

13 ~~Pr~~ Principal recognizes John. All positive forms of grace come from outside the church. ◊

The church is entirely fixated on a sin and redemption axis. Some sins are unforgivable. John on his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday ◊

13 Father beating John

18 Religion is a power tool for family social control.

Futile chore of cleaning house parallels cleaning church. Cleaning is like the futility of being saved or going to church. It just raises the dust.

p. 75 John's struggle between sainthood and leaving.

The language here sounds like that of a man about to be converted.

76 Is there some significance between those who pray and those who don't?

Florence, who left, doesn't pray?

p. 77 Thought: Religion has come into the service of family control over its members. All of it is in service to racial injustice. Walking out of religion is walking away from ~~the~~ bondage. Florence's mother + Gabriel

p. 65 Slave rebellion was an attempt at liberation before God's time, resulting in slave's death and damnation.

cele Running away from slavery was also running away from religion.

p. 74 Reference to ~~Paul~~ Peter + Paul in dungeon  
used to describe church meeting. They  
were, contrary to impression in Baldwin, never  
imprisoned together.

p. 75 John's struggle between being bound forever to  
the love of God or to walk out

p. 77 Frank walks out to Florence's relief.  
Frank went to other woman then died in war?

p. 76 Shift from prayer meeting to ... story of Frank's  
leaving

77 Frank's leaving as an answered prayer. God  
on the outside.

78 Frank, and maybe Gabriel, are stuck forever  
coming along. They are destined by their  
continual backsliding never to arrive.

p. 81 Nigger is someone stuck in slavery of  
repetition.

82 Florence's ambivalence about sex w/ Frank  
she's stuck until he leaves.

p. 67 Hypothesis: Ultimately Gabriel is permanently domesticated by family + religion, lacking Florence's ability to walk away.

p. 68 Religion has infused family function and dysfunction. Gabriel is whipped and then has to pray. Being converted

Reborah's rape diminishes her as a person, leaving her - less marriageable.

70 Florence's departure is reminiscent of Jesus' word to the would-be disciple who wanted to "bury" his father. "Leave the dead to bury the dead."

The baptism is an extension of mother's discipline. Breasting is for salvation. Church is for parenting.

Gabriel is basically a weak person

True discipleship is depicted as walking out.

p. 74 Florence's leaving ~~and~~ them back at the church

p. 83 Maybe this is a revival meeting where ~~can~~ walking out is being bookered.

p. 84. Gabriel is afraid of everything—even to acknowledge his illegitimate child, ~~is~~

85 The church/family plantation is rife w/ fear, immobility,

85 Transfer from Frank + Florence's bedroom... to church. Florence is ill. Possesses letter that gives evidence of Gabriel's child Royal.

85 highlight. everything that happens in church is negative, destructive.

Gabriel's Prayer

p. 88 Transfer back to cabin

I could imagine an evangelical reading this in a manner just the opposite of the manner in which it is intended. Gabriel is thoroughly embedded in home/church, despite his irascible character

92 Elijah at Horeb

93 God never answers Gabriel, but his mother does

94 Deborah, matronly, older than Gabriel, damaged because of rape earlier, takes over for Gabriel's mother.

What Baldwin has crafted is a lifeless, ~~the~~ congregation, brimming with pious, demonstrative believers and spiritually embedded in the family dysfunction and the afterlife of slavery. Gabriel, Deborah, Gabe's mother ~~are all~~ Elisha are all caught up. Conversion is a kind of "sealing" into this church.

The doctrine of the divinity of the Holy Spirit might be a divine certification that such a church cannot exist, that God won't let it exist. This book raises the question whether such a pestilent congregation can exist.

94 Deborah is the most convinced at Gabriel's conversion and ministry. She is his greatest sponsor.

95 A proper quotation of Prov. 16.18; and a misconstrual of "Gates of hell not standing against ..." Irony here that this misuse comes just as they are discussing importance of staying in the word.

96 Deborah takes up where Gabriel's mother leaves off.

104 Crude reference by ministers to Deborah as she served them. In a sense, she is raped again by crowd of powerful men.

105. The church is the afterlife of slavery or Jim Crow. This incident becomes the occasion for Gabriel to feel superior to his elders.

Gabriel decides to marry Deborah in this incident.

109 Gabriel's dream doesn't seem to have anything to do with Deborah. But he proposes to her anyway.

109 Switch back to church meeting

111 Curse of Roy, reference to earlier fight.

114 Seduction and conversion merge.

Sin in this church is exactly what you'd think — drinking, laziness, poverty, not going to church. The church is on a sin and redemption axis, with deliverance at repentance.

Esther

120 ~~Elizabeth~~ represents, in her non-church state, freedom and peace. She's comfortable with her situation. He's not.

127. I'd expect to see in Esther a kind of escape from his prison. He could have had her all along. Deborah is barren. - Esther is comfortable in her skin.

130 Gabriel suggests Esther run away w/ one of her boyfriends.

131 Esther wants to protect her parents from discovery of her foolishness. She is vastly superior morally to Gabriel.

135 Gabriel's is a completely graceless religion no word in [Bible] for him.

140 Deborah's personal emptiness hints at the emptiness of her faith.

142 Transition from Gabriel's life to prayer mtn.

~~144~~ Gabriel's mother beat him to get him to repent. Gabriel apparently beat John.

143 Transition back to 1918 ≈



147 Gabriel admits to Deborah his affair w/ Esther and his fathering of Royal. He sees God's action of helping him send her off (to her death) as God's rescue of himself from being dragged to hell by Esther.

149 Elizabeth was converted and Gabriel married her.

149 Elizabeth and John were God's return of Esther + Royal to Gabriel.

Elizabeth's Prayer

152 Who was Elizabeth's aunt?

154 Elizabeth's father runs a hop house but there is grace in his love for Elizabeth.

157 Here God-language to empower family power dynamics.

158 Richard rescues Elizabeth from her aunt and the South.

167 Richard takes Elizabeth to museums. He introduces her to an open beautiful world.

180 little John is fussy on trip to visit Florence  
It is as if he is foreshadowing being  
engulfed by Gabriel

189 Conversion merges with marriage proposal,  
sex.

196 A voice beckons John to go into the  
world. This is an ~~anti~~ conversion.

John feels himself sinking into Hell, as it  
were, and is struggling to live —  
leave the church.

198 Father — probably Gabriel — as Satanic.  
Ironic conversion.

Going blind — conversion symbol

200 Baldwin offers here another story of the  
Fall — this one for Blacks —

201 John emerges from the vision or dream of  
his father as devil.

203

~~The~~ John's vision in the grave, or place of death bears the boundless melancholy of race — anti-blackness.

7 Almost every reference to the church contains a qualification. When choir sang John, not moved, believes they are moved.