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Fannie Lou Hamer: Smiling at Satan's Rage

Fannie Lou Hamer had no formal education past grade six, and yet she arrived on the scene of the Civil Rights Movement in 1962 with a robust theology. This theology motivated her to join the movement, catapulted her to national stardom—inspiring adoration and condemnation—and sustained her in the face of brutality and defeat. Honed by family wisdom, church services, bible study, and negro spirituals, Hamer's theology was far from simply black and white.[1] Rather, her theology—by which is meant her understanding and expression of who God is and how God works in the world—syncretized seemingly contradictory notions of defeat and victory, pain and joy, death and rebirth. Through that theology, she transcended the strictures of orthodox timekeeping to bring together competing realities in singular moments, refusing traditional dichotomies.

As one might expect from a former sharecropper and front-line civil rights warrior, Hamer did not write down her theology in any systematic way. In fact, she never *wrote* more than a short speech in her lifetime. She did however leave behind a wealth of interviews, testimonies, speeches, and perhaps most importantly, recorded spirituals. Her singing voice rallied crowds, filled churches, soothed mourners, and inspired young activists to risk their lives fighting for the cause of equal rights in America. Her voice captured the emotion and struggle of the cultural moment and expressed universal truths that transcended it. Harry Belafonte said that in her "voice he could hear the struggle of all black America…. When she sang there was indeed a voice raised that was, without compromise, the voice of all of us."[2] Given the centrality of Hamer's singing to her life and activism, these spirituals will be treated as the building blocks of her theology—understood as being both formative to and expressive of her conception of God

in the world. This treatment builds on the intuition of theologian Charles Marsh, who described Hamer's voice as the unique mechanism through which her theology, a "synthetic ingenuity born of experience," reached the world.[3] This study of her songs will be supplemented and deepened with sermons and interviews to offer a fuller picture of this dynamic and complex theology that has not been well examined.

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to demonstrate that, alongside the likes of pastor-activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and nun-activists such as Sister Helen Prejean, Fannie Lou Hamer is fundamentally a religious figure, and specifically a Christian figure, not simply a daring civil rights activist. We cannot fully appreciate Fannie Lou Hamer without understanding her religiosity, and her songs give us a special lens to do so. Moreover, building on the choice of Barbara Holmes to raise Hamer up as a "contemplative exemplar," this study will argue that Hamer's unique syncretic theology and spiritual expression demand that she be placed among the revered ranks of the great contemplatives and mystics of Christian history.[4]

We begin this study in an unexpected place: fourteenth-century England. To frame the remarkable nature of Hamer's theology, it is worth examining another barrier-breaking woman who was also an unschooled commoner pushed aside by the power structure of her day and plagued by the collective tragedy of her people: Julian of Norwich. When Julian was eight years old, a wave of the Black Plague swept through her town of Norwich and killed more than a third of the population, as it did across large stretches of the country and nearby Europe. Thus, sorrow and death were omnipresent in the collective consciousness. Medieval Norwich was also a highly restrictive society, where a woman who spoke only the vernacular English (Latin was the language of the religious elite, and French was the language of the political elite) occupied the

bottom of the social ladder. Amidst tragedy and crisis—which not only killed people in droves but also rattled the social, political, and religious power structures—the powers of the church and state (between which there was little distinction) took the opportunity to restrict society even more. Crimes such as the writing of theology in vernacular English or adherence to heretical views became beheadable offenses.[5]

What a wonder it was then when a local woman experienced a mystical vision on what was thought to be her deathbed and then transformed the experience into one of the most acclaimed works of mystical theology in Christian history, *Revelations of Divine Love.* In doing so, she also became the first recorded woman to publish a book in the English language.

So, why does this matter for understanding Fannie Lou Hamer seven centuries later? For one, Hamer's and Julian's lives and achievements are not so dissimilar. As is true of Julian, Hamer occupied the bottom rung of the societal ladder as a black female sharecropper in mid-twentieth-century Mississippi. Like Julian of Norwich, Hamer also used her voice to confront evil and transform hearts when the existing structures of power said that her voice, and those of her people, did not matter. And finally, both women laughed at the devil.

Hamer often ended her speeches with a line from a favorite spiritual of her mother's: "Should earth against my soul engage, and fiery darts be hurled, but when I can smile at Satan's rage and face this frowning world."[6] The syntax here can be confusing, but the original Isaac Watts hymn from which this line is drawn reads more simply: "Should earth against my soul engage, and fiery darts be hurled, *then* I can smile at Satan's rage and face this frowning world." We can reasonably assume that Hamer's version holds the same meaning despite the shift in the

conjunction. This capacity and urge to smile at the devil, to laugh in the face of evil, as a way of facing the pain and terror of the world is a hallmark of Fannie Lou Hamer.

As dark as it may have been at times, Hamer used humor as a powerful subversive tool. She did not simply sing about humor. She made people laugh when she spoke too, dappling her speeches with her humor and wit. Some of Hamer's funniest moments come when recounting stories of her subversive antics within the white houses where she worked, particularly when speaking to black audiences:

> I used to have a real ball knowing they didn't want me in their tub and just relaxing in that bubble bath. Then I would fill up with everything they put on them and walk out and they couldn't smell mine because they had the same thing on them. So when they was saying that I couldn't eat with them, it would tickle me because I would say to myself, "Baby, I eat first!"….if they had a dance in fifty miles, I wore the best dress because I wore their clothes. You know—we had—I was rebelling in the only way that I could rebel.[7]

According to the editors of her collected speeches, Megan P. Brooks and Davis W. Houck, "this defiant act elicited wild applause from her listeners."[8] Hamer's stories were an effective rhetorical device both for articulating the painful absurdity of white supremacy and for connecting with her audiences as an authentic fellow sufferer under its brutal rule. Yet, when joined with her beloved spiritual's call "to smile at Satan's rage and face this frowning world," these antics become something more than a rhetorical device. Hamer practiced laughter and glee in the face of the

devil as a defensive tactic against evil, and more importantly, as a statement of hope and faith. She saw through the emptiness and absurdity of white supremacy, at times to the point of sympathy, and ultimately found joy, however limited, in its subversion.

Julian of Norwich similarly felt the call to amusement at the expense of the devil during her revelations:

> I also saw our Lord scorn [the Devil's] wickedness and set him at nought, and he wants us to do the same. At this revelation I laughed heartily and that made those who were around me laugh, too, and their laughter pleased me. I wished that my fellow Christians had seen what I saw, and then they would all have laughed at me. But I did not see Christ laughing. Nevertheless, it pleases him that we should laugh to cheer ourselves, and rejoice because the Fiend has been conquered.

The imagery of laughing at the devil is striking in its own right. We run from the devil, fight the devil, fear the devil, but rarely do we laugh at the devil. What makes Julian's image even more powerful is where it is situated within her revelations. It is not set amidst the resurrection, where one might imagine the triumphant moment to occur, but rather during the passion while "Jesus is 'bleeding abundantly, hot and fresh and vividly.'"[9] For Julian, the reason for this is clear: "with his Passion he defeats the devil."[10] Thus, she asserts that victory exists amidst the pain, suffering, and bloodiness of the cross.

There is an obvious risk in reading Julian, as many have, as preaching an apolitical, passive nonresistance that glorifies suffering and makes promises for the next life. Her most

famous line— "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well"— has often been interpreted as some combination of a surrender to the trials of this life and a blind faith in the afterlife. Yet, Amy Laura Hall makes a compelling argument for a deeper reading:

> I have come to hear Julian's laughter as a call to holy audacity. She received her delight and defiant laugh while incapacitated with what could have been yet another recurrence of the Great Plague that had devastated England in her childhood. There was ample evidence of evil in her time…. Julian received the courage to resist, to defy, and to laugh.[11]

The simple act of writing as a woman in the English language was a dangerous act of resistance at the time. Sharing revelations with bold theological claims about the abundance of God's love for all and claiming a personal relationship with Jesus was even more so. In the strictly structured state and church of fourteenth-century England, Julian was risking her head, literally, to express herself—quite the opposite of passive nonresistance. Moreover, her writing is even more radical and disruptive than it might appear at first sight. Hall argues that "Her visions do not deny justice. Her visions redirect us away from a cycle of reinforced order that depends on divine anger and a threat of retribution." [12] Only when we can recognize that the "fiend has been conquered" by Christ on the cross can this old order of anger and retribution be overcome.

Hamer similarly uses the cross as a central symbol in her theology. We hear an example of this in the lyrics of "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?" which appears in both her speaking and singing: "There's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me. This consecrated cross I'll

bear, till death shall set me free."[13] The cross carries a dual purpose, both consecrating and burdening the carrier who chooses to "bear" it, just as the cross is the place of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The symbol expresses both burden and holiness at the same time, while locating the singer in the experience of the cross. Howard Thurman, in his seminal work on Negro spirituals, *Deep River,* illuminates this dynamic: "In the spirituals the death of Jesus took on a deep and personal poignancy. It was not merely the death of a man or a God, but there was in it a quality of identification of experience that continues to burn its way deep into the heart even of the most unemotional." The cross, for both Julian and Hamer, was a central symbol of their syncretic theologies—unifying seeming contradictions—by acting as a bridge between Jesus' experience of the cross and the present-day hearts they sought to reach.

Still, where Julian's rejection of injustice is implicit in her writing and her consoling words must be rescued from misunderstanding by trained theologians, Hamer explicitly rejected passive acceptance of the status quo and glib guarantees that in heaven "all will be well." Hamer often warned against what she saw as the common misreading of the Bible that counseled the acceptance of suffering for the good of what is to come, particularly coming from black preachers, whom she castigated constantly:

> I'm sick and tired of seeing these cats telling me that I should expect milk and honey— I can't drink sweet milk, and I don't eat honey—when I get to the other side, and him riding in a good car. This ain't going to work no more, honey. You know, and I'm tired of being fed, "He said, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"[14]

Like Julian, for Hamer laughing at the devil had nothing to do with acceptance of the status quo or delayed gratification. It had everything to with conquering and transcending the status quo in the present. Therefore, the cross can be understood not merely as a promise for what will come after one's physical death. Instead, it is an urgent symbol that calls for the transformation of the order of the day. The cross can hold both, as Hall describes it, "the bloody truth of sin" and the "bloody truth of God's abundance."[15] Here lies the brilliance of both Hamer and Julian, calling forth the fullest meaning of the ultimate paradox in Christianity: the depravity and glory of the cross.

Where Julian and Hamer appear to diverge is in their understanding of God's justice and in their propensity to condemn others. Julian famously declared that there is no anger in God: "It is the greatest impossibility conceivable that God should be angry."[16] She believed that where it is "proper for man to accuse himself…it is proper for God in his natural goodness kindly to excuse man."[17]

Hamer saw justice differently. One of the songs her mother would sing when "looking for something better" while working long days in the cotton fields was "I'm Gonna Land on the Shore."[18] Between the three verses and the chorus, we hear paradoxical perspectives.[19] First, the chorus:

I'm gonna land on the shore,
I'm gonna land on the shore,
I'm gonna land on the shore,
Where I'll rest for ever more.

Here, Hamer's voice exclaims a confidence in the rest and consolation to come when the "shore" is reached. Thurman explicates the common image of the river reaching in Negro spirituals. He argues that the river's "restless movement" can be understood as a "barrier to freedom."[20] Successfully crossing the river to find rest has a dual meaning, especially for the slaves who would have sung this song before Hamer and her mother did: freedom from enslavement by crossing a river into northern states or Canada, and freedom from the hardships of this life through dying and going to heaven. In this chorus, Hamer declares a trust and faith in her own salvation.

Moving ahead to the second verse, we hear:

I would not be a white man,
White as the dripping of snow,
They ain't got God in their
heart, To hell they sure must go.

Hamer remains confident, but now it is a confidence in the condemnation of her oppressor, "the white man." Her own salvation in the chorus is juxtaposed with his condemnation. Surely this condemnation is not hard to come by for Hamer or many oppressed blacks in the south, having suffered for generations as slaves and then under Jim Crow.

Finally, Hamer returns to referencing herself:

I would not be a sinner,

I tell you the reason why,

I'm afraid my Lawd may call me,

And I wouldn't be ready to die.

She has returned the spotlight to herself, but her confidence has been replaced by doubt and fear. Hamer expresses fear of becoming a sinner and yet remains confident in the condemnation that sinners, like the white men, will receive. Sinners will not be ready to die unless they repent. Hamer does not want to fall into the category of sinner because, in the context of the previous verse, we can assume that "to hell they sure must go."

This willingness to condemn in prophetic fashion shows up in Hamer's speeches as well. In her oft repeated telling of her Winona jail experience, Hamer tells the story of her interaction with the jailor differently at different times. Her fall 1963 Greenwood, Mississippi rally speech contains her more condemnatory version: "I told the policeman, I said, 'It's going to be miserable when you have to face God….Because one day you going to pay for the things you have done.'"[21] Hamer's God was that of Proverbs 27, which she also quotes in the speech: "Who so diggeth a pit shall fall down into it."[22] As far she is concerned, the white man "didn't know, when they was digging pits for us, they had some pits dug for themselves."[23] That was divine justice. According to Brooks, Hamer's abiding sense of divine justice stemmed naturally from a childhood spent in Baptist bible study and enveloped in her mother's wisdom, which was often communicated through song.[24]

Hamer's condemnatory repertoire was not limited to this speech or to Proverbs; across her time in public leadership, she also called on Psalms 37 ("evildoers … shall be cut down like

grass")[25] and Galatians 6:7 ("For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap")[26] to make her point. Hamer dexterously utilized various scriptures to meet her needs, and she demonstrated a mastery of the jeremiadic prophetic register to call forth divine justice on the enemy of the chosen people.[27]

Her willingness to condemn was not only reserved for white people though. In Greenwood, she boldly condemned her own people, including herself, for failing to resist oppression: "we only been getting by, by paying our way to hell." She held a special place of disgust for black preachers and black churches whom she saw as impeding progress, particularly those who refused entry to activists and who preached acceptance rather than resistance: "Now you can't tell me you trust God and come out to a church every Sunday with a bunch of stupid hats on seeing what the other one have on and paying the preacher's way to hell and yours too."[28] She did not spare her own people any more than she spared the "white man."

In the context of Christian leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, this willingness to condemn set Hamer apart. For example, where Martin Luther King, Jr. made clear that white folks were not the enemy and never dared condemn white people to hell, Hamer had no such qualms. Where King strongly warned white and black church moderates, Hamer brought down the lightning rod of an angry God with all the skills of a Baptist preacher inhabiting an Old Testament prophet.

How then are we to square this Hamer with the same woman who championed interracialism in the face of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) demise? Or the woman who regularly called on Acts 17:26: '[He] has made of one blood all nations, for to dwell on the face of the earth"?[29] Or the woman who made this declaration of collective work?

> I'm not just fighting for myself and for the black race, but I'm fighting for the white; I'm fighting for the Indians; I'm fighting for the Mexicans; I'm fighting for the Chinese; I'm fighting for anybody because as long as they are human beings, they need freedom. And the only thing we can do, women and men, whether you white or black, is to work together.[30]

It is here in the juxtaposition between these two Hamers, which may appear to be in tension with each other, where we witness the brilliance of her theology. Hamer shows her capacity to reckon with the ugly reality of separation and sin at the same time that she celebrates the glorious reality of unity and salvation. There is no better symbol for this vibrant tension than the cross. Hamer has as little hesitation in proclaiming its awful nature as she has for proclaiming its salvific glory.

To further understand the symbolic power of the cross for both Fannie Lou Hamer and Julian of Norwich, the central image of blood must be studied. Hamer shared these lyrics at the end of her 1968 speech in Kentucky to a mostly white audience. She said, "let's each of us ask ourselves a question tonight:

> Must I be carried to the sky
> On flowery beds of ease,
> While others fight to win the prize
> And sail through bloody seas?

It is no wonder Hamer chose these lyrics for her mostly white audience, demonstrating her well-honed preacherly capacity to improvise her speeches to meet her listeners' needs.[31] She sought to rouse white people from their "flowery beds of ease" and join their brethren's "fight to win the prize" on the "bloody seas." Explicitly, she calls her audience's attention to the bloody battle being waged by black people in pursuit of justice. She also indicts the ease-filled lives of audience members. Implicitly, she makes a different claim about blood—namely, that either black or white, they are all one people. If they were not, then there would be no inherent problem with some suffering while others experience ease. The underlying claim is that such separation is unacceptable.

Hamer was fond of quoting the above passage from the Acts of the Apostles regarding a nation of "one blood." Sometimes, she would quote the passage explicitly, and other times she would incorporate the notion of shared blood into her speaking, as she did in her 1971 speech to the National Women's Political Caucus: "A white mother is no different from a black mother. The only thing is they haven't had as many problems. But we cry the same tears and under the skin it's the same kind of red blood."[32] Blood is the connective substance that binds all of humankind together. In a world where violence and oppression are allowed to persist, this oneness is the greater reality that is violated. The reality of violence and the reality of oneness are dueling realities.

Julian of Norwich also uses the image of blood repeatedly; her images are gory and blood soaked beyond anything Hamer approaches. The first image in Julian's revelations describes blood flowing from Jesus' crown of thorns. Then, he is crucified, and, as quoted above, Jesus bleeds "abundantly." Next, he is bled dry. Finally, blood flows profusely from his side.[33] Blood

rushes plentifully through many of Julian's visions, all communicating the undeniable pain and suffering of Jesus in the passion. Yet, surprisingly and similarly, she finds solace and safety in the blood:

> The beauty and vividness of the blood are like nothing but itself. It is as plentiful as the drops of water which fall from the eaves after a heavy shower of rain, drops which fall so thickly that no human mind can number them…. And this was what gave me most happiness and the strongest sense of spiritual safety.[34]

For Julian, blood is indicative of the pain of Jesus and of humankind, but it is also indicative of collective atonement, or "oneing" as she called it. She saw this union made possible through suffering: "Here I saw a great union between Christ and us; for when he was in pain, we were in pain."[35] She also saw this union as wholly comforting. As Hall explains, "Julian writes with an attention to our being kinned, stitched together with God's blood-red thread." The same could certainly be said of Hamer.

Hamer spoke and sang with similar attention to the oneness of humanity, and the capacity of blood, in the image of Jesus and in each person's veins, to unite humankind. Echoing the message of the song "Must I be carried…," she calls forth a shared human destiny and kinship in a speech to a mostly white audience in Madison, Wisconsin in 1971: "When [Andy Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney] died there they didn't just die for me, but they died for you because your freedom is shackled in chains to mine. And until I am free, you are not free either." Just as the cross holds the reality of oppression along with the reality of new life in

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, blood holds a similar tension as it connotes the reality of woundedness and pain along with the reality of kinship between God and humankind.

Hall describes this latter understanding of reality as "holy consanguinity." This phrase brilliantly captures the image of blood, the perspective of hope and confidence, the unity of humankind and God, and the sanctity of the relationship. Blood is the evidence of trauma that must be heeded—as in Hamer's stories of Winona Jail—and blood is the victorious "antidote" that overcomes all separation from God and each other.[36]

What makes these synthetic visions of the cross and of blood, for Hamer and Julian, even more compelling is their underlying implications for time. Hamer speaks and sings from a place "already here and yet coming."[37] The reality of racial separation and sin exist at the same place and time as the reality of kinship. The reality of traumatic defeat exists at the same time and place as the reality of God's victory and salvation. Hall explains the same dynamic at work in Julian's vision: "Julian has a vision of God that is concentrated, seen through the aperture in the universe that is Jesus' overflowing gift of blood on the cross…. [her] insight is her focus on the cross as the extravagant gift that situates every space and every moment."[38] Here they both overcome ordinary understandings of time and the limitations of many religious thinkers and leaders who divide the world more linearly into past, present, and future.

Ed King, the white chaplain of Tougaloo College and SNCC leader in the early 1960s, offers a behind-the-scenes example of Hamer's synthetic and creative theological imagination at work in playing with two spirituals:

She took the two hymns "Go Down Moses" and "[Go Tell It on the Mountain].'' With no

> seminary training, she is able to grasp the connection between Passover and Easter; between personal salvation and liberation of the people of Israel; death as my death that I want blocked but also the death of slavery. She takes the song, “Go Down Moses”; Down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh; Let my people go. She combines this with the black Christmas carol, “Go Tell It on the Mountain.” Go spread the good news that Jesus is born. What does the Gospel mean? My sins are forgiven; my life is restored; the angel of death has passed over me. It means being able to stand up to Pharaoh and saying, "Let my people go."[39]

Here Hamer takes two hymns that no one else had thought to combine and creates a new hymn that pulls together seemingly opposite concepts that transcend the strictures of time and place. Whether in laughing at the devil, celebrating the cross and its bloodiness, or combining lyrics, Hamer saw opportunity for theological synthesis where others saw only tension or contradiction.

For her revealed visions of God’s love and her complex theology that acknowledges and transcends division and devastation through Jesus’ salvific sacrifice, Julian of Norwich is a revered Christian mystic. Given just the brief exploration of her similar theological brilliance here, Fannie Lou Hamer deserves comparable reverence. Howard Thurman calls one of the original problems of the human spirit the “gothic principle”—rooted on earth and stretching towards heaven, “time-bound and timeless, finite and infinite, particular and universal.”[40] Just as he taught his readers and parishioners to transcend these dichotomies, so Hamer inspired her listeners.

Barbara Holmes forwards this argument in her celebration of contemplative practices in

the black church in her book, *Unspeakable Joy:*

> I chose her as a contemplative exemplar because of her spiritual focus and resolve. Her practices spoke to the depth of her contemplative spirit…. Fannie Lou Hamer was cloistered in an activist movement, finding her focus, restoration and life in God in the midst of beloved community already here and yet coming.[41]

Holmes sees the contemplative power of Hamer in her resolute activism grounded in her experience of God. Renowned expert in Christian mysticism, Bernard McGinn defines the words *contemplative* and *mystic* as being largely interchangeable and sharing a grounding in the "preparation for, consciousness of, and effect of the direct and transformative presence of God."[42] Whether she is revered as a contemplative or a mystic, Hamer certainly was prepared for, conscious of, and intentional in directing the effect of the presence of God in her life into word and action.

The devastating irony in recognizing Hamer's brilliance is in reckoning it with her popular rejection, often for exactly these mystical qualities. In *Beloved Community*, Charles Marsh recounts the crumbling of SNCC in 1966 and the words of Stanley Wise who claimed that "Hamer is 'no longer relevant,' and no longer 'at our level of development.'"[43] The organization's vanguard decided that both Christianity and interracialism were at odds with the future of the organization. Hamer, as a committed proponent of both of these formerly central SNCC tenets, held her ground in defending them. Her witness—which made room for black power and interracialism, and Christians and agnostics—was not swayed by the fast-changing preferences

of younger activists. In retrospect, it seems abundantly clear who was not at whose level of development, though Hamer would likely never have said such a thing.

Looking at Julian of Norwich and Fannie Lou Hamer in parallel raises the question of how these two women were able to plumb the depths of the Christian mystery so fully and share their wisdom so effectively. What made them mystics? This question is deserving of significantly more study. James Cone offers a starting point in his lecture *The Cry of Black Blood*:

> The heart of the Christian faith is the cross of Jesus, the one who shed his blood as a crucified victim in Jerusalem. No one can understand the Jesus of Calvary and the saving power of his blood without seeing him through the experiences of crucified people today.[44]

Both women saw Jesus through the experience of their own crucified people. It was the crucified nature of their people that prevented them from receiving formal educations or theological training that might have garnered respect for their voices and ideas. It was also this crucified nature that afforded them unique insight into the mystical truth at the heart of Christianity and ultimately gave them voices that could not be ignored.

In "identifying the power source" of the Civil Rights Movement, Holmes distinguishes the hierarchical institution of the black church from the true "womb" of the movement:

> Rather, it was the quixotic and limber heart of that institution, its flexible, spiritually

> open, and mystical center, that ignited first the young people and then their elders to move their symbolic initiatives from ritual ring shout to processional and contemplative marches.[45]

If there were a saint of *that* element of the black church, Hamer would have to be at the top of the list. Unlike the elders that waited, she joined the young people, from the start, on the front lines of the Civil Rights Movement, and she stirred the nation from the depth of her mystical center, making her ritual ring shouts at least as transformative and important as the marches themselves.

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Appendix A

I'm Gonna Land on the Shore

I'm gonna land on the shore,
I'm gonna land on the shore,
I'm gonna land on the shore,
Where I'll rest for ever more.

The preacher in the pulpit
With a Bible in his hand
His preaching to these sinners
But they just won't understand

I would not be a white man,
White as the dripping of snow,
They aint got God in their heart,
To hell they sure must go.

I would not be a sinner,
I tell you the reason why,
I'm afraid my Lawd may call me,
And I wouldn't be ready to die.

Endnotes