

**Reverend Earle J. Fisher, Ph.D.**

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**Education**

Ph.D.           Communication  
                  Emphasis: Rhetoric  
                  University of Memphis; Memphis, Tennessee

*Dissertation Title: "A Close Reading of Albert Cleage's The Black Messiah: A Case Study in Rhetorical Hermeneutics, Black Prophetic Rhetoric and Radical Black Politics"*

M.Div.         Religious Studies  
                  Memphis Theological Seminary; Memphis, Tennessee

B.S.            Computer Science  
                  LeMoyne-Owen College, Memphis, Tennessee

A.A.            Liberal Arts  
                  Lake Michigan College, Benton Harbor, Michigan

**Areas of Interest and Research:**

African American Rhetoric, Albert Cleage, Jr., Black Church Studies, Black Liberation Theology, Black Power Studies, Black Prophetic Tradition, Political Theology, Radical Black Politics, Civil Rights Movement and Rhetoric, Communication, Constitutive Rhetoric, Contemporary Theology, Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, Hip Hop Studies, Radical Black Politics, Rhetorical Theology, Religious and Sacred Rhetoric.

**Research:**

**Books:**

*The Reintroduction of The Black Messiah: Albert Cleage Jr., and the Black Prophetic Tradition.* Lexington Books, (forthcoming, 2021).

### **Chapters in Books:**

“The Politics of Truth” in *Split Ticket: Independent Faith in a Time of Partisan Politics*. Eds. Amy Gopp, Christian Piatt, and Brandon Gilvin. Chalice Press, 2010.

### **Research in Progress:**

The Arrest Narratives of Jesus of Nazareth: A Rhetorical & Intertextual Consideration of the Rhetoric in “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.”

Black Power, Black Faith and Black Jesus: The Rhetoric and Theology of Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr.

The Christ-Prophet as Character-Person: The Practice of *Prosopopeia* in the Presentation of Jesus of Nazareth and Socrates.

The Negro Soldier: Hollywood’s Rhetoric of Race and Religion in the Early and Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. (under review)

King, Cone, and Cleage: Critiques of the Shortcomings of MLK's Nonviolent Theology by His Contemporaries.

The African American Jeremiad and the Marginalization of Black Rhetorical Militancy. (under review)

#BlackLivesMatter and the Functions of Black Faith

### **Reviews:**

Daniel White Hodge. *The Soul of Hip-Hop – Rims, Timbs and a Cultural Theology*. Reviewed in the *Religious Studies Review*, Fall 2011.

### **Editorial Positions:**

Contributing Editor of *The Journal of Hip-Hop Studies* (refereed journal).

### **Journals (Published and/or Submitted):**

Fisher, Earle J. “Brother Malcolm, Dr. King, and Black Power – A Close and Complimentary Reading,” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 18:3 (2020).

A.E. Johnson and **Fisher, E.** “But, I Forgive You”: Mother Emanuel, Black Pain and the Rhetoric of Forgiveness,” *The Journal of Communication & Religion* 42, no. 1 (2019).

The Negative Effects of Abusive/Legalistic Christian Religion: A Call to Prophetic and Covenantal Theology. *Testamentum Imperium*. Vol 3 (2011) 1-17.

The Negro Soldier: Hollywood’s Rhetoric of Race in the Early and Mid-20th Century. *The Journal of Religion and Film*. Forthcoming (2021).

Introducing Sermonic Militancy – A Call Towards More Revolutionary Homiletics and Hermeneutics. *The Journal of Communication & Religion*. (44.3. Fall 2021)

### **Fellowships and Awards:**

**Political Science Research Fellow (2020)** of University of Memphis is a research-oriented fellowship. This position will concentrate on Political Theology and Radical Black Politics and aide the department in guest lectures, student project advisement, research presentations (Brown Bag Lectures) and attending academic conferences.

**Henry Logan Starks Fellowship 2019-2020** of Memphis Theological Seminary is a research-oriented fellowship that allows the fellow to raise funds to support research, pedagogy, and training initiatives to cultivate clergy and community partnerships centered on scholarship, piety, and social justice.

**First Generation PhD Fellowship 2014-2018** funded by the State of Tennessee to the University of Memphis to provide financial assistance to graduate students who are underrepresented in their respective disciplines and who will become the first person in their immediate families to earn a doctoral degree.

**FTE Doctoral Fellowship 2017-2018** funded by the Forum for Theological Exploration to provide financial support for doctoral students of African descent who have completed the course work stage of their Ph.D. or Th.D. program in religion, theological studies or biblical studies.

**United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Hall of Honors 2012 Inductee**, The UNCF National Alumni Council honors alumnus who have been selected by their respective UNCF alma maters to receive the UNCF-NAC Hall of Honor award. These individuals have made significant contributions to their alma mater, their professions and the community.

### **Refereed Academic and Invited Presentations:**

In the Beginning Was the Word: Understanding the Intersection of Rhetoric Race and Religion. Hosted by the Religious Communication Association. (Roundtable): **National Communication Association Pre-Conference (African American Public Address)**. Baltimore, MD. Panelist. (November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

Sermonic Militancy and #TheSoulOfBlackPreaching – Delineating Between Social Consciousness and Social Justice in Black Prophetic Rhetoric: **National Communication Association Pre-Conference (African-American Public Address)**. Baltimore, MD. (November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

History of Education (and Social Justice) in Memphis. **Teach for America Workshop Training**. Memphis, TN. Panelist. (June 7, 2016).

Ferguson, Faith, and the Pious Police State: **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Hip-Hop Conference at CALU, The California University of Pennsylvania**. Panelist. California, PA. (March 2015)

Black Faith and Gangster Theology: Relevant Religious Expressions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Presented at the **National Council of Black Studies 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Miami, FL. (March 2014).

The Politics of Jesus: A Test-Case in Rhetorical Pedagogy - Presented at the **National Council of Black Studies 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Miami, FL. (March 2014).

Christianity and Contemporary Issues – Lecturer/Presenter. Facilitated at the **Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention Congress of Christian Education**, Memphis, TN. (July 2013).

Loving God with Your Heart and Mind: The Pastor/Professor Paradigm in the Black Church Experience – Roundtable Participant. Conducted at **National Council of Black Studies 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Indianapolis, IN. (March 2013).

The Progression of Black Masculinity & Sex/ualities – Roundtable Participant. Conducted at **National Council of Black Studies 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Indianapolis, IN. (March 2013).

Pimps, False Prophets and the Commodification of the Prophetic Tradition: Presented at the **National Council of Black Studies 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Indianapolis, IN. (March 2013)

Neo-Evangelism and the “theology” of Steve Harvey: Presented at the **National Council of Black Studies 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Atlanta, GA. (March 2012).

A Critical Engagement: A Response to Andre E. Johnson's "Literary Archive of Henry McNeal Turner" held at the **National Council of Black Studies 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**. Chair. Atlanta, GA. (March 2012).

When Hip-Hop Became "Gangsta"- How the Rodney King/Watts Riots Redefined Hip-Hop: Presented at the **National Council of Black Studies 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Atlanta, GA. (March 2012).

A Comparative Analysis of Hebrew Prophetic Language and Jay-Z's Minority Report: Presented at the **Show and Prove Hip-Hop Conference hosted by New York University** via Skype. (March 2012).

Jesus and Gangsta Rap: Presented at **7<sup>th</sup> Annual Hip-Hop Conference at CALU**, The California University of Pennsylvania, California, PA. (March 2012).

Civil Rights and Hip-Hop: Bridging the Generational Gap thru Prophetic Language and Education. Presented at **IAMSCU/NASCUMC Joint Conference**, Washington, D.C. (July 2011).

Prophetic Language and Hip-Hop Lyricism: Presented at the **National Council for Black Studies 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Cincinnati, OH. (March 2011).

The Short on Bishop Long: The Church and Sexualized Scandal: Presented at the **National Council for Black Studies 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Cincinnati, OH. (March 2011).

Rhetorical Strategies of Hip-Hop Music and Black Preaching: Paper Presented at **Society for Pentecostal Studies 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, Memphis, TN. (March 2011).

Rhetorical Thoughts of Dr. King and Jay-Z: Presentation at the **National Council for Black Studies 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, New Orleans, LA. (March 2010).

Rhetorical Thoughts, Rhythms & Structures of Hip-Hop and MLK: Paper presented at the **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Hip-Hop Conference at CALU**, The California University of Pennsylvania, California, PA. (April 2010).

The Rhetoric of Dr. King and Hip-Hop Lyricism: **Presentation at 40 Yr. Assassination of Martin Luther King Conference**. Memphis, TN. (April 5, 2008).

**Selected Lectures:**

*Albert Cleage Jr's The Black Messiah and the Efficacy of Black Political Theology.* **Given at University of Memphis (Political Science Brownbag Lecture Webinar).** Memphis, TN. November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

*The Political Theology of Rev. Albert Cleage Jr.: Rhetoric, Race and a Revolutionary Religion.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary (Webinar).** Memphis, TN. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.

*Political Theology: Civic Engagement, Political Participation, and Churches as Political Communities.* **Given at University of Memphis for the Religion and Politics Class.** Memphis, TN. February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

*Black Liberation Theology, #BlackLivesMatter and the Religious Rhetorics of Social Movement.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for Religious Leadership and Social Movements Doctor of Ministry Class.** Memphis, TN. January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

*A Response to Rev. Jim Wallis's Book Christ In Crisis.* **Given at Deaconess (Foundation) Center for Child Wellbeing. St. Louis, MO.** December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

*The Soul of Black Preaching (Part III): Exegesis of Scripture: Social Justice Hermeneutics for More Responsible and Liberatory Preaching.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for Scholars Week Activities.** Memphis, TN. October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

*The Soul of Black Preaching (Part II): A Turn Towards Our Most Responsible Expressions of Black Faith.* **Given at Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies.** Memphis, TN. September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

*#PickASide: The Narrative of Frederick Douglass and the Dichotomous Depiction of White and Black Christianity.* **Given at University of Memphis for the African American Literary Heritage Class.** Memphis, TN. September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

*The Soul of Black Preaching (Part I): Social Consciousness or Social Justice?* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary.** Memphis, TN. September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

*King, Cone, and Cleage: Critiques of the Shortcomings of MLK's Nonviolent Theology by His Contemporaries.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for the Rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr. Class.** Memphis, TN. April 10, 2018.

*Albert Cleage's Black Messiah and Black Christian Nationalism as Black Religious Protest.* **Given (via Skype) at Emory University for the Black Religious Protest Class.** Atlanta, GA. March 19, 2018.

*#TakeEmDown901 and the Rhetoric of Resistance in the 21st Century Memphis Movement.* **Given (via Skype) at College of Wooster for the Rhetoric of Difference in the Age of Trump Class.** Wooster, OH. February 12, 2018.

*Preaching in Black Face...Preaching to Black Faces: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Homiletics and Hermeneutics so #BlackLivesMatter.* **Given at Mount Aery Baptist Church for the ABC Ministers Association. Bridgeport, CN.** December 2, 2017.

*Liberative Methods and Prophetic Practices "By Any Means Necessary."* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry Prophetic Preaching Class.** Memphis, TN. July 12, 2017.

*Social Justice Hermeneutics and Obery Hendricks's Guerilla Exegesis.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for the Biblical Hermeneutics Class.** Memphis, TN. January 10, 2017.

*Faith, Labor, and Black Liberation Theology.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for the Faith and Labor Class.** Memphis, TN. January 9, 2017.

*Faith, Civil Rights, and Albert Cleage's Militancy: Where Do We Go From Here?* **Given at Rhodes College for the Civil Rights Movement Class.** Memphis, TN. November 11, 2016.

*Dis-eased by Design: Structural Perspectives on Social Justice Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.* **Given at NAACP Conference Mass Meeting.** Memphis, TN. September 22, 2016.

*Memphis Has A Hashtag: Social Justice Preaching and Religious Rhetorics.* **Given at Memphis Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry Preaching Class.** Memphis, TN. July 20, 2016.

*#BlackLivesMatter and the Foundational Functions of Black Faith.* **Given at Penn Highlands Community College, Black History Month Program.** Johnstown, PA. February 19, 2015.

*Black Preaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Constructions for New Contexts.* Given at the **Meeman Center for Continuing Education at Rhodes College,** Memphis, TN. (April 2012).

*The Boondocks and Prophetic Satire.* **Given at Tidewater Community College, Black History Month Program.** Virginia Beach, VA. February 21, 2011.

*Dr. King, Hip-Hop & Prophets in the Making.* **Given at Bethune-Cookman University, Presidents Legacy Forum.** Daytona Beach, FL. January 19, 2011.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Clafin University, Orangeburg SC** **January 2021 – Present**

Adjunct Professor of Biblical Literature

- 1 Instruct students (online and on ground) in areas of theology, African American and cultural studies, history and ecumenical approaches to biblical literature.
- 2 Develop and propose classes in contemporary and contextual theology.
- 3 Reports to Chair of Humanities Department.

**Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis TN** **January 2020 - Present**

Adjunct Instructor

- 1 Instructor of Black Church Studies courses.
- 2 Preaching Coach in Theology and Practice of Preaching Course.
- 3 Reports to Dean of Faculty

**LeMoyne-Owen College, Memphis TN** **January 2020 – Present**

Adjunct Instructor of African American History/Contracted Researcher

- 1 Instructor in dual-enrollment course at Soulsville Charter School in areas of African American History, cultural criticism, critical thinking and ideological articulation of black studies ideology and praxis.
- 2 Report to the Division Chair of the Social Sciences Department.
- 3 Contracted to do institutional research in health disparities study with Shelby County Health Department (reporting to Vice President of Institutional Research and Effectiveness)

**Concorde Career College (Memphis Campus)** **June 2018 –December 2019**

Adjunct Instructor of Communications

- 1 Instruct students in associates degree program in areas of oral communication and English composition.
- 2 Promote critical thinking, academic rigor, and professional ethics.
- 3 Reports to Lead Faculty for Communications.

**Arkansas State University – Mid South Campus** **August 2017 –January 2018**

Adjunct Instructor of Communications

- 1 Instruct students in associates degree program in areas of oral communication and English composition.
- 2 Promote critical thinking, academic rigor, and professional ethics.
- 3 Reports to Lead Faculty for Communications.

**Tri-State Defender, Memphis TN** **February 2016 – January 2020**

**Freelance Writer of Religion and Spirituality**



- 1 Submit monthly or bi-monthly articles to local newspaper for publication containing content related to religion and spirituality.
- 2 Expected to conduct thorough research related to religion and spirituality.
- 3 Reports to President and Executive Editor of Newspaper.

**Christian Brothers University, Memphis TN** **August 2015 – August 2017**

Adjunct Instructor of African American Theology

- 1 Instruct students in CAPS program in areas of theology, African American and cultural studies, history and ecumenical approaches to biblical literature.
- 2 Promote critical thinking, academic rigor, and professional ethics.
- 3 Reports to Faculty Services Curriculum Coordinator.

**Rhodes College, Memphis TN** **August 2011 – May 2014**

Adjunct Instructor of Contemporary Theology

- 1 Implement and instruct courses which focus on contemporary theological themes, ideas, concepts and scholarship.
- 2 Instruct students in areas of cultural criticism, critical thinking and ideological articulation of theological thought and practices.
- 3 Reports to the Division Chair of the Religious Studies Department.

**Strayer University, Memphis TN** **July 2010 – June 2019**

Adjunct Instructor of Humanities and Religion (Shelby Campus)

- 1 Instruct students in areas of cultural criticism, logic, critical thinking and ideological articulation in regards to the area of Humanities and Religion.
- 2 Tutor/Advise students in Humanities courses (Religion & Philosophy, Logic, etc.)
- 3 Reports to the Campus Dean of Academics.

**Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church** **May 2011 – Present**

Senior Pastor

- 1 Prepare and preach weekly sermons as well as invite and assign guest preachers.
- 2 Fulfill Pastoral counseling duties as needed.
- 3 Assist in administrative, organizational and ministerial planning, programming and development.
- 4 Create and facilitate weekly midweek study seminar.
- 5 Represent church at selected denominational and ministerial meetings, workshops and conferences.
- 6 Perform weddings and funerals as requested
- 7 Reports to the Joint Board of Deacons and Trustees.
- 8 Perform other Pastoral Duties as assigned and needed.

**Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis TN** **January 2010 – December 2011**

Adjunct Instructor/Formation for Ministry

- 1 Facilitate, teach and develop group of students in relationship to Spiritual Development and ministerial formation.

- 2 Assist School of Servant Leadership in implementation of vision and mission relating to academic, seminary training of faith leaders.

**LeMoyne-Owen College, Memphis TN**

**August 2008 – August 2010**

Adjunct Instructor of Religious Studies

- 1 Instructed students in areas of cultural criticism, critical thinking and ideological articulation of theological thought and practices.
- 2 Assisted in establishing a solid Religion program by effective marketing and implementing various courses and events.
- 3 Reported to the Division Chair of the Fine Arts & Humanities Department.

**Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis TN October 2005 – July 2007**

Director of Student Ministries

- 1 Served as member of Pastoral Staff, assisting in areas of congregational preaching and teaching, planning, preparation and worship leading.
- 2 Responsible for programming and support of various Youth Services.
- 3 Implemented and oversaw Young Adult Choir, Young Adult/College ministries.
- 4 Reported to Senior Associate Pastor.

**Volunteer/Academic Service**

- 1 Founder, #UPTheVote901 (2017-Present)
- 2 Executive Committee Member, Black Clergy Collaborative of Memphis (2020-Present)
- 3 Past Board President – Greater Whitehaven Economic Redevelopment Corporation 2017
- 4 Co-Founder/Co-Spokesperson – Memphis Grassroots Organizations Coalition (2015)
- 5 Founder - #UPTheVote901, 2017 - Present
- 6 Past Chairman, Religious Affairs Committee – NAACP, Memphis Chapter (2017-2018)
- 7 Rhetoric, Race & Religion Blog Contributor
- 8 Theta Alpha Kappa– National Honor Society of Religious Studies