains, which, although not performed by McClurkin, are sometimes sung in Jamaican “country churches.”

*Me slip and me slide and me rock upon Jesus.*

*Jesus name so sweet.*

*Me dilly and me dally and me rock upon Jesus.*

*Jesus name so sweet.*

He concludes the medley by returning to “I’ve Got My Mind Made Up.” However, before the final repetitions of this chorus, the instrumentalists suspend the classic reggae groove as McClurkin tells one of his coperformers, “Okay, Juanita, we sing it like *this*.” He then shifts gears by slowing the tempo and inserting the chorus of the traditional gospel hymn “Oh, I Want to See Him.” During this hymn, the singer reverts to his celebrated R&B-influenced contemporary vocal style, and the rhythm section backs him with a smooth, un-

derstated accompaniment reminiscent of the sound of African American church music. Although McClurkin's prefatory remark, "We sing it like *this*," reveals to the audience his awareness of the cultural difference between himself and the audience, collective participation in the medley ultimately helps to foreground the common spiritual ground between them. By sandwiching this hymn within the medley's reggae choruses, McClurkin thus skillfully appropriates the contrast between Jamaican and African American styles of gospel expression.

Both the audio and video recordings of McClurkin's performance fade out on "Fire, Fall on Me," leaving the listener (or viewer) to imagine the continuing moments of celebratory praise induced by the "Caribbean Medley" and heightened by its final piece. McClurkin eventually introduces the next song with remarks that once again reveal his ability to manipulate cultural musical difference and effectively evoke "place" through musical sound.

Well, that's how you all do it in England and in Jamaica. Now I gotta take you to *my* home. I'm a-show you how we do it in Perfecting Church in Detroit, Michigan, *where the pastor and founder is Marvin L. Winans!*

McClurkin *sings* the last phrase, placing special emphasis on the church's pastor, a renowned contemporary African American gospel singer who later makes a guest appearance during the concert. After the short introduction, the band begins a bass-heavy funk groove, setting the stage for McClurkin's next piece, "Hail, King Jesus." Although McClurkin portrays this piece as emblematic of African American gospel expression, the song's musical style is viewed by more conservative African American Pentecostals as too worldly because of its perceived similarity to secular hip-hop genres. In fact, the musical styles of McClurkin and other African American gospel artists such as Kirk Franklin are often deemed wholly inappropriate for use in a Pentecostal church context. While these styles, sometimes referred to as "hip-hop gospel" or "holy hip-hop," may succeed in expressing an African American cultural identity, they fail to resonate with the religious identities of African American Pentecostals who fear the loss or contamination of the gospel tradition that they experience as vital to their contemporary practice.

I mention the interplay between religious and cultural identities among African Americans because it bears some resemblance to musical negotiations of identity among Jamaican Pentecostals. There is indeed a fascinating tension that arises between the way in which McClurkin employs musical style in his "Caribbean Medley" to signify cultural distinctiveness and the manner in

which many Jamaican churchgoers use it to assert their Pentecostals identities. The Jamaican Pentecostals I interviewed express great pride in their “Jamaicanness.” Moreover, they are adamant in their belief that their Pentecostal faith does not in any way make them “less Jamaican,” even though their standard of holiness prohibits involvement in certain quintessential Jamaican musical genres. Although many Jamaican Pentecostals find the classic reggae style of McClurkin’s medley entertaining in a concert setting or for radio listening, such a style is rarely performed during actual church worship. The same choruses are often sung, but the rhythmic accompaniment does not draw so obviously on a classic 1970s reggae sound, because it evokes images of the contemporary dancehall (where this style is still featured), Bob Marley, ganja smoking, and Rastafarianism.

In Jamaica’s Pentecostal churches, traditional choruses are typically sung at a slightly slower tempo than that employed by McClurkin, albeit with a denser, more quickly moving underlying accompaniment. Pentecostal church musicians sometimes described their style to me as “old R&B” or “ska,” referring to the commercial popular music genre that developed on the island during the late 1950s and 1960s. At Mount Olivet and Riversdale Pentecostal Church, I was often impressed by the ska-like rhythmic accompaniment that characterizes most of the up-tempo singing.

In some cases, Pentecostals take issue with both the musical style and the use of Jamaican patois in a traditional chorus. Although preachers do occasionally switch into patois during sermons, hymns and choruses are nearly always sung in Standard English, which is viewed as the more respectable language within Jamaican society. The tendency to steer clear of Jamaican patois in sung expression may indicate a desire to avoid the social stigma historically attached to Pentecostal musical and bodily expressions. To illustrate this point further, we need only reexamine McClurkin’s performance of “Jesus Name So Sweet.” While most of the Jamaican Pentecostals to whom I spoke are familiar with the patois versions of the chorus, I rarely heard these lyrics during church services. Some pastors to whom I spoke expressed negative views of McClurkin’s medley. For example, one referred to it as “a tacky Jamaican imitation.” Another pastor took issue with the use of the phrase “Every rock me rock upon Jesus.” “It doesn’t mean anything,” she complained in response to my question about the significance of the lyrics. “It’s just some words they throw together!” Among conservative congregations, praise and worship moderators choose lyrics closer to Standard English, such as “Every time I talk about Jesus, Jesus name so sweet,” after which they generally repeat the initial couplet.

Near the conclusion of a service I attended at Mount Olivet, a group of teenagers began singing the chorus as some congregants stood at the altar seeking the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They began with a traditional rendition of the lyrics, but then, feeling uninhibited since the service was nearly over, they switched into patois versions of the chorus. Picking up on this shift and being familiar with McClurkin's recording, the instrumentalists began playing a dancehall reggae accompaniment. By this time, the Spirit infillings and refillings had already taken place, and most congregants were simply "rejoicing in the Lord," enjoying the celebratory aspects of Pentecostal musical praise. However, Pastor Orie, who had been trying for the past ten minutes or so to calm things down and stop the musicians from playing so he could dismiss service with prayer, gestured more urgently for the musicians to stop. "Okay, okay," he admonished, "we're getting carried away. Let's stick to the original. We want the Holy Ghost to always be in control." For Pastor Orie, as well as for many of the congregants, the musical style of the chorus had begun to get too worldly, crossing the boundary of appropriate church music.

#### **FUN IN THE SON: GOSPEL REGGAE, CONCERTS, AND POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT**

In February 2002, when I arrived on Jamaica's north coast to begin my fieldwork, I quickly gained a sense of the popularity of discourses concerning worldly and holy expressive behavior. In the local paper *The Western Mirror*, an article announcing the opening of a new adult nightclub called "Pleasure Dome" was placed adjacent to a poem entitled "Christianity versus Heathenism," which called for the espousal of a holier, more biblically based lifestyle among Jamaica's citizens. The journalistic juxtaposition of these two pieces indexed for me a moral dichotomy that is particularly discernible among the island's evangelical Christians and also present within the broader Jamaican society.

What reinforced my sense of the pervasiveness of this dichotomy between the church and the world was that Jamaica's tourist sectors were in the process of gearing up for the annual return of "Spring Breakers," many of whom would be college students from the United States. According to the *Jamaica Gleaner*, "the spring break season usually lasts for six weeks beginning in mid-February and attracts more than 50,000 college students annually."<sup>5</sup> Each year, this contingent of party-hungry foreigners faithfully descends on Jamaican resorts in and around Negril, Montego Bay, and Ocho Rios, where all-inclusive resorts,

such as Sandals, Breezes, Club Ambiance, and Hedonism, cater to pleasure-seeking young adults who crave fun and romance in an “exotic” locale. While local news reports highlighted the positive impact of tourism on the Jamaican economy, commentators expressed concerns felt by many Christians that the tourists were having a negative moral impact on Jamaican society. Another article in the *Gleaner* commented on the history of “lewd and excessive conduct” among visiting Spring Breakers who reportedly “stripped naked and used their tongues to clean whip cream [*sic*] from each other’s bodies, while a large crowd cheered them on at a popular establishment in Montego Bay.”<sup>6</sup> Following a great deal of public complaint, the Jamaica Tourist Board and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association issued a code of conduct discouraging sexually explicit acts among patrons and threatening to take severe actions against establishments that allowed them.

By March 2002, the Jamaica Tourist Board launched the country’s first gospel spring festival, entitled “Fun in the Son.” This three-week festival is extremely popular among young Jamaican Pentecostals. For foreign tourists, it offers a spiritually acceptable alternative to the rowdy party scene usually associated with Spring Break. “Fun in the Son” features Jamaican gospel artists such as Carlene Davis, Papa San, Stitchie, Grace Thrillers, Prodigal Son, and Robert and Genieve Bailey, as well as internationally known African American gospel performers such as Hezekiah Walker and Ron Kenoly. The festival provides a charismatic Christian dancehall space in which participants enjoy intense bodily participation—jumping and waving their arms to the sounds of gospel reggae. However, for some conservative Pentecostals, “Fun in the Son” overemphasizes the celebratory aspects of musical praise, “tickling the ears” of participants but failing to minister to their spiritual needs. It is wrong, they say, to engage in musical practices that so closely resemble those of the secular dancehall.

The music of secular dancehall artists such as Beenie Man, Bounty Killer, Lady Saw, and Buju Banton is considered too worldly for inclusion in either worship services or gospel concerts. However, since the mid-1990s, a number of dancehall artists have converted to Christianity and begun recording gospel reggae songs featuring dancehall rhythms set to Christian lyrics. Gospel reggae artists such as Stitchie, Papa San, and Judy Mowatt have renewed their images and reestablished themselves as legitimate gospel artists. However, as Stolzoff notes, some critics question the sincerity of these conversions and suspect that they constitute nothing more than “a savvy marketing ploy to capture the untapped demand for dancehall music among Christian teenagers whose parents forbid them to listen to mainstream dancehall music.”<sup>7</sup> Beenie Man’s parodic

rendition of “Gospel Time,” conspicuously positioned as the first track on his CD, no doubt represents both a marketing strategy and also a tongue-in-cheek response to dancehall artists who, unlike him, claim to have converted.<sup>8</sup>

Some Pentecostals to whom I spoke feel that certain musical styles, especially gospel reggae, are simply too worldly and therefore unacceptable irrespective of the contextual frame in which they are performed. Most Pentecostal pastors simply view gospel reggae as too stylistically distant from the hymns and choruses of the Pentecostal tradition to be used in the worship service. Cheryl, age thirty-two, serves as youth president in her organization. When I asked her about the styles she felt were appropriate in her church, located near Montego Bay, she replied,

Churches use different styles. For example, we use a lot of *hymns* for congregational singing . . . It's my personal conviction. There are a lot of different styles churches use. It really depends on the focus you want to get. Reggae doesn't fit. It crosses the line for me.

Nonetheless, some Pentecostals deem gospel reggae appropriate within a festival or concert frame because it helps to attract young people and keep them in the church.

Most Jamaican Pentecostal pastors I have encountered teach against wearing makeup, jewelry, chemically straightened hair, and pants, establishing a set of prohibitions that have to do mostly with the comportment of women and girls. African Caribbean Pentecostal women differ from their African American counterparts in that the latter are much more likely to have straightened hair. Beyond that, there is a great deal of variation in the degree to which Pentecostal congregations adhere to specific rules concerning dress.

Among the saints, there is often considerable debate regarding the necessity of women abstaining from wearing pants, cosmetics, and jewelry. Although Pentecostal organizations sometimes exert influence over the way in which “holiness” is interpreted, it is typically the pastor who establishes the dress code for his or her congregation. Liberal-minded Pentecostals sometimes view the dress code as old-fashioned, too rigid, legalistic, and lacking a sound biblical basis. They argue that the code is overly dependent on “man-made” traditions and has become an unnecessary hindrance to the growth of Pentecostal churches. More conservative Pentecostals cite biblical mandates to “lift up a standard” (Isaiah 59:19, 62:10), stressing that while holiness is a matter of one's heart and not defined by dress, it should manifest itself through one's daily

comportment, including outward appearance. Moreover, it is largely through the dress code that Pentecostals seek to distinguish themselves from the world of popular culture. Preachers often lament the fact that some saints are too eager to adopt fashionable practices, many of which stem from the United States. Thus, for many African Caribbean Pentecostals, upholding the standard involves preserving one's island identity and maintaining a critical distance from things negatively associated with the United States.

Some women have told me that they follow a stringent dress code purely out of obedience to their pastor. Others adopt the holiness standard wholeheartedly, particularly when they view immodest apparel as an unwanted reminder of their preconversion lifestyle. I have spoken to several Pentecostal women who adhere to the dress code because they feel a need to maintain the Pentecostal tradition handed down to them by their mothers and grandmothers. For these women, the standard of holiness is a sacrifice to God that they view as a sign of virtue and humility.

Given the fact that dress codes seem more prohibitive for women than for men, I asked Sister Wright whether she felt holiness standards make it harder for girls than boys to stay committed to the church. "No, it's the same," she insisted, "because boys have more peer pressure to get sexually involved." One of the reasons women strongly outnumber men in most Pentecostal churches may be that secular symbols of womanhood do not clash as harshly with Pentecostal holiness standards as do symbols of masculinity, which include alcoholic drinking, gambling, and sex outside of marriage. As Austin-Broos notes, "The moral signs indicative of being a clean vessel . . . bear on why [Pentecostal] practitioners are more often women than men."<sup>9</sup>

The disproportionately large number of males in church leadership roles no doubt reflects a long-standing gender bias in the broader society. However, as Austin-Broos suggests, the "assertion of a patriarchal status [through a leadership role] mitigates the inevitable denial of [other] signs of masculinity."<sup>10</sup> I would add that musical participation, particularly instrumental performance, is also a highly significant way through which Pentecostal men derive a sense of empowerment, a vehicle for self-expression, and a vital means of male bonding within an overwhelmingly female socioreligious context.

Sister Wright also spoke to me about the temptations of "worldly music," which she defined as "the reggae beat." She explained, "Sometimes you hear it [on a sound system] and you want to start moving [imitates secular dance moves]. And the children have it hard because the bus driver and the car driver could play music loud, and you can't ask them to turn it down!" When I asked

Sister Wright about the kinds of gospel music she dislikes, she responded, “Calypso . . . I don’t like the calypso.” By this, she referred to the genre known as “gospel reggae,” which is enormously popular among young Pentecostals but often critiqued by elders because of its dancehall-influenced characteristics.

I had the opportunity to speak with Pastor Orié on several occasions during my three-month stay in Liliput. I was most struck by his commitment to the hard work of evangelism. “I never wanted to pastor,” he admitted during one interview. “The most important thing is for people outside the church to get saved. We spend too much time sitting down *inside* the church.” Noticing that there were no Pentecostal churches in Liliput, he originally came to the area with the hope simply to reach lost souls by teaching and preaching the Word of God. During one early-morning prayer meeting in 1998, when a lady was filled with the Holy Spirit, Pastor Orié became inspired to continue his work. The church land was donated by a man who lived nearby in a small, one-room house. “I feel God sent you here,” the man had said, “so I’m gonna give you this land.” Pastor Orié concluded that it was God’s will for Mount Olivet to be established in its current locale. The biggest source of frustration for Pastor Orié is that he lacks the money to “go out” and preach like he wants. “There are a lot of areas,” he insisted, “that need to hear the gospel.” Therefore, he prays for the means to purchase a truck so that he can carry the Christian message to more people.

Although Mount Olivet is considered a mainstream church because of its nominal affiliation with the United Pentecostal Church (UPC), this U.S.-based organization does not extend to Pastor Orié any financial support. In fact, Mount Olivet was built using money mostly from his own pockets. “The saints here don’t have much,” he explained. He noted that the UPC churches in Jamaica are “not that well organized,” particularly in terms of actively maintaining ties to sister churches in Jamaica and to the international headquarters in the United States. Consequently, the construction of new churches, such as Mount Olivet, is often undertaken without organizational oversight and sometimes lacks even local support from other churches on the island.

The Jamaican UPC churches meet twice a year, during February and August. Pastor Orié dreams of someday attending an international UPC convention in the United States and hopes that his ministry might receive a financial boost through organizational channels. Despite serious difficulties, Pastor Orié expressed his plans to continue expanding his work in Jamaica by building a new edifice in the upcoming months. “We have to go out and claim the land,” he often preaches, referring to the Old Testament Israelites’ mission to occupy

enemy territories.<sup>11</sup> “We have a lot of work that need to be done, just like in America.”

### Notes

1. Bilby, “Jamaica,” 170.
2. Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*.
3. *Jamaica Gleaner*, October 23, 2000, <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20001023/star/star1.html>
4. The video version of the concert shows McClurkin first asking for applause from various African and African Caribbean ethnicities. He solicits responses from Barbadians, Trinidadians, and St. Lucians before finally asking the Jamaicans in the audience, whom he apparently knows to be in the majority, to show themselves by applauding. After their enthusiastic response, McClurkin proceeds to introduce the medley of “Jamaican songs.”
5. *Jamaica Gleaner*, March 21, 2003.
6. *Jamaica Gleaner*, March 21, 2002.
7. Stolzoff, *Wake the Town*, 268 n. 4.
8. This kind of intertextual dialogue across the sacred-secular divide goes in both directions, as gospel reggae artists sometimes mention secular dancehall DJs on recordings and in live performances. I see the musically embedded conversations that take place among Jamaican singers as a kind of signifying practice common throughout the African diaspora. See Gates, *Signifying Monkey*.
9. Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 123.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Num. 13:26–30; Josh. 1:1–11.

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