

CHAPTER 1

Darkness at the Break of Noon

Sam Cooke, Bob Dylan, and
the Birth of Sixties Music

*I was born by the river
In a little tent
And just like that river I've been running ever since.*

—Sam Cooke, 1964

*He not busy being born
Is busy dying.*

—Bob Dylan, 1965

IN LATE 1963, Sam Cooke found himself at another crossroads in a lifetime full of them. In 1950, a nineteen-year-old Cooke (then Cook) had become the lead singer of the Soul Stirrers, perhaps the most famous gospel group in the country. Seven years later he added an “e” to the end of his name and wrote and