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Special Section: *Martin & Malcolm & America*

*Dwight Hopkins*
*Garth Baker-Fletcher*
*Rebecca Chopp*
*David Tracy*
*Thomas Ogletree*
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*Moses Moore*
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# Special Section:
## *Martin & Malcolm & America*

# Introduction

Dwight N. Hopkins

*Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream Or A Nightmare*, by James H. Cone, is an intellectual gift to all of us. Grounded in the particularity of the dynamic lives, faith commitments, and transformative spirituality of two seminal leaders in the African-American community, this book — itself a path-breaking project — repositions all theological efforts from a static universalism to an unfolding movement of faith affirmations through the prism of justice, equality, love, and risk.

Cone has produced the first major theological analysis and scholarly treatment of both men's beliefs and practices from their religious experiences. Moreover, he accomplishes successfully this exacting and intricate goal by contextualizing Martin and Malcolm within two interrelated moves. First, he juxtaposes and interweaves both men in the African- American practical and intellectual traditions (for Martin, the integrationist trajectory, and for Malcolm, the nationalist claim). And second, he provides as background the larger framework of American race, power, and religious relations in order to discern America's formative and enduring impact on Martin and Malcolm and their indelible and permanent imprint on America. The thoughts, accomplishments, and lives of both men derived from the black reality as crafted by American complexities during the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century.

Perhaps one of the striking contributions of this work is its ability to situate theological discourse in the public realm, thus bridging the liberating power of scholarly vocation cloistered in the hallowed halls of religious educational institutions with the life and death concerns of everyday believers and disbelievers. For instance, *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* called *Martin & Malcolm* a "landmark analysis" and *The New York Review of Books* termed it "an illuminating

discussion." Indeed, Cone's pioneering effort has become an influential conversation piece signified by its presence in book stores ("mainstream" and black) from Harlem, New York to Oakland, California. If one is literate and concerned about Martin and Malcolm, especially the play between their faiths and works, one has to acknowledge and footnote this text in order to proceed with an informed voice.

The intentional method of doing theology, in Cone's treatment of Martin and Malcolm, systematically surfaces from the depths of the interaction between the gifted leadership personalities of each man and their circumscribed realities as subjects constructed out of communities in pain which continued to fight while embracing hope for a newness in life. Therefore, the doing of God-talk that matters results from a potent people-leader and leader-people dynamic.

For instance, theology evolves from a rigorous and rational engagement of specific individual thinkers and practitioners of faith. In this sense, theology deploys its discipline's tools of analysis as focus on leaders. Though proclaimers of prophecy and purveyors of possibilities (thus bearing the mantle of leaders at the kairotic crossroads of divine-human history), at the same time, Malcolm X and Martin King stood on the shoulders of a giant. Initially for both, this powerful giant entailed primarily the torrential flow of black Americans' current toward civil and human rights. But as the two men's faith in a God of justice, coupled with their own broadening encounters with diverse manifestations of the demonic (e.g., structural poverty and global imperialism), began to broaden, the shoulders upon which they stood comprised a more comprehensive "coalition of conscience" (for King) and gathering of "freedom fighters" (for Malcolm). In other words, individual leaders -- as they synthesize the sensibilities and spiritualities of the fluctuating context out of which they arise -- and people's movements -- as they collectivize multitudes of values and visions -- are requisite heuristic indicators for the development of constructive theology. And for Cone, the people-leader and leader-people marriage in the ongoing discourse about faith attains full maturity through the universal implications of the poor's and the disenfranchised's plight and resistance.

Cone's flagship book, moreover, indicates the common concluding directions in which Martin and Malcolm were heading, particularly at the end of their careers, regarding faith and power. Their deepening convictions and selfless life experiences had pushed both men's public ministries to interrogate and deconstruct demonic systemic

political economies, on the one hand. And on the other, they sought the construction of the collective self signified through the lens of the poor. A reading of Malcolm and Martin (and one might add, of Cone) on this issue is quite a revelation for contemporary theological discourse.

In fact, rarely is class analysis (as a decoding of monopoly capitalism and a hermeneutic for a new revolutionary society) inscribed in the pages and works of today's theologians. The failure to intertwine this theoretical judgment with race and gender investigations, perhaps, is a failure of nerve or of faith in a post-Soviet Union and post-Eastern Block phenomenon. The reality today, one could argue, is the heralded triumph of western monopoly capitalism and individualistic Christianity over communal ownership of production (and distribution) and collectively based expressions of faith (and life). But through Cone's writing, Martin and Malcolm directly linked evil with society's promoting certain minority sectors that hoarded the earth's resources, which originally belonged to all humankind.

Obviously unknown to them, King and Malcolm in their religious practices, nevertheless, served as paradigms of and precedents for how one should conduct present "multiculturalism" debates. Unfortunately, today's conversations, sometimes civil and other times vitriolic, have posed a false polarization and obscuring cackle between making space in middle class professional jobs for differences and preserving the traditional and dominant canons. However, in contrast, Reverend King and Minister Malcolm linked "multicultural" rhetoric to designated movements for transformation of structural materiality, not simply privileged linguistics.

For instance, King arrived at this conclusion by the time he began preparations for his second March On Washington. The first 1963 march had represented more of a one day affair of ongoing words and speeches by leaders. The second 1968 march would ground the 1963 ethical admonitions and moral rhetoric with a sustainment movement led by a rainbow coalition of poor people descending on the nation's capitol, occupying federal buildings, and shutting down the federal government until jobs or incomes were provided for the victims of massive structural poverty in America. Now, for King, the word of God compelled him to move beyond token discourse and, paraphrasing King, to build a part of the Kingdom on earth, even if it meant giving his life for the poor.

Similarly, for Minister Malcolm, the break with the Nation of Islam enabled him to restructure his rhetoric. Now, instead of merely hurling caustic and insightful critiques from the sideline at racist and sinful America, he could organize a practical program to substantiate the correctness of his verbal bashing. His new Muslim faith and painful sense of always talking about struggle but never organizing the masses to fight compelled him into action. Thus Malcolm actively pursued the connection between his international human rights campaign against American genocide on African Americans and his developing perspectives on the globally oppressed. For King and Malcolm, the multicultures domestically and abroad comprised a discourse in which power, structures, and the poor were privileged signs of speech and organized action.

Cone's *Martin & Malcolm & America* also exemplifies theological writing as spiritual formation for the theologian. For ten years, Cone relentlessly listened to tapes, read transcripts, and watched movies about Martin and Malcolm. Similarly, he constantly spoke about, preached on, taught and led workshops on the two men. One could argue that for Cone, theological research and writing themselves reflect a religious quest for meaning and truth as that truth and meaning incarnate and make a difference in the materiality of peoples' spiritual, political, and cultural lives and that of the theologian. It seems that Cone could give ten years of his own life on this intellectual journey because dedicatedly and studiously he dwelled both in King's and Malcolm's world and the ethos of those for whom these two men spoke. Such a faithful commitment to and extended sojourn in the research and writing of this text must have transported Cone, in some fashion, into another realm where theological incite is offered from sources beyond the limited scholarly capabilities of the singular author. The (re)creation of the faith, works, and spiritual stature of Rev. King and Minister Malcolm presented the possibility for spiritual growth for the author as well. The crafting of the theological biography also entailed a (re)constructing of the biographer's spirit. And that is a fundamental ingredient for constructive theology that matters.

Indeed, various colleagues of Cone's in the American Academy of Religion (AAR) gathered recently at an annual AAR meeting to critically challenge and interrogate the theological worth of *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream Or Nightmare* for conversation in the public realm. What difference did this text make and what did it signify for faith in the arena of the common good? Such questions were

confronted straightforwardly and passionately by five leading scholars in diverse fields of religious studies. Garth Baker-Fletcher's reflection on Cone's book underscores the need to embrace ethical resources which affirm African-American dignity in the midst of the moral nihilism, communal suicide, and social dissolution stalking America today. For Baker-Fletcher, *Martin & Malcolm & America* intimates both an African- American Xodus and a plea for "common ground." The former denotes "a Divine intervention within one's own life empowering us to affirm self-liberation first." The latter, "common ground" concept, building on Howard Thurman's corpus, instructs the Xodus to embrace the reality of the public square.

Rebecca S. Chopp's essay develops along two major avenues. First, she affirms the book's innovative contributions to theology, especially its complex interpretation of "heroic figures" and its portrayal of embedded faith born out of contextual contingency. Following her sanguine appraisal, her second part is a challenge to Cone's metaphorical usage of dream and nightmare (or integration and separation) in parallel to the paradigm of Martin and Malcolm as corrective and complements. Chopp poses the following theoretical opinion: the stated paradigm holds for narrating both men's biographies as integrationist and nationalist but falls short as a systematic and analytical parameter for Cone's theological themes of justice and blackness. As a suggestion, Chopp presents her intriguing notion of "a new, transformative theory of justice."

David Tracy's contribution highlights Cone's successful accomplishment in theological methodology. *Martin & Malcolm & America* substantively attains the "move from an analysis of history as historical consciousness or philosophical historicity to history considered as the concrete struggle of peoples and groups." Furthermore, Tracy praises Cone's text for pinpointing the necessity, at least for Tracy, of adding Malcolm to the distinguished genealogy of masters of suspicion: Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and women religious scholars.

Thomas W. Ogletree presses forth the ethical implications of King's and Malcolm's convictions and lives. After an involved evaluation of faith and culture (indicating no privileged status for any language and culture as medium of faith) and faith and justice (indicating the necessity of coupling religion and public responsibility) vis-a-vis Malcolm X and Martin, Ogletree then queries the reader with theoretical issues foundational to his argument. How do religious communities promote justice in a secular, pluralistic society? What is the possibility of pub-

lic policy promoting justice in a "post-industrial, post-modern society?"

Finally, Alton B. Pollard, III places *Martin & Malcolm & America* within the social location of the African-American freedom movement of the 1950s-1970s: Malcolm contextualized within the northern demands of black urban vicissitudes and Martin within the southern Christian, non-violent way of life. Employing a sociology of religious investigative methodology, Pollard challenges us with the question: what do Martin and Malcolm X mean for us today? In response, he offers us specific hopeful illustrations in today's youth who embrace Malcolm and Martin in rap/hip hop genres, African cultural pride adaptations, solidarity efforts with the Third World, and assorted hungerings for serious commitment to renewed activism.

The rich diversity of nuanced insights, various disciplines, and provocative questions brought to bear on *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream Or A Nightmare* in this *USQR* edition adequately testify to this highly acclaimed and seminal work of James Cone. The rhythm, content, and form of the book have brought theology as intervention in the public realm. And most would agree that theology is, fundamentally and rightfully so, at the service of the Church, the academy, and society.

We are fortunate to have James Cone's response to his respondents included in this journal edition. Superb theology, in the classical sense articulated by David Tracy, is inexhaustible in providing meaning for each generation. Just as the lives and commitments of King and Malcolm X remain texts transcending generations, Cone's engagement with his colleagues' critical discourse about his own text likewise suggests the potential enduring legacy of *Martin & Malcolm & America.*

The discussion of *Martin & Malcolm & America* took place in the Black Theology Group session at the 1992 AAR annual meeting in San Francisco, California.

# Somebodyness and Self-respect: Themes of Dignity in Martin Luther King and Malcolm X

Garth Baker-Fletcher

The challenge for Black Theology in the Nineties is to envision a theological understanding of human dignity strong enough to meet the triple threat of moral nihilism, communal suicide, and social dissolution. Our starting point must be the streets, which exploded into uprisings in Los Angeles, New York, and Atlanta this year. Rampant injustice and dreams deferred have reached the point of critical meltdown. Our theological task cannot hide behind lame abstractions taken from irrelevant textbooks, but must face the rage, pain, and hopelessness that threatens to engulf our people. **Where are the resources for African Americans to affirm our dignity despite ongoing dehumanization?**

James Cone's *Martin & Malcolm & America* is a prophetic summons to Black theologians to begin to mine the hidden theological riches of both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X in order to meet the contemporary dilemmas of African Americans. Cone demonstrates through a careful analysis of both men's lives and teachings our need to hold Malcolm's call for self-love and power together with King's call for universal resistance to injustice. Following Cone's lead, I shall look at two pertinent theological symbols of human dignity offered by King and Malcolm X which require further elaboration when taken together. The two symbols, *Somebodyness* of King and *self-respect* of Malcolm X, will be presented in terms of their theological grounding, fundamental ethical aim, and capacity to envision a more radical affirmation of one's humanity. I shall conclude with

suggestions on how these two symbols may be applied to our contemporary constructive task in notions of "Xodus"and "Common Ground."

*Somebodyness*

While King's work has been analyzed from the perspective of the religious genius of a preacher, nascent black theology political theory, or a nonviolent ethic, a more adequate view of King's thought is as a vigorously intellectual and practical visionary concept for transforming our understanding of human dignity. By emphasizing *dignity*, the essential connections between King's use of Boston Personalist metaphysics, African American "down home" Christian spirituality, Gandhian nonviolence, and popular American civic religious presuppositions become more apparent.[1] King's most influential ideas and phrases were woven throughout the entire corpus of his thought, repeated variously in speeches, sermons, addresses, and writings. I contend that King's most comprehensive and multivalent symbol of human dignity was *Somebodyness*. It is a symbol which appeared most prominently towards the end of King's life in response to the nascent Black Power movements, although his earlier writings also used the expression.

Somebodyness presupposes a traditional Christian view of human beings in which every person is created in the image of God. For King, the image of God in human beings is best understood as the *indelible imprint of dignity and freedom* that becomes a *throbbing desire for freedom* for the oppressed who are robbed of their freedom.[2] King interprets this inner desire for freedom as a thirst so profound that it demands that those robbed of their external freedom fight to regain it. For King, nonviolent demonstration was the best means to attain the end, freedom. Thus, the fundamental theological basis of Somebodyness is that all human beings have been granted dignity because they are all children of God. Further, King construes the image of God as freedom, without which people are left with a throbbing desire to attain it, which in turn energizes their struggle to regain freedom through nonviolent means.

King insisted that through the energizing force of agape the nonviolent practitioner concretely realized the confrontational power of Somebodyness. King construed *agape* as a volitional commitment to confronting injustice with nonviolence, creating a beloved commu-

nity, going to any length to preserve community, forgiveness, and an awareness of the inter-relatedness of all life.

King's commitment to an agape-centered life enabled the fundamental ethical aim of Somebodyness to be the self-affirmation of African- American person hood. Such self-affirmation was attained by "standing up" to the oppressive structures of racism that depersonalize us.[3] King listed four qualities of Somebodyness during an interview in 1967:

1) an internal change in the psyche of African Americans, 2) a sense of pride, 3) an ability to stand up, and 4) the feeling of being a human being.[4]

King viewed Somebodyness as a "positive response" overturning the instilled sense of "worthlessness" that is our legacy of slavery.[5] Somebodyness demands an unshackling of our minds in order to affirm our worth for ourselves:

> The Negro must assert for all to hear and see a majesic sense of worth. There is such a thing as a desegreated mind. We must no longer allow the outer chains of an oppressive society to shackle our minds. With *courge* and *fearlessness* we must set out daringly to *stabilize ouregos.* This alone will give us a *confirmation of our roots* and a *validation of our worth.*[6] [Italics mine]

Such self-affirmation caused King to note that Somebodyness requires courage. Courage, in King's estimation, was that quality of dogged determination, perseverance, and a spirit of never giving up hope embodied in "our slave forbears."[7] In fact, for King, such courage engenders self-respect, a quality we shall examine more closely in the thought of Malcolm X.

Finally, King believed that Somebodyness is an affirmation of the beauty of our blackness. He chastised black folk for using bleaching creams to have lighter colored skin, and processing our hair so that it would be "straighter."[8] King envisioned life as a piano with both black and white keys, where *all* the keys would be valued for their contribution in producing the harmonious music of living together. King believed that if Blacks would gain the genuine self-appreciation and self-acceptance of Somebodyness, a process could begin whereby white Americans might begin to understand integration as "an oppor-

tunity to participate in the beauty of diversity."[9] Therefore while King constructed the notion of Somebodyness from his mother's injunction to remember that he was "somebody," in his maturity he reached out to value the beauty and diversity of both black and white folks. Somebodyness is a imaginative conceptual vision of human self-affirmation in spite of dehumanizing evils which begins black oppression and reaches outward ultimately toward the transformation of all persons.

*Self-Respect*

Malcolm X has been called everything from "our shining Black Prince" to a "hate monger." Both greatly admired and deeply feared, his charismatic power to sway the masses of Black folk has often distracted scholars from doing serious critical study of his thought. Like Cone, I believe that Malcolm X's view of human dignity and self-respect deserve a place alongside the respected place we give to King's thought. In fact, Self-Respect, like King's Somebodyness symbol, articulates Malcolm's most cherished fundamental claim about the nature of human beings.

Malcolm believed that self-respect had been systematically stripped away from American blacks by the European-American system of racism, or "the collective white man." [10] Malcolm dramatized in vivid language the way in which this "white man" had brutalized, raped, and robbed the "black man" of his self-respect, pride, and dignity. In fact, according to Malcolm, the "white man" literally brainwashed African people into being "so-called Negroes." The "Negro," according to Malcolm, had become *sickened*: psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, economically, and politically by accepting *self-hatred* into our collective psyche.[11]

While Malcolm was a part of the Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad, his "cure" for black people was theologically grounded in what he later referred to as a "demonology" of the devilish nature of whites.[12] In an elaborate myth known as "Yacub's History," Elijah Muhammad taught members of the Nation of Islam that the white race was a genetic mutation developed by a malevolent black genius Yacub. The "devil white race," in accordance to prophecy, would be destroyed by God's Judgment after reeking havoc and oppression for six thousand years on the "original people" of the Earth -- the Black race.[13] This apocalypse was to occur soon, therefore all Muslims were called

to separate themselves from the doomed race of devilish whites rather than integrate. In fact, Malcolm believed that integration was the deceptive solution dreamed up by "liberal white devils" to keep blacks in bondage and subjugation. Rather, Malcolm believed that blacks had to recognize our historic-mythic greatness as "original people" of the "tribe of Shabazz" and voluntarily *separate* from whites in order to gain self-respect and the independence necessary to gain respect from others.[14] Malcolm wanted blacks to "awaken" to a mature intelligence and moral independence from whites.[15] In this phase of Malcolm's journey, a commitment to Allah enabled him to realize a disciplined transformation of himself from a hardened street hustler and convict into a fitting role-model and grass-roots leader.

Grounded in this transformative faith, Malcolm was able to find salvation in the strict moral code of the Nation. This code forbade partaking of alcohol, drugs, smoking, dancing, gambling movies, sports, "filthy porks" and "taking long vacations from work.[16] The positive aspect of the moral code enjoined courtesy, especially to women, faithfulness to one's mate, honesty, and thriftiness. Muslims were not supposed to be insubordinate to any civil authority except on religious grounds. Further, Muslims were encouraged to be *economically independent*, relying upon one another for all business transactions, thus developing a true sense of nationhood within the oppressive state of devils. Malcolm preached this code as the only way that was stringent enough to concretely uplift the black race and enable it to clean itself up.

Cone helps us to see that Malcolm despised the message of "turn-the-other-cheek" nonviolence as espoused by Martin Luther King,Jr. Malcolm believed that it was immoral and criminal to ask blacks to be nonviolent because it denied blacks a fundamental human right: to defend one's self in the presence of an overtly violent attack.[17] Malcolm delighted in shocking whites with the ominous sounding ethic that he believed that blacks should do "whatever is necessary" to protect themselves, insisting that it was a fundamental modicum of human respect in "every civilized society."[18] Further, Malcolm countered the other-centered aspects of King's agape concept by insisting on the deontological necessity of self-love as a primary value that constitutes self-respect. It is clear, then, that Malcolm's doctrine of self-defense was as integral to his understanding of Self-Respect as Martin's doctrine of nonviolence was to his vision of Somebodyness.

From the very start Malcolm called for blacks to gain self-respect by doing for ourselves, rather than waiting for "crumbs from the white man's table." Such self-motivation enabled Malcolm to overcome the shock of being cast away from his beloved Elijah Muhammad as a traitor. Creatively, Malcolm broadened his theological vision by learning the more traditional ways of Islam, ways which transformed his condemnation of "whites" into more pointed accusations about racism. His *moral judgment on racism* enabled him to broaden his message by appealing to a pan-African, international audience.[19] Creating the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) as a *political* organization, Malcolm countered the apoliticism of his Nation days. The ethical aim of his last days was toward forging a "solution" to the race problems rather than arguing about whether or not his methods and ideas were better or worse than that of traditional civil rights leaders. He called for "human rights," saying that "civil rights" is too confining a term for the revolutionary consciousness that was emerging at the time. His assassination robbed us, as did King's, of a fully developed theory of Self-Respect from the perspective of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz -- the Muslim name he took after his Hajj to Mecca.

Both Martin and Malcolm developed a broader and yet more radical vision of human dignity in their last days. King intensified his commitment to a world-wide vision of inter-relatedness which he felt was appropriate for the revolutionary times, while Malcolm radicalized his pan-Africanism within a context of global awareness. Both defended their core vision of love until the end. For King other-centered, outreaching, and community-building agape was essential to the formation of Somebodyness, while Malcolm insisted, to the contrary, that Self-Respect for blacks could only be achieved by learning to love our own first, a difficult achievement for a race that had been brainwashed to hate everything about itself! Yet both Martin and Malcolm's symbols of human dignity insist upon the following:

1) *love of one's self and one's body* that originates from a life-chang ing encounter with the Divine
2) *radical self-affirmation* which is the fruit of the life-changing di vine encounter that counteracts the self-hatred and de-person alization of one's past self-image that was produced by sys temic racism
3) *a sense of pride* gained by disciplined study and analysis of one's historic past, and

4) an *affirmation of Black Power* as a healthy thing spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and economically.

*Xodus and Common Ground*

In order to respond creatively to Cone's challenge and fashion the symbols of Somebodyness and Self-Respect into a contemporary framework, I have listened to both an old voice in our recent past and new voices rising from the streets. The old voice is that of Howard Thurman, whose vision of "Common Ground" has become a favorite political image of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. The new voices are those of "raptivists" such as: X-Clan, Sister Souljah, and Public Enemy who are calling for an exodus."

In anticipation of Spike Lee's movie on Malcolm X entitled "X," many members of the African-American community are sporting "X" caps. While it is a style and a fad for many, I believe that it symbolizes a spiritual and moral yearning for the kind of message Malcolm embodied. It is time to put theological flesh and moral sinew onto the skeleton of "X's" running around, so that they might live!

Malcolm described the "X" in Muslim's names as symbolizing the "true African family name" that had been destroyed and forgotten due to slavery.[20] According to Malcolm Elijah Muhammad told him "that we should keep this 'X' until God Himself returned and gave us a Holy Name from His own mouth."[21] Malcolm's "X" reminded him that he was an ancestor to kings, queens, and an immensely rich civilization that the white race had "whitewashed" out of history. Therefore the "X" reminds us of a powerfully positive and constructive way of renaming self in opposition to one's "slave name"-- the name of European derivation. In the consciousness awakening moment when followers of the Nation of Islam submit to Allah, the taking on of an "X" name graphically symbolizes the *spiritual and moral* move out of European American dominated "space" into a Space of one's own. I believe Exodus as a theological symbol is suggested. The act of Exodus (Exodus 12: 31-40) not only initiated the release of slaves from servitude, but also increased their consciousness of the powerful Intervening Hand of God.

Our contemporary Xodus is a divine intervention within one's own life empowering us to affirm *self-liberation first.* Without awaiting "Pharaoh's orders," the African-American "X-People" are "coming out" of this Egypt named America -- land of the free and home of

the brave -- *without* requesting permission, or expecting a blessing. This Xodus suggests a more massive, group-wide self-deliverance than has been experienced for over a generation. Instead of individuals becoming aware of the need to "come out" of white American-controlled space, the Xodus implies the need for the entire race to "come out" in order to flourish as human beings. In Christian theological language, Xodus represents the dead and crucified historical-cultural personhood of African Americans "rolling away the stone" of Euro-heteronomous imposition, rising to new self-affirming Life.

This Xodus affirms the rage and frustrations of African Americans with the same polemics as Malcolm X used. Such polemical rhetoric stretches the boundaries of acceptability and "proper" appreciation of whatever "progress" has been made since the Sixties by a harsh condemnation of white hypocrisy. It gives voice to the inner demand for Self-Respect and dignity that Malcolm articulated so well, while also affirming the demand for self-liberation which is integral to King's understanding of Somebodyness.

As an African-American Christian intellectual, I have found myself Journeying with the theo-poesis and politics of urban street folk who have loved and accepted me despite all of my "white-sounding" education and speech-patterns! Xodus, as the Hebrew Exodus of many centuries past, is a happening, carrying all of us along, whether we like it or not. The destruction of human dignity, the annihilation of workable and constructive moral vision in our impoverished communities demands the forging of our own self-image and self-respect outside the parameters and judgment of European-American dominated space.

Unlike both Malcolm and King however, Xodus Journeying ought to be a Space of Inclusion, wherein African-American males and females are included as partners. Malcolm preached a stridently sexist theological anthropology wherein women's natures were posited as complimentarily "weak," needing the "strong" and "protective" nature of the male.[22] Martin did not believe that women differed from men *ontologically*, but possessed a necessarily second-class functional role confined to the private sphere of family.[23] Both believed that women's highest calling was the nurturance of children, support of husbands, and the passing on of sustaining values to new generations. Their sexist views on women undermined the full efficacy of their liberationist potential even in the Sixties. Our Xodus must learn from their mistakes and insist upon both the *theological* and *func-*

*tional* equality of women and men for we cannot be "free" if we are not full partners, male and female.[24]

The name "Xodus" springs from the theo-political poesis of raptivist group X-Clan, whose recent album entitled "exodus" issues a fiery call for the "children of Africa" to unite, "board the Cosmic Ark," and "trust in the power of the Red, the Green, and the Black." Inspired by the pan-African message of Self-Respect of Malcolm X, the theo-politics of rappers such as X-Clan, Sister Souljah, and Public Enemy are being avidly heard by young African Americans. Greg Tate recently challenged the Black Churches to wake up and hear these new voices as the "new ministers that young people listen to because they are not out of touch like church ministers are."[25] Black Churches must wake up and respond boldly if they are going to be the genuine "prophets" of this Xodus, or they shall actually become what they are already accused of being: a thing of the past "Civil Rights" movement, an impediment "holding us back."

Black Churches can make a special contribution to the Xodus by teaching about the necessity of seeking *Common Ground* as we journey on Xodus. Xodus journeying might ultimately lapse into a culturalist conservatism that cannot connect to others because of its inner-cultural solipsism dynamic, as Cornel West has warned about the contemporary shallow renaissance of the most narrow and militant aspects of Malcolm X's thought.[26] The Xodus needs the complementary dynamic of Common Ground, lest it become another form of racial exclusivism. Here is where the voices of Black Church prophets such as Martin King and Howard Thurman encourage us to build Common Ground with *all* others in order for us to gain a deeper sense of the profundity of our self-reinvention in Xodus.

Common Ground builds on the theological anthropology of King that insists upon human inter-relatedness because all of us are created in the image of God. Thurman affirmed the same principle of *Imago Dei* by saying that we are all "children of God." I would push beyond Thurman and King to affirm not only our shared inter-related spiritual ties, but our common biospheric ties as children of the Earth itself! The Hebrew language informs us that we are "adam," the creature fashioned by God's Hand from "Adamah," -- the Earth. We share Common Ground because our source is the common ground.

The Earth is as multi-colored as are we human beings. The rich blackness of mud in the ocean's depths is as much a part of the Earth as is the frosty whiteness of snow capping majestic mountains.

As the elements are a part of this earthly whole, so is the vast diversity of human beings. Each group has a part to play in the construction of Common Ground, a part which cannot be predetermined by any particular group grasping for hegemony. King described this diverse inter-relatedness and need for an appreciation of our differences as one of the values of Somebodyness, because Somebodyness insists upon the intrinsic worth and beauty of diversity as a symbol of God's richness. In the "World House" (to use King's term), each fractious ethnic, class, and racial grouping must find a way to come together to create Common Ground. Xodus people need to intentionally be part of the Whole that will become Common Ground. It will be a Whole based on contribution rather than acquisition, cooperation rather than coercion, and respect rather than utility.

Such a moral telos consists of more than economic or political goals. Thurman reminds us over and over again that a true vision of Wholeness cannot be achieved without a *sense of transport*, of being "caught up in the Spirit." Our sense of Oneness in the midst of our diversity needs the inner-nurturance of prayer, ecstasy, and power. Common Ground requires the mystic theo-centeredness of Thurman dancing with the radical vision of King and the vocalized proclamation of Malcolm to be Whole.

As King believed that the norm of *inclusion* was stronger than norms of *exclusion* (which he spoke of specifically in terms of race) so Common Ground will need to find ways to engage in concrete inter-faith, inter-religious communion and action that goes beyond the promising "dialogues" of the recent past. Common Ground is an invitation to inclusion for Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, traditional spiritualists, Christians, and humanists to find ways of building the future together

We live in the ashes of recent Uprisings, but we need not despair, for out of those ashes may arise the possibility of Xodus and Common Ground. Out of the tragic deaths of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. new life is arising. We must arise to see that their voices may become a part of our social resurrection. Deferred dreams do explode[27] and create rivers of unnecessary suffering. The blood flowing in the streets demands our fervent Christian commitment to envision and courage to act before it is too late.

*Notes*

1. Cf. my dissertation--Garth Baker-Fletcher, *Somebodyness as a Resource for a Theory of Dignity in the Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.* (Harvard: 1991),p. xv. published as *Somebodyness: Martin Luther King and the Theory of Dignity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Harvard Dissertation Series, 1993).
2. Martin Luther King Jr, "The Birth of a Nation," sermon, April 1957, p.3-4, Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolence and Social Change Archives, Atlanta, GA.
3. Martin Luther King, Jr., Interview on Merv Griffin Show," 7/6/67, p.6, King Center Archives, Atlanta, GA.
4. Ibid., 6.
5. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press 1967), 122.
6. Ibid., 122-123.
7. Ibid., 123.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Alex Haley, *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine, 1965), 290.
11. Ibid., 279, cf. also Malcolm's exposition of the "hateful self-image" in *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, ed. by Bruce Perry (New York: Pathfinder, 1989), 166.
12. Ibid., 179.
13. Ibid., 179-183.
14. Ibid., 277, 297, 300.
15. George Breitman, ed., *By Any Means Necessary* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 9.
16. Ibid., 241.
17. George Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 22.
18. David Gallen, *Malcolm X: As They Knew Him* (Carrol & Graf Publishers, 1992), 184.
19. *Last Speechs,* 158, 45.
20. *Autobiography,* 216-217.
21. Ibid., 217.
22. Ibid., 246. Cone gives a strong criticism of this aspect of Malcolm's thought, *Martin & Malcolm*, 272-275, as well as Martin's sexist views.

23. cf. Corretta Scott King's *My Life with Martin* and his "Ebony Advice" columns.
24. cf. bell hooks and Cornel West *Breaking Bread* (Boston: South End Press, 1991) for a fuller description of *partnership* between African-American women and men.
25. A Black Entertainment Television interview entitled "Our Voices," Friday, Oct. 23, 1992.
26. Cornel West, "Malcolm X and Black Rage," in *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image*, ed. by Joe Woods (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992), 48-58 (especially p.51).
27. An apt paraphrasing of Langston Hughes' famous poem by Karen Baker-Fletcher.

# Beyond Narratives: Cone's *Martin & Malcolm & America*

Rebecca Chopp

James Cone's *Martin & Malcolm & America* is a book that is both moving and provocative. I, like many readers, found this one of those rare academic books that is simply hard to put down. My initial judgment about the force of this book was confirmed by students in a graduate seminar in theology. Our readings of Kant, Schleiermacher, Rahner and others had all led to thoughtful discussions of these thinkers' theories of life and history. But when the seminary members gathered to discuss Cone's book, we all sat on the edge of our seats, for we realized that in this book theology *was* life and history. The stories of Martin and Malcolm led us to discuss not only their lives but our own lives and history as well. As one student commented to me later, Cone has written a *disturbing* book that makes us think about our lives and U.S. culture and at the same time to question the nature and purpose of theological practices.

I want to divide my essay in two parts: the first part focuses on the contributions of this book and the second part raises a question about the basic issue of this book, the nature of the relation of Martin and Malcolm.

## *The Contributions of* Martin & Malcolm & America

The first contribution to be noted, and saluted, is that Cone has written a book that offers complex interpretations of heroic figures. Cone's interpretation reminds us that both Malcolm X and

Martin Luther King, Jr. were real men with failures and triumphs, with struggles and hopes. For many readers habituated to the simplifications of King the great moderate and Malcolm the great radical, Cone's book will return real figures, allowing the readers to accept the faultedness and goodness of the men and removing them from their simple caricatures in the popular media. For other readers who have either neglected or never had the privilege of learning about these men, Cone's wonderful grasp of both the details and the broad strokes of each man's life will give such readers full and adequate biographies. While for those who have already acquainted themselves with these important figures, Cone's book will offer another rich testimony giving these readers an opportunity to once again witness the power of these two men. All readers will have to grapple with the limits and distortions of both men's thought: particularly, according to Cone, in the areas of sexism and classism.

The second contribution of this book consists in a gift that Cone has long demonstrated: his ability to trace the contextual influences of race, class and geographical locations and how such factors determine, without ever entirely legislating each persons positions. Cone's first chapter on Martin Luther King, Jr., entitled "The Making of A Dreamer" tells the story all the factors that contribute to this dreamer: the southern middle-class black family, the model of Martin Luther King, Sr.'s, the Ebenezer Baptist Church, the importance of education, and encounters with racism such as being made to stand for a 90 minute bus trip on the way home from an oratorical context. Cone creates the story of these influences constructing Martin's life and displays, in this initial chapter and throughout the book, their influence on King's life. An excellent example can be found in the concluding paragraph of chapter one:

> It seems that King's life from his birth into the middle-class family in Atlanta to the beginning of his second year in Montgomery as the pastor of Dexter was socially, religiously, and educationally shaped so that his proclamation of the "American dream" was just about inevitable. It was quite easy for him to think of America as a dream and to be optimistic that it could be realized because he himself was a concrete embodiment of its realiza-

> tion. He was well-educated, culturally refined and politically aware. King believed that if other Negroes were given the same opportunity he had, they too would manifest a similar social and educational development. That was why integrationist became the major theme of his political philosophy. (p. 36)

Just as carefully does Cone treat Malcolm X, beginning in chapter two and then expanding the treatment throughout the text. Chapter two is entitled "The Making of a Bad Nigger" and Cone treats, in turn, the powerful influences in Malcolm's life. Malcolm was a product of what Cone calls the northern poor black masses. His family, devoted to the nationalist cause, was driven out of Omaha by the Ku Klux Klan and later had their house burned down by the Black Legionnaires. Family violence occurred between parents and by both parents toward the eight children. Malcolm's father died when Malcolm was six years old. Malcolm's mother, trying to be a single parent during the depression, suffered an emotional breakdown and the children were placed in several homes. Malcolm's formal education ended at the eighth grade and Cone addresses Malcolm's often quoted sentence: "I finished the eighth grade in Mason, Michigan. My high school was the black ghetto of Roxbury, Massachusetts. My college was the streets of Harlem, and my master's was taken in prison." (p. 42) Cone takes care to explain the importance of Malcolm's conversion: not only the rejection of the white man but the affirmation of African-American cultural history. Cone tells Malcolm's story as one of stark contrast, even opposition to Martin's:

> In opposition to Martin Luther King's middle-class integrationist image of the American dream of Negroes and whites working together, Malcolm X, looking at America from the viewpoint of the "black masses living at the bottom of the social heap," invoked the contrasting image of the nightmare to describe the sociopolitical reality of America for the vast majority of African-Americans. While King was having a dream, he snapped about the march on Washington, "the rest of us Negroes are having a nightmare." (39)

Thirdly, Cone has contributed a great deal to the contextualization of theology by writing a book that traces the embeddedness of theology in individual lives, as well as in the movements these two lives represent. Theology in this book is explicitly enfleshed in action, desires, practices and relationships. I have no interest in suggesting that all theology be of the same style. Part of the richness of Christian traditions lies, in part, for me, in the wide variety of styles: autobiography, disputations, expositions, etc. Theology speaks of God and God's activity in the many symphonic instruments of language: poetry, rhetoric, dialectics, analytics, etc. I take it from the variety of style in Cone's other works that he would agree. But there are few books in the present that really demonstrate (as compared to urging) the enfleshment of theology in person's lives, a style from which a great deal is to be gleaned. Cone has contributed a classic to this style of theology and thus he will teach present and future readers the ways in which theology makes a difference.

The fourth contribution is also about the style of the book and that is another narrative which Cone uses Martin and Malcolm to create, the narrative of dream and nightmare in relation to justice and blackness. This other narrative is, in a sense, a somewhat more implicit plot, through which we are questioned by the dreamer who learns to have nightmares and by the one who saw the nightmares and then learned how to dream. Cone is not just an historian, though he offers us a historical work especially by telling accurate stories of these men lives and in tracing out the influences on these men. Cone is also a theologian, and this work must be read as theological, both in sense of theological biography and in the sense that this books seeks to challenge the reader about how dream and nightmare are related in terms of justice and blackness and America. Striding through this book are questions about the definition of justice and the reality of blackness: questions of critique, of expression and narrative, but also questions of change and transformation in the contemporary times. I do not want to entertain a complex discussion of narrative plot and theological frameworks, except to point out that such frameworks seem necessary to carry a kind of tensive relation whereby the reader is invited to also explore the issues of justice and blackness through the framework of nightmare and dream.

It is perhaps the powerfulness of this fourth contribution that raises the major question about this book for me. But before turning to my own engagement with the framework of Cone's book, I want again to underscore that this book is important, both for the information it conveys and the ways in which it asks the reader to think of these figures, the U.S. and the self.

*The Relation of Martin and Malcolm?*

For James Cone, though, the point of Martin and Malcolm is not simply to present information nor even merely to trace the impact of each figure. Cone explains the point of the book in this manner: "This book is an examination of the meaning of justice and blackness in America in the context of the lives and thought of Martin King and Malcolm X." (p.x) I want, in the rest of this essay, to query how it is that Cone relates Martin and Malcolm, or to be more exact, how it is that Cone relates the notions of correction and complement, and the strategies of integrationist and separatism or nationalism around the terms justice and blackness. What are the ways in which Cone uses Martin and Malcolm to help us think, through the metaphors of dream and nightmare, through the relations of correction and complement of justice and blackness?

Note that I use the plural "ways" for there is no one logical or historical or even structural way in which Cone sees that Martin and Malcolm are related. Indeed, Cone never fully explains what he means by the terms "corrective", "complement" or even by the positions of integrationist and black nationalism. Like all good story tellers he moves us from one meaning to the next through narrative emplotment. I want to suggest at least three distinguishable ways that corrective/complement work to relate the positions of integrationist and black nationalism.

The first type of relation between Martin and Malcolm as correction/complement, I will fondly refer to as the nip and tuck position. This way takes its stance within the integrationist position, which Cone's deep sympathies with Martin seem to indicate, and is corrected and informed by the nationalist, thus Martin is more corrected and complemented by Malcolm rather than vice versa. This notion that Malcolm is the necessary corrective/complement to Martin is suggested by the structure of the book, which begins with the story of Martin Luther King, Jr. (though Malcolm is born first,

and the final biographical chapters follow the chronology of the men's lives). It is also suggested by the fact that Cone never really brings together quite different religious traditions, Christianity and Black Muslim, through the notion of either complement or correction. At least this reader is left with the impression that Cone prefers to stay within Christianity and use the Black Muslim tradition as a correction and complement. The danger with this type of relation is that we may water down the one taken as "other", that we fail to tally long enough in the radical difference of these two positions.

The second type of relation Cone gives us is the synthesis of opposites or a kind of living with contradiction, just accepting them as necessary rhythms of critique. This is a powerful position and rather the opposite of the first nip and tuck position. To a certain extent living with this feeling of contradiction is what many of us do. As one student pointed out in my class, he lives with Martin and Malcolm inside him all the time. Long-time readers of Cone have probably sensed this position before. While I think it is descriptively accurate of a personal struggle, I think it is inappropriate as a theological strategy for it tends to let the system dictate that either we accept its own terms for correction or that we leave it all together. The first alternative mitigates any radical critique, allowing simply emotional oscillation between euphoria and despair, and the second is an impossible luxury for the victims of the systems. In sum, I think this position works fine existentially, but fails as a social theory.

The third relationship in the text between correction and complement, nightmare and dream, is that of transformist or transfigurationist. This third position moves beyond both integration and separatism and correction and complementariness to argue that theology must deconstruct and reconstruct both the positions of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X in order to speak to the contemporary situation of oppression in the U.S. In this reading of the text we might stand with neither Martin Luther King Jr., or Malcolm X nor do we move back and forth. In front of them, so to speak, we must struggle to find new ways of theologically, theoretically and practically naming concretely systematic distortedness of major orders and of small practices, of politics in general and of face to face encounters. In this position we have to question the categories we use at the same time resisting the culture in which we

live, all on the way to transformation of the whole.

To say it even more sharply, I think that though Cone's notion of corrective and complement is a successful framework in terms of telling the stories of Martin as an integrationist and Malcolm as a nationalist, but when we are done reading I think the text has prompted us to search for a different framework. That is to say, Cone's theological concern of thinking about justice and blackness in America through the relation of Martin and Malcolm is at least a somewhat different task than writing theological biographies of these two men.

To consider how the text calls for this relation of transformation of and between integrationist and nationalism, take Cone's central concern for justice and blackness. Cone argues that for Martin justice meant equal rights, for Malcolm it meant judgment. Yet after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s awareness of injustice as dealing with political marginality, cultural self-denigration and economic powerlessness and Malcolm's encounter with new understandings of human relatedness after his travels leading him to visions of justice in community, the categories of integrationist and separatism no longer really works. But, of course, neither figure lived long enough to really come up with new understandings of justice and blackness and America.

Indeed if we could read the book back to front I think that we would find the need for what I will call a new, transfigurative theory of justice. This transfigurative theory of justice would include the naming in detail of what Iris Marion Young has called the faces of oppression in the U.S.: exploitation, marginality, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Injustice must be explicated in detail through the multiplicative or interlocking systems of oppression. Justice as a category needs to be rethought of in terms other than the distribution of goods in the system or simply leaving the system altogether. We might say in front of Martin and Malcolm justice needs to become, in Iris Marion Young's language, related to the institutional and cultural conditions to exercise one's capacities and to participate in determining one's action.

Another example might be to raise the question of what a cultural-political theology should look like after this book. For theology, after *Martin & Malcolm & America*, must take seriously popular culture, the imagination, the telling of stories and the tapping of persons' desires. Yet what will a critique look like in the

present situation, with the continual breakdown of the infrastructures of education, heath care, etc., and the increased rise of violence of all types in America? I am not sure that the critical analysis, or even the tones, of Martin Luther King Jr. or of Malcolm X fits the present time. If neither integration nor separation (or any relation between the two) offers us viable solutions, then neither does a critical analysis focusing on the lack of education, rights, and even income in reference to African Americans, and the attitudes of fear and hate on the part of white Americans, (a fact Cone recognizes in his concluding chapter). This can be framed as a question in the following manner: how do we develop a theology of political *transformation*?

I suppose, in sum, all I am saying is that in a quite impressive way Cone's book exceeds its own categories, and its success is to be measured, at least in part, by the question it leaves unanswered: how do we understand justice and blackness in the U.S. in our present situation? Perhaps there is no greater compliment to an author than to ask him to continue writing, to help us now to think through the question he has so powerfully taught us to ask.

*Notes*

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

# *Martin & Malcolm & America:* "Theology in the Public Realm"

David Tracy

In the brief time allotted, I would like to state as clearly as I can at present my amazement at this achievement of James Cone. If you think about, how rare and exceptional it is, that a major constructive thinker, a major theologian for all of us, should, at the height of his powers, take out ten years to do close historical and social scientific work while continuing his theological reflections in order to develop his own constructive theological position now in direct and critical conversation with these two great, often conflicting figures. Moreover, this complex historical and constructive project, as truly public theology, speaks not only to the Academy and the churches but also to the wider society and general public and culture who are closely receiving his book with strong and critical affirmation.

Cone's ability to speak persuasively to all three of theology's public spheres (i.e., church, academy, wider culture) is not only a rare one for a theologian but rare for a historian and a social scientist as well. At the same time I would not like to take your time to state all the things that I think I learned in Cone's reading of these two classic figures -- classic is also in the sense of inexhaustible in interpretation and therefore always forcing new reflection -- except to emphasize one comment in order to make a more general point for theology. What I found most important and unusual in this unique reading of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X and of the argument for reading both together is not only Cone's analysis of the amazing final years of both King and Malcolm but the insistence, if I may put it in my own words, that Malcolm X represents and should represent for any serious analysis of Western thought, the same kind of major hermeneutic of suspicion that we are already familiar with when we speak of the

hermeneutics of suspicion in Freud, in Marx, in Nietzsche, in feminist and womanist thought. For Cone has persuaded me that Malcolm X is exactly the kind of analyst who belongs on that small list of great hermeneuts of suspicion. For Malcolm X is the thinker who, with the same kind of clarity as Freud, Marx, Nietzsche and feminist analysts on central systemic distortions, has made unmistakably clear how central and pervasive the issue of racism has been in every form of thought, including theology.

Theologically construed this book represents as well a major example of the necessary move many theologians are pleading for methodologically. This is a step, however, which most of us cannot seem to achieve substantively in a move from an analysis of history as historical consciousness or philosophical historicity to history considered as the concrete struggle of peoples and groups (i.e., an analysis not simply of historical context but of the social location of gender, race and class). Cone achieves this both methodologically and substantively in his analysis of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. on gender and class issues in relationship to race issues in this complex work. To make that shift methodologically from historical context to social location (as I have discovered in my own hermeneutical work) is extremely difficult. Doing so, however, in relationship to contemporary figures about whom most of us inevitably possess not only opinions and beliefs but also memories is intellectually courageous by rendering yet more explicit the need for all genuine theology to become related to analyses of social location as well as to more unusual historical work; for all theology claims to take history seriously. Any adequate history of interpretation now believes that we need not only a hermeneutics of retrieval and not only a hermeneutics of critique of conscious errors, but we also need an analysis of those unconscious systemic distortions that pervade all known reality (racism, sexism, classism, etc.). Even the earlier hermeneutical model of conversation (Gadamer) must now be judged necessary but inadequate. In personal and public conversation, if you believe I am wrong you can correct me by argument. If I'm reasonable, I will change. What if something deeper and unconscious is at stake: what if, for example, you think I am pathological? In that case something else is needed. Sexism, racism, and classism are the latter kind of pathology-like problem. They are not conscious errors that further conversation and argument can undo. They are unconscious but systemically functioning distortions. When we adjust to this kind of strong, critical analysis all of us are both fright-

ened and relieved that we have an opportunity to see theology functioning finally as genuine analysis of our deeply ambiguous history. For history comes not as idealist or culturalist interpretation but as attentive to the material conditions and unconscious distortions which count by functioning unconsciously in all thought and action; all discourse in history demands attention to explicit and implicit power realities in the emergence of even our best meanings and knowledge. History demands such analysis. History demands the kind of hermeneutics of suspicion that James Cone's book makes available to anyone who can read.

For that reason I would like to end by making a further suggestion --a suggestion which I have been instructed in principally by the work of Don Matthews, Matthew Johnson, Dwight Hopkins, and my former colleague Charles Long. It may be the case that the work on the African side of the classic pluralist African-American tradition might go beyond even the work that Cone analyzed in Malcolm X or, even before him, of W.E.B. Du Bois. The new studies made available through African-American literary critics and through African-American historians of religion are the studies that we theologians also need to appropriate. Even beyond this book on Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, jr., even beyond his earlier crucial work on the spirituals and the blues James Cone may, I hope, turn in his future work to further analyses of the extraordinarily subtle and complex interplay of biblical and African, of narrative and dialectic, in that unique tradition, African-American theology. That is my hope for Cone's future endeavor. Readers of Cone's work have reason to be this hopeful -- as this summary quotation from his book makes clear:

> Martin and Malcolm are important because they symbolize two necessary ingredients in the African-American struggle for justice in the United States. We should never pit them against each other. Anyone who claims to be for one and not the other does not understand their significance for the black community, for America or for the world. We need both of them and we need them together. Malcolm keeps Martin from being turned into a harmless hero. Martin keeps Malcolm from being an ostracized black hero. Both leaders make important contributions to the identity of African-Americans and also, and just as importantly, to white Americans and to Americans in general.

# Faith, Culture, and Power: Reflections on James H. Cone's *Martin & Malcolm in America: Dream or Nightmare*

Thomas W. Ogletree

James H. Cone's contributions to theological education and to the public vocation of the churches have been immense: from the bold advocacy of black power in his first book,[1] through his careful retrieval of the texts and traditions of black liberation thought,[2] to his disciplined efforts to deepen the dialogue among various liberation traditions within a global context.[3] He continually travels untrod paths. He does not shrink back from making himself vulnerable to criticism from those who speak out of different cultures and experiences. He strives always to remain connected with the practical struggles of people, especially those who have been victims of oppression. Happily, his writings are invariably clear, rhetorically powerful, and full of passion.

Of all of Cone's books, however, *Martin & Malcolm & America* may prove to have the most enduring value. This book is important not simply because of the intrinsic merit of its subject matter, nor because of its skillful handling of the ideas, experiences, and activities of these two extraordinary leaders. It is important because of the way it portrays theological inquiry.

In his treatments of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Rev. Malcolm X, Cone highlights forms of theology that are: a) practice-based yet deeply rooted in living traditions of faith and practice: b) attentive to the conditioning and shaping power of social and cultural dynamics, but without reducing thought to a mere function of

these dynamics: c) attuned to the importance of organizational and institutional structures, both as barriers to and as resources for liberating actions, and d) substantively joined to the promotion of human dignity and social justice

Not surprisingly, the theological issues which come into focus as a result of Cone's investigations are profound and fundamental, not merely academically interesting or fashionable. I want to focus on two: 1) the relation of a redemptive and liberating religious message -- whether Christian or Muslim -- to the cultural materials that shape concrete human appropriations of that message, and 2) the relation of elemental religious convictions to sociopolitical commitments to human dignity, justice, and freedom.

*The Cultural Penetration of Distinctively Religious Understandings*

I want to begin by citing my colleague, Lamin Sanneh, a native Gambian who grew up in an influential Muslim family yet converted as a young adult to evangelical Protestantism. In a recent monograph, Sanneh argues for the essential translatability of the Christian message.[4] By its very nature, he contends, the Gospel finds expression in a multiplicity of languages and cultures. No single expression is privileged, still less final. Many, if not all, have the potential of becoming authentic vehicles of the saving, liberating Gospel. Paul's dictum, *neither* Jew nor Greek, is at the same time a positive declaration: both Jew and Greek, and so likewise, Macedonian, European, African, Asian, and Pacific Islander.

Any particular appropriation of the Christian message, Sanneh argues further, involves the assimilation into Christian understandings of cultural materials that shape a given social context. His point is that indigenization is not simply a late twentieth-century invention. It is a fundamental feature of the Christian world mission. This fact is often obscured in treatments of European Christianity since the adaptations of Christianity to Hellenistic, Latin, and European cultures was largely complete more than a millennium ago. Yet Christianity does not exist except in culturally indigenized forms.

The difficulty is this: any indigenous appropriation of the Christian message will inevitably reflect the limitations, ambiguities, and deceits that mark the culture in question. To be sure, the Christian message promises to transform and renew every culture it touches. It evokes in diverse human cultures unrealized possibilities for develop-

ment. Those possibilities in turn give human beings a new vantage point on the Gospel itself. Indigenization, then, both facilitates the hearing of the Gospel and qualifies the manner of that hearing. No particular reception of the Gospel can ever claim more than relative and partial truth, and every reception stands in need of correction and supplementation by alternative perspectives. Further, every hearing is ambiguous, flawed, even distorted, and hence, in need of prophetic criticism and transformation, both from within and from the perspective of alternative views

The activities and reflections of King and Malcolm X compel theological attention to these complex and difficult matters. King, for example, was nurtured in one of the central streams of an independent African-American Christianity. This stream of tradition disposed him to take for granted a non-racist appropriation of the Christian message. Peter Paris refers to this non-racist reading as the "Black Christian principle," a belief in the kinship of all peoples as brothers and sisters in relation to the parenthood of God.[5] Correctly presuming the universal import of the Christian message, King sought to relate his own spiritual heritage to the intellectual accomplishments of white, liberal Protestant Christianity. Even though he knew the pervasiveness of racism in American culture, he expected that white Protestantism would at least be receptive to a moral challenge to renounce its acquiescence in the racism of the larger society.

It was only with reluctance that King faced the degree to which Euro-American ethnocentrism disposed white Christians in America not only to accept, but even to advocate racist appropriations of the Gospel. To this day, most theology done by white Americans continues to treat African-American Christian traditions as little more than relatively naive and unsophisticated variants of white evangelical Protestantism. There is a general failure to appreciate the distinctive power and originality of these traditions and their indispensable contributions to the integrity of the Christian mission.

In confronting the depth of the racist assumptions in white American Christianity, King gained a heightened awareness of the positive contributions to African-American Christian consciousness of traditional African religion and of the tenacious struggles of African peoples to survive the evils of slavery. Central to African-American Christianity is its clear grasp of the race-transcending universalism of the Christian Gospel. Thus, King discovered that what he had initially taken for granted was actually an extraordinary religio-cultural

accomplishment.

More bluntly than King, Malcolm X exposed the inherent racism of white Christianity in America. He could only conclude that Christianity is a "white-man's" religion, whose function for Black Americans was to domesticate them and turn them into pet animals. To claim their full humanity and dignity, Malcolm X argued, Black people require a Black religion, one with African roots. In drawing this conclusion, he too may have failed to discern the distinctiveness of African-American Christianity

Without diminishing the compelling logic of Malcolm X's exposure of white, American Christianity, Cone also notes that the Nation of Islam did not arise from contact between Black Americans and Muslims. Its proximate origins were nationalist movements within African-American Christianity, especially that of Marcus Garvey. African-American Christianity had already dealt with the problem of Malcolm X's radical critique of American Christianity. Yet it had addressed that problem largely by means of African-American Christian resources; in particular, resources that thematized the African social and cultural contribution to the distinctive African-American appropriation of the Gospel.

Peter Paris has shown that, from time to time, the leaders of the independent African-American churches expressly stated that the empowerment and liberation of Black Americans was of more fundamental importance than explicit Christian identification as such.[6] If Christian America would not renounce its racism, then perhaps African Americans would find a non-racist religious alternative.

In the course of his public ministry, Malcolm X became increasingly aware of the fact that the Nation of Islam is not the same as orthodox Islam. In the spirit of inherent translatability, he claimed that the Nation of Islam was a distinctive appropriation of Islam suited to the social and cultural circumstances of Black Americans. At the same time, his desire to make contact with historic Islam also grew. Among other things, he arranged for Elijah Muhammad to go on holy pilgrimage to Mecca as a recognized Islamic leader. The final stage of Malcolm X's own odyssey occurred when he broke with the Nation of Islam, affiliated with an orthodox mosque, and adopted orthodox Islamic observances.

Ironically, Malcolm X's move to orthodox Islam might eventually have had the effect of distancing him from the distinctive travail of Black Americans and their religious practices Lamin Sanneh, who

is also a specialist in Islamic studies, observes that Islam, unlike Christianity, is not readily translatable into a multiplicity of cultures. To become Muslim is to become Arabic: it is to learn Arabic in order to study the Quran in its true, revealed language: and it is to adopt Arabic customs and practices in one's everyday life. Sanneh's observation should not be taken too literally. There are manifestly divergent Islamic parties, and Islam, like any world religion, adapts to some degree to various local and regional cultures as it spreads to different parts of the world. Sanneh's point is that such cultural adaptation is intrinsically appropriate in the case of Christianity, but religiously more problematic in the case of Islam. The diverse tendencies in these religions qualify their respective patterns of acculturation.

Islam's Arabic cultural base appears not to have inhibited its spread, either in Africa or in urban centers within the United States. In Africa, at least, Islam does seem to have complicated the efforts of relatively young, multi-cultural African states to develop a distinctive and cohesive national identity, one capable of sustaining social and political development over time. Based on Sanneh's analysis, one can anticipate that the Arabic nature of Islam would in time also complicate the efforts of African Americans to claim an authentic American identity. In this respect, the Nation of Islam, despite its curious historical inventions, may have been more functional for African Americans than historic Islam. Though Islam may offer African Americans freedom from the deep racist assumptions that pervade American Christianity, it could in the long run lead to its own forms of cultural alienation.

Cone's study dramatizes the practical import of the faith-culture question for theological inquiry. It renders urgent the need for attending systematically to these dynamics in the interest of bringing to the fore the liberating, world-transforming promise of the Christian message.

*Faith and Justice*

The second major set of issues concerns the relation between basic religious convictions and public responsibility for social justice and human well-being. These issues are especially difficult where the public life of a society is formally secular and religiously pluralistic. In such a society, there can be no direct transfer of discrete religious convictions to public policies and practices.

Cone observes that Malcolm X's religion *was* his preoccupation with justice. For King, he suggests, the quest for justice was an essential implication of faith. More important, it would seem, is that justice for Malcolm X and King moved in two different directions, at least in the early phases of their public activities. For King, the focal interest was public policy, initially the right of all Americans to the ballot and to full access to public accommodations. These goals were largely achieved through federal Civil rights legislation in 1965 and 1966.

In the last years of his life King gave increasing attention to economic issues, especially the right to a job with decent pay and good benefits, and the right to a quality education Concern for housing, health-care, and other social goods was also in the picture. King's assassination, Cone reminds us, occurred in the context of his support for sanitation workers in their dispute with the city of Memphis.

In turning to problems of poverty, King became increasingly aware of class factors in the sufferings of African Americans. He expressed sympathy for socialist ideas, though, as Cone notes, he did not undertake any systematic studies in class analysis. Besides, his interest in poverty was by no means single-minded. He devoted considerable energy toward ending the war in Vietnam.

As a minister of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X emphasized Black consciousness, Black pride, Black discipline, and Black economic and social self-development. Acutely aware of the harsh realities of class, his response was to stress discipline and self-development. He also promoted Black resistance to the unjust and insulting treatment of Black Americans, even sanctioning the use of violence in self-defense. Yet his own practice remained as consistently non-violent as King's!

During the early years of his public activity, Malcolm X did not concern himself with public policy. In racist America, he believed, such an interest would be naive, fruitless, even self-demeaning. He ridiculed King for his vision of justice and for his programmatic activities. His tendencies toward political activism were curbed, moreover, by Elijah Muhammad. The more Malcolm X gained public notoriety, the more aggressively Elijah Muhammad sought to restrain his political activities.

After breaking with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X moved closer to King's political involvements. Alongside an on-going commitment to Black autonomy and self-development, he took greater interest in the promotion of civil liberties within the larger American society. In so doing, he displayed more tolerance for the ambiguities of American politics.

In this new context, Malcolm X had to surrender any simple identification of justice with religious commitment. Though he continued to present himself as a Muslim minister, he found it necessary to create explicitly political organizations that could unite people with a diversity of religious and secular sensibilities. What bound people together in these new organizations was not religion, but a common determination to promote justice and freedom for Black Americans.

For religious leaders who would seek to play an effective public role the central critical questions are two. First, how do religious communities -- whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish--properly play a role in fostering justice and human well-being within a secular religiously plural society? Second what forms of public law and public policy can actually bring about justice and human well-being in post-industrial, post-modern societies?

When religious people enter the public arena, must they bracket their distinctive faith identities in order to uncover common ground among like-minded people across a diversity of religious and secular views? If common ground can be found, moreover, will it furnish normative conceptions of justice and human well-being capable of guiding public actions? Might this common ground be provided by the American civil religion, as some have argued? Can the American civil religion sustain a viable public ethic alongside of discrete conceptions of religious ethics? If the American civil religion, however, is too tainted with racism to serve as a vehicle for relative justice in human society, is there a public ethic that is common to African-American communities and to other racial, ethnic, and religious minorities -- perhaps a special way of understanding the American civil religion itself? Alternatively, are there some authentic and practical ways in which discrete religious traditions within a religiously plural society might substantively figure in a public discourse about the common good. When we confront questions such as these, we soon discover that it is far easier to talk about the essential unity of faith and justice than to find practical faith-informed ways of promoting justice in a secular, religiously plural society.[7]

The second set of issues has to do with the formulation of public policies that can actually promote human justice and well-being in a post-industrial, post-modern society. What can we do to mitigate persisting problems of poverty, human degradation, and racism in contemporary American society? What courses of action will make a difference?

Poverty and human degradation hardly confront us with simple problems that we can readily solve if we only have the requisite determination! Indeed, there would appear to be no single analysis of the causes of such suffering that can grasp all of the relevant factors, still less trace their multiple interrelationships. Similarly, there is no readily identifiable set of policy initiatives that can effectively reverse processes that lead to such suffering. Furthermore, even if we could discover promising directions to take, we would still face the task of building a public consensus in support of those initiatives. These difficulties are not cited to dramatize the hopelessness of the present situation. They are lifted up in order to make clear the critical studies required for the practical implementation of key features in the legacies of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

Cone's study of King and Malcolm X heightens ourappreciation for these two singular leaders. Cone will not have achieved his purposes, however, if he merely prompts us to add their names to our list of saints and heroes. His study presses us toward new forms of critical inquiry and practical experimentation in support of an on-going struggle for justice, dignity, and human well-being in a world set free from the evils and cruelties of racism.

*Notes*

1. James Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969).
2. James Cone, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986) and Gayraud Wilmore and James Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-79.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979).
3. James Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 93-113. *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, 445-601.
4. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

5. Paris, Peter J., *The Social Teachings of the Black Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).
6. Paris, 50-52.
7. Cf. Thomas W. Ogletree, "Renewing Ecumenical Protestant Social Teaching," in Peter Paris and Douglas Knight, eds. *Justice and the Holy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 338-405. and "The Public Witness of the Christian Churches: Reflections Based upon Ernst Troelstch's *Social Teachings of the Christian Church.*" The Annual Society of Christian Ethics, 43-74.

# Martin and Malcolm and the African-American Struggle

Alton B. Pollard III

*Martin & Malcolm and America*

It is appropriate that I begin this essay on a note of high praise: the publication of James Cone's *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* signals a new level of growth and theoretical advancement for black Theology, and the continuing institutional maturation of African-American religious studies. Unlike many previous offerings in Black theological reflection, *Martin & Malcolm & America* effectively challenges the marginalizing propensities of society and the academy where African America is concerned, to critical acclaim and commercial success. Muslim, Christian, Jew, black, white, brown, nationalist, integrationist and others cultural, religious, racial and ethnic are attesting to the seminal significance of this book.

As an American of African descent and as a sociologist of religion, I am especially concerned to establish the locus for Cone's work on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X within the broadening, deepening internal dynamics of the African-American experience itself. At the very least, such an approach is likely to illuminate the social sources of positive identification with Cone's work in America's African communities. And in the process, if we are fortunate, we may be able to communicate something more -- why this particular writing, a theological and religious one, is also of such moment for the nation.

Of course, ever since the publication of his first book in 1969, *Black Theology and Black Power*, Cone's writings have heralded the

arrival of something new on the academic front, a form of theologizing that takes seriously the God-talk of those who are in too many other respects bereft of voice. The crucible for much of Cone's scholarship is the tumultuous era of the modern African-American Freedom Movement, dating roughly from the civil rights initiatives of the 1950's to an awakening black consciousness and black power in the 1960's and early 1970's. At the very least, *Malcolm & Martin & America* is to be read as a testament to an entire generation of freedom loving, justice-obsessed women and men. As for Cone himself, this work is a compelling distillation of his thought and, to my mind, its most significant application. Lastly, this book offers resounding vindication of an ineluctable yet oft-ignored fact: theological and sociopolitical consciousness stand deeply in need of each other.

*The "Movement"*

By the middle of the twentieth century the descendants of Africa in America had come to number well over twenty million. Two world wars and a myriad of domestic changes had begun to transform the mind and self-image of African America, releasing powers that had been but too dimly realized and defined before. African Americans were everywhere becoming a people in motion, in movement, daring to challenge the monolith of white prerogative, striving against institutionalized pathologies and implicating a social order designed to devalue their meaning as citizens and humans.

The African-American Freedom "Movement" of the 1950's and beyond was, of course, an intense evocation of powerful and prolonged experiences that for the better part of three hundred years had sought to dismantle the institutional apparatus of racism. The spirit of African-American protest and conflict is historic -- from David Walker and Nat Turner to Francis Ellen Watkins Harper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett -- but the scope and magnitude of these surging new protests were of a scale previously unknown.

Somewhat less well remembered is the fact that the freedom movement was, tactically and ideologically, two in expression: on the one hand largely Southern, rural, Christian and demonstrably non-violent, on the other Northern, urban, and more disposed to violence as a form of mass action and self-defense. The militant uprisings of the south became firmly identified with Martin Luther King, the Southern

Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, while the freedom movement's explosive momentum north and west was to find primary expression in Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam and, later, the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

The movement, as led by King, would, along with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, be largely responsible for desegregation rulings that forced public facilities to end *de jure* (but not *de facto*) discriminatory practices. Public school systems from Little Rock, Arkansas to Washington, D.C. had to extend a measure of educational equality and, for the first time, the private sector was compelled to take black job applicants seriously. By most objective criteria, conditions in many of America's communities of African descent improved as a result of movement efforts.

However, an additional set of factors existed in the African-American community that were discordant, contentious, and of equally historic consequence. As movement participant and chronicler Vincent Harding observed, "though African Americans formed a community in the broadest sense of the word, though there was a national sense of identity, ferment, and movement among them, there was no overall sense of direction, no clarity on where their efforts were taking them and how they might go forward with maximum power to force change in society."[1] Hardly a simple statement, nor an easy sentiment to publicly express. But the sustaining article of faith among African Americans, that justice and equality were to be had by all, also harbored distresses and ambivalences unawares. What if there was not a place for each of us, in fact, but for only a chosen few?

Consciously or not, some in the fledgling black middle class were already beginning to distance themselves from the larger struggle, conducting their lives in ways which indicated that not everyone was responsible to the whole. Social gains awaited African Americans anxious to move beyond segregation, but with the subtle proviso they accept larger societal values that had, with rare exception, buttressed the oppression of their race. In other words, the winds of desegregation which swept the black nation in the 1950's and 1960's were prelude to a painful and pronounced wrenching of the African-American soul. At the time there were few who could envision the pitfalls as well as the opportunities presented by legal desegregation. W.E.B DuBois, better than most, understood the complex strivings of the American soul and the late-modern dilemma of reconciling racial con-

sciousness and identity with the attainment of American material success. In his 1947 essay, "Can the Negro Expect Freedom by 1965?," DuBois prophetically writes:

> It [freedom] will bring, however, certain curious problems. How far will ... young Negroes consider that their primary duty is toward the cultural group which they represent and which created them? If they had been born in Russia or England, in France or Japan ... such a question would not arise.
>
> On the other hand, Negroes in the United States, being on the one hand American, and on the other hand members, more or less integrated, of the Negro group, will not have so clear a duty before their eyes. They may think of their preferment chiefly as their personal accomplishment and therefore as a chance to escape an unpleasant environment and hateful conditions. They may look upon their careers as American, not Negro; withdrawing themselves from the Negro group as much as possible.[2]

In due time, the rewards of civil-rights integrationism proved smaller than had been anticipated. The social advancement of a relatively few individuals gradually, almost imperceptibly, began to take precedence over the welfare and concerns of the dispossessed black masses. Again, incremental social gains were accorded some African Americans, but at what psychological and spiritual cost? The net result was an unquestioning acceptance of general societal values inimical to millions of blacks and others living beyond the pale. The newly "integrated" of America saw no clear remedy for racial injustice, save a sort of personally negotiated detente between two near -- but not quite -- equally competing allegiances.

By the mid-sixties the southern wing of the Africa-American Freedom Movement faced a growing crisis as it searched and groped for ways to move beyond the penultimate issues of constitutional civil rights to the deeper, structural racism of American society. Civil rights orthodoxy rightfully assumed that African Americans were entitled to participate fully in the socioeconomic benefits of the American dream. However, movement leaders seldom if ever discussed what kind of people, in moral and social terms, such "progress" might produce --

middle class, white-collar African Americans disdainful of their community and amnesic concerning their culture. King, in particular, was valiantly struggling with the changes which his movement had helped to create, changes which were to increasingly plummet him into the deepest levels of American politics, economics, and culture.

In the meantime, urban griots across the north were declaring that no authentic social equality could exist in the United States if distinctive African- American cultural patterns had to be surrendered. No matter the cost, these activists contended, the lure of unilateral forms of integration had to be fought to prevent racial assimilation. The civil rights dream of "freedom now," long linked to the Horatio Alger success story, naively affirmed social acceptance and upward mobility within the existing centres of corporate power. Student activists came to repudiate this dream; black nationalists never shared it. The King-led, Southern phase of the movement had helped to release forces for change, forces which were now surging beyond it along with a growing sense that, for the time being, the future of the struggle lay elsewhere. As the civil rights coalition began to unravel, the preeminent voice to articulate an alternative vision for African Americans was Malcolm X.

*Malcolm X*

Thanks in good measure to the cinematic work of Spike Lee, Malcolm X is no longer a menacing or mysterious figure to most, no more the infamous "Malcolm the Tenth." And, yet, despite the current fascination with and endless marketing of Malcolm, are we now or have we ever been sure who he is? It has often been difficult for us, decades removed, to grasp the utter humanity of Malcolm, his earthy and infectious personality, his meaning as a revolutionary, his genuine commitment to the unintegrated, disinherited, and dispossessed. As we know, his tough urban upbringing had much to do with his greatness. Malcolm Little rose from the self-destructive depths of criminal involvement to become his generation's leading proponent of nationalism. Leaving prison in 1952, he became Malcolm X -- the "X" symbolically repudiating the white man's name, religion, and culture. As the leading spokesperson for Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam his rhetoric, articulate and rivalling that of King's, had a near hypnotic effect upon black audiences. He preached a militant and, at first, polemical message that transformed the lives of innumerable poor

and oppressed African Americans, terrified whites, and upset most traditional civil rights leaders. On any given occasion, Malcolm was sure to attack the twin evils of white complicity and black complacency:

> My beautiful black brothers and sisters! Look at your skins! We're all black to the white man, but we're a thousand and one different colors. Turn around, look at each other!... During slavery it was a rare one of our grandmothers who escaped the white racist slavemaster. That rapist slavemaster who emasculated the black man with threats, with fear until even today the black man lives with fear of the white man in his heart! [3]

As a gifted orator and organizer for the Nation of Islam, Malcolm served in several cities before heading the well known Temple Number Seven of Harlem. Word that the "chief messenger of the Messenger" was going to speak would always bring out hundreds of people, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. And although as Gayraud Wilmore points out, Malcolm repudiated Christianity, "his prophetic ministry contributed to the further development of the indigenous black religion that was never exclusively Christian anyway."[4] Even upon his conversion to orthodox (Sunni) Islam, no one spoke more forcefully to the relationship between the faith of African Americans and black unity, identity, and empowerment than El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, Malcolm X.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

To my mind Martin Luther King, Jr., his life and work, has been mystified and misappropriated even more than Malcolm X. What do I mean by this? I mean that in this nation's most passionate efforts to embrace King it has simultaneously sought safe refuge from his witness. In the clamor to lay claim to the "universal" King, the mildly challenging and stirring "dreamer," what is often ignored was his equally explicit commitment to the children of Africa in America, that we as a people should fight injustice with dignity and integrity, to never embrace the moral poverty of larger American society or become dependent wards of the same. The limits that we would set for

King, that he had once set for himself, dishonor his radically democratic vision for the nation.

By 1967 King's singular focus on civil rights integration, with its idyllic call for African Americans to move gratefully and unquestioningly into the "mainstream," had metamorphosed into an unparalleled identification with the poor and oppressed -- mainly people of color -- wherever they were. In the period from 1964 until the end of his life his commitment to human rights grew to become perilous, compassionate, prophetic. Fundamental systemic change became the compelling objective:

> For years I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of the society, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values.[5]

And again:

> We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's market place. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.... When you deal with this, you begin to ask the question, "Who owns the oil?" You begin to ask the question, "Who owns the iron ore?"[6]

The "revolution of values" and "restructuring" that King had begun to envision for the United States centered on issues of economics, human rights, and peace. As the boundless dimensions of human need became excruciatingly clear, his freedom movement intensified to include the international and largely Two-Thirds world poor. Much to the dismay of his associates, King was pressing beyond the older, traditional understandings of integration (equality of opportunity) to advocate a radical kind of cultural and political pluralism (equality of conditions). As Cone so adroitly notes, by life's end King had made the crucial and, no doubt, fatal distinction between being "integrated *out* of power" and being "integrated *into* power."[7] For the African-American estate this meant the affirmation of black identity and heritage within the context of U.S. citizenry; and for every American, the call to a revolutionary transformation of the entire nation, inclusive of

its racial and other societally constructed forms of preferment. Herein, King believed, lay the seeds for global human transformation -- and the beginning of the beloved community.

*The Struggle*

My discussion of Malcolm and Martin has admittedly been brief. Numerous other commentators have thrown into sharp relief the political and ideological differences between the two men. Rightly so. But the messages of our exemplars while in conflict were equally complementary, linking issues of culture to the imperatives of justice.

Ironically, the numbers of movement beneficiaries who saw fit to ignore or reject efforts at voluntary racial organization (versus an evil and compulsory segregation) continued to swell over the years, no matter the messenger, means or end. Relatively speaking, as legal segregation gave way the pursuit of socioeconomic success so preoccupied African Americans they no longer operated as a united front or out of a common bond of experience. They, like the vast majority of Americans, were rapidly becoming different sets of people with different interests. As DuBois somberly writes, African Americans had been successfully "bribed to trade equal status in the United States for the slavery of the majority of men."[8]

Into the void of forsaken values and heritage the frustration and rage of African America's urban enclaves, long present in underground form, found explosive release. "Freedom now" was rejected in favor of an even more strident "by any means necessary." "Black power," "power to the people," "fight the power," "burn, baby burn," and "white reparations" were defiant and necessary responses that had long been simmering in the steaming cauldron of America's social proscriptions and racial posturings. Grounded in an arresting sense of oneness, the functional forms these slogans took were fiercely retributive, sometimes vengeful, and presumed effective in dismantling the nation's virulent racial system. In brief, the new strategies for social change denied the utility of non-violence and spiritual disciplines and repudiated King's "dream." Had our grueling and protracted struggle for freedom been co-opted? Or was the great colossus of American quasi-democracy and capitalism about to meet its match?

Before we move further into the interior reaches of the African- American struggle let me return to an earlier point. What are we to make of the critical and popular recognition accorded Cone's study?

Cone himself provides at least a partial answer. A quarter of a century after the assassination of Martin and Malcolm and the Movement's precipitous decline, now more than ever, he tells us, "We need both of them and we need them together."[9] If the truth be told, the paramount crisis in the African- American community today remains what it was thirty years ago (and, with slight revision, the same concerns might well apply to any American group). We have fought segregation and bigotry only to see their nefarious and insidious return -- the ravaging of African-American lives of every age and description; structured unemployment and chronic underemployment; environmental, sexual, and psychological forms of genocide. The struggle for African America goes on, unabated, how best to champion the solidarity of the race (Malcolm's particularism) *and* the kingdom beyond caste (Martin's universalism).

If nothing else is clear to us about Martin and Malcolm by now, it should be that their life concerns were profoundly religious concerns. Key to the African-American Freedom Movement, for a generation at least, was the connection of black socio-political objectives with moral-ethical imperatives. The essential genius of Martin and Malcolm was rooted in their understanding of religion's capacity to expose and engage an unjust and oppressive social order. To believe as they did (without denying their legitimate theological differences) meant that no socio-political strategies for change could endure without a spiritual touchstone, without due recognition given to the vital link between personal and cultural deep-rootedness. Without the holistic uniting of the inner and outer, personal and communal, spiritual and social it was impossible for the "Movement," any movement, to maintain the necessary incentive for change.

Unfortunately, much of that legacy is today in disrepair. Few anticipated the negative consequences of legal desegregation, especially beginning with Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society." Viewed differently, it is hardly accidental that the continuing trend among some African Americans is to absolve themselves, as much as possible, of racial group responsibility. For the first time in the history of the United States, sufficient numbers of African Americans have been deemed socially and intellectually qualified as to make the phenomenon of *crossing over* (as opposed to the less savory historical activity of *passing)* the prize of great worth. However, the price of admission to the "mainstream" has been high, too high, including an acquiescence to social attitudes and arrangements that relegate the majority

of African-Americans, women, Latinos, and Native Americans to lives of involuntary servitude, government dependent status, or worse.

As we approach the end of this century the racial lessons of the recent past have begun to fade *ipso facto* from the collective memory, a reflection of the powerful and prolonged processes which now and again have stalled the African-American -- and larger American -- movement toward liberation. The once unthinkable possibility, that African Americans might somehow be tempted to relinquish their birthright, to renounce their unique (but by no means superior) history of strident social protest and rich cultural gifts finds disturbing fulfillment in some of the more prominent African- American voices of our day. Some proclaim "self-help," while others espouse the common good of "the race." The loudest and most disruptive voices belong to those whose tunnel vision of self-help leads them to attack the very educational and professional affirmative action that enabled them to climb the middle class ladder of success. It is rather curious to note that those firmly ensconced in the self-help camp seldom find fault with a society whose war chest dwarfs its community chest and where, by all indications, human suffering continues to escalate at an alarming rate. Historian John Hope Franklin, I believe, said it best: "Self-help is admirable so long as it encourages initiative and achievement in a society that gives all its members an opportunity to develop in the manner best suited to their talents."[10] What the apostles of self-help fail to mention is that even in the great "color-blind" society, admittance is no guarantee of acceptance. Thankfully, the legacy of Martin and Malcolm will not let us so easily forget.

*The Hope*

In this essay I have attempted to connect Cone's work to our struggles of the not so distant past and also to more current concerns, some less evident than others. For sure, Martin and Malcolm were not then, nor are they now salvific figures. As Cone reminds us, both men had their limitations, particularly where sexism and oppressions based on gender, class and environment were concerned. Nor are Africa's children on this continent presently in need of a messiah; they desperately require ordinary leaders who make mistakes, assess their errors, and embark on finding solutions. It is the manifest witness of Martin and Malcolm -- their commitment to forcing ***us*** to address social justice and the common good -- that remains critical in our unremitting

quest for liberation.

African America's youth, the children of the Movement's aftermath, are beginning to explore the sacred texts and events of that earlier age, hoping to gain insights that will prove liberating for the present. What will be their responses when they read works like *Malcolm X Speaks*, Martin King's *Trumpet of Conscience*, and the writings of Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer? Or, what if they are introduced to *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*, Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* and Sam Yette's *The Choice?* For these are veterans of the Movement who, along with many others, struggled and wrote to remind us that "Freedom ain't free."

Today's young people are responding in distinctive (and, to some of their elders, disturbing) ways to the ongoing struggle for freedom; through rap music and hip-hop, Afrocentricity and African cultural pride, rediscovery of the black college and university, and identification with black South Africa, Haiti, Cuba, Grenada, and others in the Two-Thirds World. In a word, our young folks hunger for a renewal of activism that is contemporary but no less relevant, a movement that is capable of nourishing their famished souls. Dare they to believe that the magnificent tradition of radical African-American consciousness which Malcolm and Martin so ably represented still exists? Dare they hope to find a forward-looking way out of our current impasse, an impetus to emancipate, elevate, and liberate the race -- the human race -- collectively?

In that last question lies the ultimate meaning of the ongoing African- American movement for freedom and my own most intimate hope in writing this essay. In the last half century, changes of major moment have transpired across African America. To an astonishing degree we have transformed ourselves, the nation, and the world and in the process, we have been transformed. The transformation has had mixed consequences for African Americans, however, favoring those who have "made it" (is this Martin's dream?) and condemning those who never will (is this Malcolm's nightmare?).

When we look closely at all our present strivings, from the religio-political to the socio-economic, prospects for the African-American estate appear to be unavoidably, irrefutably dim. Indeed, if there is any judgment that rests on us today, it may well be that we have so marginalized the moral and ethical, so lost our way in pursuit of the American Way that we feel we can no longer withstand. But the great and unrelenting challenge, James Cone so carefully reminds us, is to

learn (and learn again) the lessons of the past -- good, bad, and otherwise -- for the living of these days. The gifts of the ancestors, the wisdom of the elders, the teachings of the griots, the courage of prophetesses and prophets, these are repositories without measure. We end, then, where we began. *Martin & Malcolm & America* joins this magnificent tradition, a signpost in the luminous darkness, a discerning and instructive word for our time.

*Notes*

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3. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (reprint, New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 201-202.
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# *Martin & Malcolm & America:* A Response by James Cone

James Cone

I want to begin with an expression of my deep appreciation to the respondents for their crisp and incisive evaluation of *Martin & Malcolm & America.* Like most writers, I like to hear nice things said about the importance of my work, but I learn more from what I don't like to hear: the limitations of my argument and vision. Although a critique is often a bitter pill to swallow, I try always to take it for the sake of my theological health, even when it comes from unexpected places. I will continue to mull over for some time the issues and questions my respondents identified. I wrote *Martin & Malcolm* because I wanted to generate the kind of discussion that we have had this afternoon. A writer, first and foremost, wants to be taken seriously, and theologians seldom are taken seriously by the three publics David Tracy mentioned: church, culture, and the academy. One reason theologians are often ignored is that they seldom take themselves seriously. Thanks to my critics, I have been given a serious hearing this afternoon.

Rebecca Chopp is right. I left unanswered the question, "how do we understand justice and blackness in the U.S. in our present situation?" I did not write *Martin & Malcolm* because I thought I had the answer to that urgent and complex question. I am currently writing a book trying to explore it at a deeper level. There are also other questions, explicit and implicit, raised by my respondents, especially Thomas Ogletree, which are not answered in *Martin & Malcolm* and will not be addressed in my response today.

What I want to do today is to say a word about why I wrote *Martin & Malcolm.* In order to explain my motivations, I need to say a word about my theological journey. Martin and Malcolm had a profound effect upon the development of my identity as a black Christian theologian. Although I studied theology at Garrett Theological Seminary (now Garrett-Evangelical) and Northwestern University for six years (1958-64), I didn't find my theological voice there. I hardly knew who I was as a theologian; I was a graduate student who mimicked white male Europeans and Americans. I wrote numerous papers on issues such as justification and sanctification in the writings of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley; the Barth and Brunner debates on natural theology, Tillich's method of correlation; Bonhoeffer's christology; Bultmann's method of demythologization; Niebuhr's doctrine of sin and salvation; and the highly controversial death of God theology. Much of what I studied was intellectually fascinating and challenging. But I didn't find my voice in those persons or in the issues they debated. Who I was as a "Negro," a "Colored," or a "Black," and how I was called to live out my racial identity as a Christian or an American did not get played out in the theological readings or in classroom discussions.

I found my theological voice after I left graduate school and went back to teach at Philander Smith College, a small black United Methodist school in Little Rock, Arkansas, from which I had graduated earlier. Black students at Philander were not interested in the theologians or the issues I had studied in graduate school. They were enthralled by the Civil Rights movement that was spreading throughout the South and by a burgeoning Black Power movement in the North. "What does Jesus' gospel have to do with the black struggle for justice or with our struggle to be black in a white racist society?" they inquired.

My students asked me questions I wanted to ask my professors in graduate school but was too afraid to ask, largely because I did not know how to phrase them in an inoffensive or acceptable academic manner. I found my theological voice as I tried to respond to my students' questions and to the urgent socio-political issues raised by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. There were two main theological questions for me: first, how can I be a Christian and struggle for racial justice? and second, how can I be Black and also Christian? Nothing I had learned in seminary had prepared me for these questions.

Martin and Malcolm helped me to answer them. Martin taught me how to be a Christian and to fight for racial justice. He taught me that the identity of the Christian gospel could not be separated from the struggle to make the world a just place for all. The two must go together. Of course, a few white theologians and ethicists (notably Reinhold Niebuhr and John Bennett) made justice a crucial element in their understanding of the Christian identity, but, unfortunately, racial justice was either ignored or made secondary to other issues. Martin, however, was so forceful in his articulation of racial justice as the great moral issue of our time that he embarrassed both white and black churches into becoming involved in the Civil Rights Movement. A few white theologians even became involved, although they did not make race an important subject for theology.

Although Martin taught me how to be a Christian, he did not teach me how to be black. Martin used the term "Negro" as a description of his racial identity throughout his life. It was only under the pressure of the young radical Black Power advocates that he gradually began to curtail his public use of the term "Negro" and to replace it with the term "Black." But it was a reluctant change and thus was not an integral part of his thinking about racial identity and freedom in America.

Malcolm taught me how to be black. But he didn't teach me how to be a Christian. In fact, Malcolm challenged and even ridiculed my Christian identity. He told me I couldn't be black and Christian at the same time. Blackness and Christianity did not go together because "Christianity," he said, "is the white man's religion." Malcolm forced me to wrestle with the question, How can I be a Christian in a society in which the public definition of Christianity is identified with white supremacy?

Since I was born black, I knew I couldn't stop being black. Besides, now that I had become conscious of the power of my blackness, I loved it and had no intention of trying to deny or to ignore it. The words "Negro" and "Colored" no longer served as an adequate description of my racial identity. The once hated word "Black" was reclaimed and replaced them. The sound of blackness in the popular culture (as in James Brown's "I'm Black and I'm Proud") reinforced my determination to make it the starting point of my thinking about everything.

As I focused on these thoughts and feelings, my then suppressed voice began to emerge, and I heard myself thinking out loud for the first time. But could I still be a Christian theologian and a

black-thinking person? No theological scholar whom I read in seminary could help me wrestle with the question about Christianity's relationship with blackness. I felt alone, isolated without much guidance. The one time I raised that question in a seminary class, it almost got me expelled. So, I suppressed that question in order to get through graduate school. And when we do that, we sometimes forget that we ever had the question.

It was in the streets of the African-American community that the question about Christianity's relationship to justice and blackness was forced upon me in a manner I could not ignore. I had to deal with that issue or lose my mind trying. It was not only an intellectual question but an existential and a therapeutic question. My theological sanity was at stake. I remember that emotional and painful struggle as if it were yesterday.

The spiritual and intellectual discovery of blackness was like a revelatory experience, like meeting and falling in love with the person with whom you want to spend the rest of your life. That was what my encounter with Malcolm was like. The word "black" in the phrase black theology came from Malcolm X. "Theology" in the phrase came from Martin King. I was determined to find a way to bring Martin and Malcolm together into a constructive understanding of the Christian faith that evolved out of and was accountable to the black struggle for justice. That is why I wrote *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970). Martin and Malcolm, therefore, were the main sources and catalysts for the development of a liberation theology in the context of the African-American struggle for justice.

After I had been writing and teaching black theology for nearly 15 years, I began to ask myself and other black colleagues, what difference did it all make? What did we accomplish? Where do we go now? I did not know the answer to these questions. Of course, I could train doctoral students at Union Seminary and other places, hoping that they would show us the way. And some are showing us the way. We only have to look at the work of Dwight Hopkins, Alton Pollard, Kelly Brown-Douglass, Garth Baker-Fletcher, Delores Williams, Katie Cannon, Jackie Grant, and other participants at this and other sessions at the AAR meetings to see that young black men and women scholars are showing all of us a way into the future. Pollard and Baker-Fletcher have provided informative and challenging responses not only to Martin and Malcolm, but to other persons and

issues in popular culture, especially to the enormous impact of the rap artists.

But to deal with my personal struggle to define the meaning of black theology for the present crisis, created partly by the failed dreams of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, I had to return to where I started in 1968. I went backward in an effort to find a way forward. When I began writing about black theology in 1968, I didn't have time for a disciplined study of Martin and Malcolm, even though they were my primary inspiration. I had to make a statement immediately about theology and racism. I was too angry and too passionately engaged with the urgency of the racial moment to wait. Both *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation* were my response to what I believed about the significance of blackness for theology and the struggle for racial justice—an articulation of the rage that I felt deep down in my theological gut. I had to say what I believed was the truth of the gospel *then,* to get it out, or to be consumed by my rage. The times were filled with much racial tension, and white theologians were ignoring it in their teaching and writings. Somebody had to address theology's relationship to the black revolution. I decided to accept the challenge. I couldn't do the kind of careful thinking and research that I was taught in graduate school, weighing all sides of the issue objectively before offering an alternative perspective.

By the year 1980, however, the world was more complex and more confused. A reactionary former movie star was now the President. The consequences for the African-American community were devastating. The achievements of the Civil Rights movement were undermined. What do we do? I went back to Martin and Malcolm, hoping to find in them insights and clues for understanding the present crisis and a way out of it. But this time, in contrast to the 1960s, I decided to do theology through Martin's and Malcolm's voices, through an interpretation of their lives in relation to each other.

After several years of studying Martin and Malcolm, I was still struggling, still looking for a way into the future. Rebecca Chopp is right about the need to move beyond Martin and Malcolm, beyond the integrationism and nationalism, beyond the correction and complement dialectic and seek to create a new understanding. I didn't go back to Martin and Malcolm because I thought they had the answers to the present theological situation. But I thought I could find in them a dynamic tension, a reality out of which constructive possibilities

could be created. I still believe that. However, I do not believe that the answer to the current problems of racial justice resides in one or both persons. It resides in our own collective struggle and work together. Our hope lies in our possibility to find a common ground in which to address the crisis of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other conflicts in the U.S. and the world.

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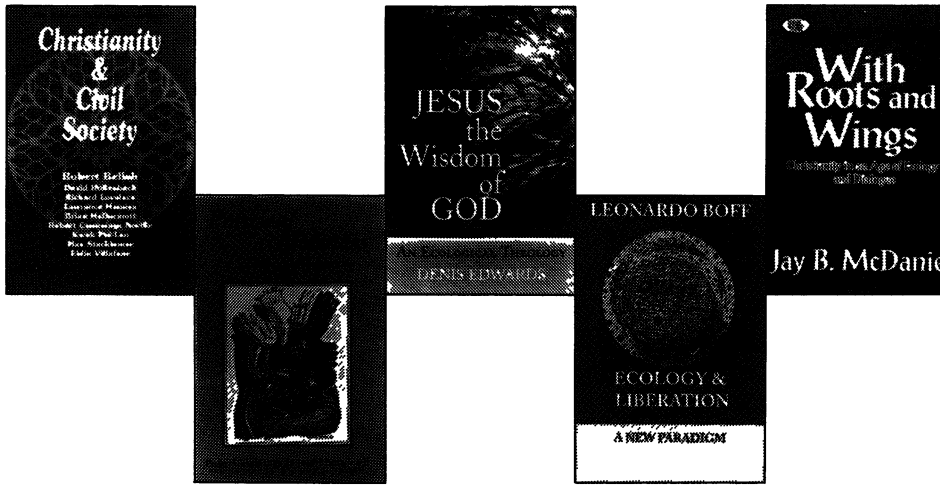


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# Edward Blyden and the Presbyterian Mission In Liberia

Moses N. Moore, Jr

In 1888 Edward Wilmot Blyden, writing from Liberia, expressed the following sentiments in reference to recent developments in the American Presbyterian community:

> . . . truth is a long time coming to the front. In this world of shadows pursuing shadows, David Swing goes into obscurity and Francis Patton rises to the top -- both seekers after and both looking at it and aiming at it from different points of view and seeing some of its many-sided aspects.[1]

Although numerous studies have examined Blyden's contributions to West African nationalism and Pan-Africanism, none have attempted to analyze his life and work in the context of the varied theological, doctrinal, and missiological debates that took place within the American Presbyterian community and its foreign mission arena during the last half of the nineteenth century.[2] This oversight is significant because Blyden's conceptualization of the problems of black existence and the solutions that he envisioned were decisively shaped by the religious and theological orientations that he embraced.

Steeped from youth in the conservative Calvinism of the Reformed tradition, Blyden received his secondary education and preparation for ordination under the auspices of the Old School Presbyterian Church. Then, for almost thirty years as an ordained Presbyterian minister, missionary, and educator, he shared, championed, and attempted to advance the theological, missiological, and pedagogical

tenets of Presbyterianism in Liberia. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, however, Blyden became increasingly disillusioned with the traditional theological and missiological tenets of Christianity, especially as applied in the West African mission arena. Subsequently, he became not only a vocal critic of the Christian missionary effort in West Africa but also a fervent apologist for Islam and traditional African culture. Consistent with this theological, missiological, and ideological transition, he demitted his Presbyterian ordination and became "a minister of truth."

Blyden's massive literary corpus reflects and chronicles his theological, missiological, and ideological evolution.[3] His writings also provide important insight into a number of issues and concerns (theological, missiological, and racial) that contoured Presbyterianism in both the United States and the mission arena during the last half of the nineteenth century. Drawing upon this corpus, this article examines Blyden's theological and missiological thought and contributions within the context of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia and the broader theological and missiological developments of nineteenth century American Presbyterianism.

I.

Edward Wilmot Blyden was born on August 3, 1832 of African parentage on the Danish West Indies island of St. Thomas.[4] His initial religious and theological orientation was shaped by pious parents and membership in the local Dutch Reformed Church. Its minister, John P. Knox, an American recuperating his health on St. Thomas, became Blyden's religious mentor. Impressed by the youth's piety and intellect, Knox suggested a ministerial career for Blyden and began tutoring him in the theological intricacies of nineteenth century Calvinism.[5]

In 1850 the seventeen year old Blyden, a communicant in full standing of the Dutch Reformed Church, traveled to the United States and attempted to enroll in the theological department of Knox's alma mater, Rutgers. Blyden's dream of a formal theological education was thwarted, however, when he was refused admission to Rutgers and two other American theological seminaries "because of his race."[6] A disillusioned Blyden was contemplating returning to St. Thomas when he came under the influence of John B. Pinney and Walter Lowrie who urged him to emigrate to Liberia and continue his education at

the Presbyterian sponsored high school in Monrovia.

Blyden's meeting with Pinney and Lowrie was fortuitous. Both were members of the Old School Presbyterian Church and intimately associated with Presbyterian missionary efforts in Africa. Pinney had served as one of the first Presbyterian missionaries to Liberia and Lowrie was the corresponding secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Both were also active supporters of the colonization movement and its efforts in Liberia: Lowrie as a member of the executive committee of the American Colonization Society and Pinney as president of its auxiliary, the New York Colonization Society.[7]

The activities and commitments of Pinney and Lowrie illuminate the intimate relationship that had evolved by mid-century between the Old School Presbyterian Church, its West African missionary enterprise, and the colonization movement. It was a relationship initially rooted in the convergence of heightened foreign mission concern and rising antislavery sentiment within the American Presbyterian community during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In 1774 Presbyterian stalwart Ezra Stiles and Congregational divine Samuel Hopkins submitted a letter to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia requesting assistance in educating and sending "two natives of Africa on a mission to propagate Christianity in their native country." The project, however, was deferred and superseded by events relating to the Revolutionary War and its aftermath.[8] It was revived in1816 with formation of the American Colonization Society. Colonization's broad based and ambiguous program (a combination of piety, pragmatism, and prejudice), appealed to denominations such as the Presbyterians that were struggling to maintain accord in the wake of growing sectional and theological tensions over the Church's proper response to slavery.[9] Its projection as a providential instrument for the evangelization of Africa also attracted Presbyterians anxious for their church to begin missionary work in Africa. [10] Thus the General Assembly "gave its hearty endorsement to the organization of the American Colonization Society" and routinely passed resolutions encouraging its support by Presbyterian congregations. [11]

The founding of Liberia in 1822 by the Colonization Society provided missionary minded Presbyterians with a ready locus for their West African Mission which began in 1833 under the auspices of the Western Missionary Society.[12] However, Liberian colonization and the West African mission enterprise, synonymous in the minds and hearts of many American Presbyterians, soon became enmeshed in

the bitter doctrinal and theological controversies that rent the American Presbyterian community in 1837 and divided it into Old School and New School Churches.[13]

One of the first acts of the Old School Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.) was the establishment of its own foreign mission agency. This was accomplished in 1837 with the founding of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. and the transference of the work of the Western Missionary Society to it.[14] Liberia and the colonization movement would have special appeal to the new Board as it sought to convey Christianity "to whatever parts of the heathen and anti-Christian world the Providence of God might enable."[15]

II.

Despite the opposition that colonization engendered among abolitionists and a substantial proportion of the African-American community, its goals and the opportunities that it afforded appealed to Blyden.[16] Disheartened by America's racial climate that reached its nadir with passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in the year of his arrival, he agreed to immigrate to the fledging nation of Liberia with the assistance of the Colonization Society and his Presbyterian supporters.[17]

Prior to his departure for Liberia, Blyden presented one of the earliest of his many defenses of the colonization movement and its efforts in Liberia: "I know that the object of the Colonization Society is to evangelize the dark parts of Africa, through the instrumentality of her own sable sons, and in order to do this, it is endeavoring to gather her dispersed, but civilized and enlightened sons, and plant them on its shores." He concluded with the theological query: "How can any fail to perceive disinterested benevolence in such a scheme?"[18] Thus with deliberation and a sense of Providential Design, Blyden linked his future and that of Liberia to the American Colonization Society and the Presbyterian mission in Liberia. He would become the most articulate spokesman of the dream that the fledging nation would become the nucleus of a modern West African state that would serve as the outpost of Christianity in Africa and proof of the capabilities of the "Negro race."[19]

Blyden's immediate goal of furthering his education in Liberia was delayed by the belated reopening of Alexander High School. The school, named in honor of Alexander Archibald, was subsidized by

the Old School Board of Missions and viewed as a vital part of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia.[20] In 1851 Rev. David Agnew Wilson, a white graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, arrived in Liberia to expedite its reopening.[21] Meanwhile, Wilson began private instruction of Blyden. In letters to Walter Lowrie and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, Wilson described Blyden as "a promising youth. . . modest, respectful, of a kindly disposition, of good natural talents, and attainments." He added: "I have high expectations of his usefulness. . . . If I am not greatly mistaken, he will make an able minister. . . and if not an able teacher, at least, one competent to fill my place, should it be vacated by sickness or death.[22]

Upon the opening of the school in 1852, Blyden and his classmates engaged in studies "directed strictly under Presbyterian Principles" by Wilson who thoroughly shared the theological, missiological, and pedagogical tenets of the Old School Presbyterian Church. These he strove to impart to Blyden and his other young charges.[23] Wilson's influence upon Blyden's theological orientation was heightened after Blyden's "determined yet anguished decision" in 1857 to enter the Presbyterian ministry.[24] In preparation for his ordination examination, Blyden began part-time theological studies under Wilson's tutelage while serving as a lay preacher and tutor at Alexander High School.

Although Wilson was impressed with Blyden's theological studies and continued to report enthusiastically to the Board on Blyden's progress, Blyden revived his dream of a formal theological education. One month before his scheduled ordination examination, he wrote to the Board requesting assistance for two years of study at one of the Church's theological seminaries in the United States.[25] His letter of petition to the Board reflected his conviction that an "enlightened ministry was an indispensable agency" in Liberia's development.[26] It also reflected his belief that Presbyterianism was especially suited to this task:

> I am now a candidate for licensure, in order to which I shall be examined next month before Presbytery. . . But I do not feel competent for the new duties that will thereby devolve upon me; . . . I feel that to start out just as I am upon the duties of life, particularly duties of so high a character, would be to invite failure. I beg, therefore, for the sake of the cause of Christ, for the interest of Presbyterianism in this land, that

> assistance be afforded me by the Board to attend for two years one of the Theological Seminaries of our church in the United States. . . . [27]

Although Blyden's request was consistent with the Church's increasing emphasis on seminary based theological education for its ministers, the Board rejected his petition.[28] Racial paternalism may have been a factor in its decision. Blyden's expression of self-confidence, pride, and intelligence offended members of the Board prejudiced in their expectations of black intelligence and capabilities.[29] Such sentiments were clearly reflected in the extensive correspondence between Blyden and the Board during the tenure of John L. Wilson as corresponding secretary. Wilson, a white Southerner who had served as a pioneer Presbyterian missionary in West Africa, often criticized Blyden for his "pompous display of learning" and "the pretension to literature which pervades and characterizes your letters."[30] Wilson's perception of Blyden's abuse of his educational attainments may have been decisive in the Board's decision not to subsidize Blyden's seminary education. Ironically, this decision may have inadvertently helped to nurture the theological and missiological independence which Blyden would exhibit as he gradually distanced himself from the theological and missiological orthodoxy of Old School Calvinism.

Despite lacking a seminary education, Blyden gave satisfactory evidence of his knowledge of and subscription to the tenets and doctrines of Old School Presbyterianism during a thorough ordination examination.[31] Upon ordination in 1858 he became a member of the Presbytery of West Africa.[32] He thereby joined the slowly growing roster of Presbyterian clerics of African decent whose ranks and loyalties, like those of their white counterparts, had been divided by the schism of 1837 and its aftermath.[33] Black ministers affiliated with either the Old School or New School found their vocational opportunities circumscribed by racism within their respective Churches. Those affiliated with the Old School, however, had even fewer opportunities for realization of their ministerial talents in the United States than their New School counterparts.[34] Consequently, Liberia became the focus of the talents and skills of many black Old School clergy some of whom were educated at Ashmun Institute specifically for missionary service in West Africa. A significant proportion of the membership of the Presbytery of West Africa was made up of men who fit this profile.[35]

Despite the less progressive posture of the Old School Church regarding slavery and matters of race, it nevertheless had some appeal to Blyden and other blacks who chose its affiliation. This appeal apparently included its distinctive theological, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical tenets as well as the limited missiological and educational opportunities that it afforded.[36] Blyden's initial allegiance to Old School Presbyterianism was rooted in all of these factors.

III

In the decade following his ordination, Blyden actively sought the advance of Old School Presbyterianism through press, pulpit, and leadership in the Presbytery of West Africa.[37] He had additional opportunity to express his allegiance to the theological and pedagogical tenets of Old School Presbyterianism when he succeeded Wilson as principal of Alexander High School in1858. Under his direction the curriculum of the school continued to reflect a decisively Presbyterian orientation.[38] In an 1860 report to the Board of Missions, Blyden confessed to having "great faith in Presbyterian principles and policy for the elevation of the Liberian Church and State." He added, "whenever and wherever these principles are likely to have precedence every effort should be used to forward them. We should watch with Jesuitical vigilance every opening, and avail ourselves of every proper expedient to bring the people under the influence of Presbyterianism."[39]

A year later Blyden abruptly resigned his position at Alexander High School and accepted appointment to the faculty of the newly established College of Liberia as Professor of Greek and Latin Languages and Literature. In announcing his appointment, Rev. Joseph Tracy, Secretary of the Trustees of Donations for Education in Liberia, reported that Blyden was an "ordained minister and missionary of the Old School Presbyterian Church... with... claims to scrupulousness in respect to scholarship." [40] Nevertheless, controversy erupted almost immediately over Blyden's acceptance of the College's "Fulton Professorship" allegedly without "proper evidence that he had subscribed to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith." [41] Subscription to the doctrines of Presbyterianism had long been of special concern to Old School conservatives preoccupied with doctrinal and theological laxity. An issue in the schism of 1837, it reemerged as a source of contention with the further divisions of American Presbyterianism occasioned by the Civil War.[42] Its emergence in Liberia illustrates

that the West African mission arena was not immune to the theological and doctrinal conflict which afflicted the wider American Presbyterian community. It also suggests that Blyden's theological orientation had already become suspect in some Presbyterian circles.[43]

Blyden was not oblivious to the theological, racial, and regional issues racking the American Presbyterian community. Thus in 1861, upon being commissioned by the West African Presbytery to attend the Old School General Assembly, he sought advice from Rev. John L. Wilson of the Board concerning the prudence of his attendance "in the present agitated state of affairs in the U. S."[44] His concern proved to be warranted. Meeting in Philadelphia amid heightened sectional tension, the Assembly, upon passage of the Spring Resolutions by Northern commissioners, divided along sectional lines. Subsequently, the southern wing of the Church withdrew and formed the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.[45]

However, a prudent Blyden "found so much to do in Britain that his crossing to the United States was delayed" until the close of the turbulent Assembly. Any disappointment that he might have experienced over failure of "enjoying the privilege of being the first black representative from Africa in that distinguished body" was probably mitigated by the reception which he was accorded at the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church meeting in session at Edinburgh. He was elated by the Synod's acceptance of his credentials from the Presbytery of West Africa and the invitation to address its delegates with a speech that rehearsed the history of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia and solicited funds for extension of its educational offerings to females. [46] Over the next decade Blyden would actively cultivate relationships with Presbyterians throughout Europe and even the Middle East.[47]

## IV

The increasing respect shown Blyden in West Africa and abroad was a reflection of his reputation as a scholar as well as Presbyterian minister and missionary. [48] In works such as *A Vindication of the Negro Race* and "The Negro in Ancient History," he employed historical as well as biblical scholarship in defense and celebration of the accomplishments of the black race.[49] By the mid-1870's publication of these and other works in some of the outstanding literary and scholarly journals of the era had established him as a scholar of international stature.

Although the Board of missions and the Presbytery of West Africa took pride in Blyden's accomplishments and often basked in the honors bestowed upon him, there were increasing tensions between Blyden and their membership. The causal factors, personal and public, often overlapped and became inseparable. For example, Blyden's expansive concept of his ministerial vocation often led to his involvement and subsequently the involvement of the Presbytery and Presbyterian mission in the often volatile arena of Liberian politics.[50] Blyden's concept of race and his increasing antipathy against mulattoes (blacks of mixed racial heritage) were also disruptive of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia.[51] Blyden, who was proud of being a "pure Negro," argued that mulattoes were "immoral" and "weak people" whose "confused race instincts" hampered the advancement of both Presbyterianism and the race. Such views, privately and publicly expressed by Blyden, became a source of tension and conflict within the Presbyterian community in Liberia and the United States, both of which included significant numbers of blacks of mixed racial heritage.[52]

Blyden's relationship with the Presbyterian community in Liberia and in the United States was further strained when he was accused in 1871 of having an affair with the wife of Liberia's President, Edward J. Roye. Rescued from a "mulatto" mob previously incised by his depiction of them as "mongrels," Blyden fled to Sierra Leone.[53] The response of the Presbytery to the scandal was precipitous and reflected some of its members personal animosity against Blyden. Forgoing an investigation of the charges or trial, the Presbytery met without quorum and summarily suspended Blyden from his ministerial privileges and functions. Blyden, however, received influential support from Pinney who questioned the motives of the Presbytery and predicted that its members would soon have to the "reverse their action."[54] Pinney's comments proved prophetic. On December11, 1872, the Presbytery "Resolved that the Rev. E. W. Blyden be and is hereby restored to all the functions of the gospel Ministry." [55]

V.

In 1873 an embittered Blyden returned to Liberia from exile in Sierra Leone.[56] Although his privileges were restored by the Presbytery, he was increasingly critical of it and the general state of Presbyterianism in Liberia. He was especially concerned about the Presbytery's "habit of licensing young men to enter upon missionary

work, with hardly any preparation." Alluding to similar concerns about the dilution of Presbyterian standards that were being expressed in the American Presbyterian community, he warned that this practice was "continually lowering the character of Presbytery and opening the door wider and wider for incompetence."[57]

While Blyden's concerns appear justified, there is evidence to warrant the suspicion that some of his harsher assessments of the Presbytery and Presbyterianism in Liberia had personal motivation. In what proved to be a self-serving letter to John C. Lowrie of the Presbyterian Board, Blyden emphasized the Presbyterian commitment to a learned ministry and argued that the lack of proper education and educational facilities was undermining the quality of Presbyterian clergy and the special mission of Presbyterianism in Liberia. The long term solution, he suggested, was the establishment of a Presbyterian college in Liberia where candidates for ordination would have "good training. . .under competent instructors." As a result, he predicted, "in a few years, we shall have in Liberia the interesting and effective spectacle witnessed everywhere else, of Presbyterian clergymen as Christian, gentlemen, and scholars."[58]

In closing, however, Blyden disclosed his more immediate agenda which was the reopening of Alexander High School under his direction. Evoking the image of Princeton and the legacy of Presbyterian divines who had contributed to its development, Blyden linked his personal agenda and that of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia:

> It is an undoubted that a great many of the important enterprises religious, moral and political in the United States, can be traced to Princeton College and what Princeton College has been to the United States the Alexander High School in a much humbler degree, will be to Liberia. . . .
>
> We shall not have, of course, the lofty gifts of a Jonathan Dickinson or the almost inspired intellect of a Jonathan Edwards or the seraphic eloquence of a Samuel Davies or the Executive power of [John] Witherspoon but if you accept of my services to inaugurate such a work, I promise you the labours of one who would endeavor to devote his whole head and life to the glorious enterprise.

> It cannot be expected that the present generation will witness the organization of the great Presbyterian College--which must exist in this country if the Republic is to succeed in its political and missionary work--but I trust I may aspire, without presumption, to assist in the preliminary task of breaking the ground and clearing the foundations of the Future. . . .[59]

Having eloquently convinced the Board of the necessity of improving educational opportunities in Liberia, Blyden was reappointed Principal of Alexander High School.[60]

Blyden's political astuteness, scholarship, and long cultivated friendships allowed him to exercise considerable influence on the Board of Foreign Missions and the Presbytery. However, as the Board began a policy which transferred oversight and responsibility for the Liberian mission to the Presbytery, Blyden's influence and perogatives were increasingly challenged by younger and more conservative members of the Presbytery. Thus in 1876 Rev. Robert A. M. Deputie charged the Board with partiality in its treatment of Blyden. He complained to the Board's corresponding secretary that "there appears to be a degree of favoritism manifested towards. . . Dr. Blyden, that such liberty be allowed him to go when and where, to travel and preach as he may deem proper, and to be allowed special and private letters which we are never permitted to see, but which he circulates among his friends to the detriment of the Church. . . ."[61]

Blyden, in turn, expressed growing disillusionment and impatience with the Presbytery whose impertinent members often misunderstood, resented, and frustrated his agenda.[62] Presumably, it was a combination of vocational and personal frustration that induced Blyden, heralded as the proponent and champion of indigenous African ecclesiastical leadership and the West African independent church movement, to inquire in private correspondence with John Lowrie: "Has not the Board the power under certain circumstances-especially such exceptional circumstances as characterize the work in Liberia--to resume the management of its operations once committed to a Presbytery on missionary ground?" He continued, "It would be better, rather than leave matters as they are, for the Board to resume direct control of its operations here."[63]

An additional factor inducing Blyden's call for the resumption of direct Board oversight of the Liberian mission may have been

his concern over diminishing financial support for Alexander High School. His desperation to maintain support from the American Presbyterian community is reflected in his request that the Board formally prefix the name Archibald to the school. Blyden reasoned: "As the school was named during his life-time and he [Archibald Alexander] did not object to the compliment, we can hardly suppose that if he were consulted he would interpose any objection to making the compliment more precise and definite."[64]

VI.

In 1877 Blyden's ministerial and pedagogical efforts were interrupted by his appointment as Liberia's Ambassador to the Court of St. James.[65] Three years later he resumed efforts to advance Presbyterianism in Liberia as the newly appointed President of the College of Liberia, moderator of the Presbytery of West Africa, and its commissioner-elect to the 1880 General Assembly.[66]

Blyden was one of two representatives "of the continent of Africa" present at the Assembly which opened on May 20 in Madison, Wisconsin. The other representative, Dr. Robert Hamill Nassau, was a white missionary assigned to the Church's West African mission at Corisco.[67] As moderator of the Presbytery of West Africa and newly elected President of the College of Liberia, Blyden's primary objective was to encourage the American Presbyterian Church not to" relax its educational efforts" in Liberia.[68] He was an extremely active commissioner and presented the "best speech" on missions at the evening session of the Foreign Missions Board on May 25. The climax of his attendance, however, was "a noble sermon" on "Africa's Service to the World" delivered before the "packed" Assembly the following Sunday.[69]

The report of the Assembly published in *The Presbyterian* noted the significance of Blyden's attendance and suggested that in his sermon before the Assembly, Blyden had "unconsciously defin[ed] his own position" in allegiance to doctrinal and theological orthodoxy.[70] This superficial assessment of Blyden's theological posture was a reflection of increasing theological and doctrinal tensions within the American Presbyterian community. Although often couched in terms of allegiance to the Westminister Confession and Catechisms, the concern of Presbyterian traditionalists by 1880 was increasingly the impact of new forms of theological and doctrinal heterodoxy associated

with an emergent theological liberalism.[71]

In correspondence to his long time friend William Coppinger of the American Colonization Society, a triumphant Blyden provided his own account of his activities at the Assembly: " The present General Assembly is said to be the largest since the Reunion, and the church is exceedingly well represented. . . I addressed them on Wednesday night last, and they seemed much interested." His report to Coppinger also included a poignant account of a reunion with John P. Knox, his early pastor and mentor, on the floor of the Assembly.[72] It was also to Coppinger that Blyden confessed that his triumph at the Assembly had been marred by conflict with "mulatto" delegates:

> At Madison there were three black delegates out of six colored from the South--and the three blacks were anxious to go to Africa and will go--the three mulattoes said they would not go without plenty of money to pay their way back if they wished to return, and when I was to preach before the Assembly the three mulattoes contrived to find engagements somewhere else and did not come to hear the sermon. The three blacks were glad to come, and felt proud I was to be heard on Africa by the leading men of the Assembly. The mulattoes were indifferent. Several other things occurred at the Assembly which showed a marked difference between the two classes--and I did not fail to point out the difference to the blacks.[73]

In the wake of his impressive showing at the Assembly, Blyden was so inundated with invitations to preach before Presbyterian audiences that he lamented "I cannot fill one half of the engagements I have before returning home."[74] En route to the East coast for departure, he preached at First Presbyterian Church in Chicago, in Philadelphia at "Dr. Harper's Church," at Dr. Breed's West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church, and before the black congregation of Dr. John Bunyan Reeve.[75] He also addressed the Presbyterian Alliance and attended the commencement of the Collegiate Department of Lincoln University, formerly Ashmun Institute, where he was awarded an honorary "Doctor of Divinity" degree. [76]

Despite his clash with mulatto clergy at the Assembly, Blyden's relationship with leading northern based black Presbyterian

clerics such as John Bunyan Reeve, John Anderson, and later Francis James Grimke' remained cordial.[77] This was reflected in his successful recruitment of Rev. Hugh Browne of Shiloh Presbyterian Church and Rev. T. McCants Stewart of Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church to teach at the College of Liberia. Both were recent graduates of Princeton Seminary and Blyden hoped that they would not only lend academic strength to the college but also solidify its relationship with Princeton and the wider American Presbyterian community. In announcing their appointment, Blyden noted: "The gentlemen being both Princeton men enjoy the confidence of Dr. McCosh and the Professors there and have a large acquaintance among Presbyterian clergymen."[78]

Although Liberia College was ostensibly "a State institution. . . in no way connected with any sectarian or religious organization," Blyden's efforts on behalf of the college clearly indicate that he viewed it as a means to advance both the black race and the Presbyterian mission in Liberia. In his inaugural address, "The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans," Blyden called for a progressive and race-conscious curriculum that incorporated the study of religion.[79] He also took special pride in noting that the college's curriculum had been approved by none other than President McCosh of Princeton.[80] In an additional overture clearly intended to further ties with the American Presbyterian community, Blyden encouraged establishment of the "Charles Hodge Professorship of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy" and Hugh Browne's appointment to it.[81]

Despite such efforts, Blyden's tenure as President of Liberia College was mired in turmoil and proved unsuccessful. Among the contributing factors were Blyden's lack of tact and administrative skills, his continued prejudice and antipathy against mulattoes, and the school's financial dependency upon American trustees. In June 1884, after a protracted struggle which pitted him against the board of trustees and even his American recruited professors, Blyden resigned from the college.[82] Characteristically, he viewed his difficulties at the college as symptomatic of what he perceived as the intrinsic weakness of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia. The lamentable condition of church, mission, and college in Liberia, he argued, was the direct result of the Board's misguided policy of appointing to Liberia "persons largely of mixed blood, who could least endure the climate and do efficient work in it."[83]

VII.

As the decade proceeded, Blyden continued to lament the declining fortunes of Presbyterianism in Liberia and simultaneously express his allegiance to it. There is evidence, however, that suggests that he had began to distance himself from many of the traditional theological and missiological tenets of Presbyterianism as early as the mid-1870's. No single factor seems to account for this transition which would eventually lead him to demit his Presbyterian ministry and become one of the most vocal critics of traditional missionary Christianity in Africa. Most assessments of Blyden's transition focus on his increasing appreciation of Islam and its positive influence on West African indigenous cultures and people in contrast to that of traditional missionary Christianity. Generally overlooked as a related factor in his transition is the impact which new scientific, academic, and intellectual currents such as Darwinism, biblical criticism, and comparative religion were having upon the theological and missiological orientation of Western Christianity in general and Presbyterianism in particular during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[84] Blyden's intensive contact and correspondence with scholars and clergy in America and Europe insured that he was not isolated from these influences as they were introduced and responded to first within the European and later the American Presbyterian community.[85]

Among American Presbyterians, defenders of orthodoxy, led by Charles Hodge and Francis Patton, denounced Darwinism, biblical criticism, and the findings of corollary disciplines such as comparative religions as incompatible with the tenets and doctrines of Presbyterianism.[86] Meanwhile, more moderate and liberal Presbyterian clergy such as James McCosh, David Swing, and Charles Briggs attempted to reconcile and appropriate the new scientific, intellectual, and academic currents. The resultant controversy was chronicled in theological journals such as the *Princeton Review*, monographs such as Charles Hodge's *What Is Darwinism ?*, and eventually a series of well-publicized heresy trials.[87]

Blyden was not the only member of the Presbytery of West Africa abreast of these developments. Robert A. M. Deputie, a "mulatto" member of the Presbytery and long time opponent of Blyden, was convinced that the Presbytery was in danger of being infected

with the heresy of liberalism and that Blyden was the source of infection. In 1876 Deputie wrote to Lowrie and associated Blyden with the heterodoxy of Rev. David Swing who had been charged with "defection from Westminster Standards" by a conservative faction of the Chicago Presbytery led by Francis Patton, editor of the *Interior*: "Dr., the 'Interior,' a few years ago, expressed grave doubts as to soundness of Dr. Swing's preachings and I will assure you that they were no more serious than mine are, as to the orthodoxy of Dr. Blyden."[88] Eager to emulate Patton's vigilance and defend Presbyterian orthodoxy in the West African mission arena, Deputie expressed frustration that "Dr. Blyden designs his articles for the literary world--the reading world, and we have not the means of securing them and consequently we cannot bring charges against him. But Sir, it is true as truth can be 'He that is not for us is against us.' "[89]

Deputie's assessment of Blyden's theological stance appears to have been more accurate than that of the 1880 Assembly report which eagerly associated Blyden with Presbyterian orthodoxy and conservatism.[90] A careful reading of most of Blyden's published writings as well as private correspondence after approximately 1870 reflect his increasing departure from the theological and missiological tents of Presbyterian orthodoxy and critical appropriation of many of the presuppositions, tenets, and methodologies associated with theological liberalism. The missiological, theological, and ideological impact of this appropriation is vividly illuminated in Blyden's numerous post-1870 writings pertaining to Islam and the Christian missionary enterprise in West Africa.[91]

## VIII.

By the mid-nineteenth century Islam was a well established and increasingly influential presence among the indigenous inhabitants of interior West Africa.[92] Blyden, like most members of the Presbytery of West Africa and the Liberia mission, however, had little initial interaction with Muslims and other residents of the interior. Reflective of the peculiar nature of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia, most of their attention was focused on the repatriate population along Liberia's coast. Despite occasional expressions of concern and calls for the Presbytery to expand its missionary efforts into the Liberian interior, little was effectively done.

During the early 1860's various assignments took Blyden into the Liberian interior where he was deeply impressed by Muslim villages and their Arabic speaking inhabitants. Ideological and missiological concerns converged as he became convinced that Liberia's development was dependent upon the successful conversion of its Muslim population and that the key to effective missionary outreach to them was through study of their religion and the Arabic language.[93]

Few of Blyden's colleagues in the Presbytery shared his enthusiasm for the study of Islam and Arabic. In keeping with prevalent theological and missiological tenets, most viewed Islam as "a pernicious and perverted religion propagated by disciples of a false prophet."[94] However, Blyden's enthusiasm for work among Liberia's Muslim population and conviction that "The Arabic language must be the medium of communicating sound Christian knowledge" into the Liberian interior did elicit interest and support from the American Colonization Society and the Presbyterian Board of Missions. In correspondence to the latter, Blyden persuasively argued that the Presbyterian Church and its Liberian missionaries were particularly situated to successfully convert adherents of Islam: "From this church I am persuaded will come the men who will cope most successfully with the Mohammedans of the interior; and I am persuaded that teachers from among us will bring aspiring Mohammedan youth as willing leaders to their feet. The quietness and dignity of the well educated Presbyterian contrasts in his favor to the Mohammedan, with the excitable and emotional religion of the Methodists and others. His self reliance and intelligent acquaintance with the Scriptures are elements of character that impress the Mohammedans. . . ."[95]

Further impetus for Blyden's study of Arabic came with the opening of Liberia College and his appointment to the faculty. With the intent of adding Arabic to the college's curriculum, he departed Liberia in May 1866 for intensive study at the recently opened Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.[96] Enroute he wrote to Rev. Daniel Bliss, the Presbyterian president of the College, explaining that owing to the rapid extension of Islam in West Africa knowledge of Arabic had become a necessity "for those who were to educate the youth and train the future missionaries in that part of the world."[97] After completing his studies, Blyden, who possessed a rare talent for mastery of languages, returned to Liberia and in 1867 introduced the study of Arabic to his pupils at the college.[98] A year later his success among Muslims

convinced even the Presbytery of West Africa to belatedly endorse his work:

> This Presbytery, having heard the report of Rev. E. W. Blyden, in relation to his labors among the Mohammedans, and the gratifying opening that seems to be presented among that people, do Resolve, That we most heartily express our sympathy in this work, and do recommend Mr. Blyden and his labors to the patronage and Christian benevolence of the members of the Presbyterian Church in the United State and in Liberia, and to all benevolent associations having for their object the spread of the Gospel of our blessed Lord and Savior.[99]

Although the initial impetus for Blyden's study of Islam and Arabic had been the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, subsequent research and contact with European Islamic scholars and West African Muslims heightened his appreciation of Islam and its impact in West Africa. [100] In a number of articles published during the 1870's, Blyden began to publicly advance the controversial thesis that Islam's influence upon the indigenous culture and inhabitants of West Africa had been salutary while that of traditional missionary Christianity had been destructive.[101] Consequently, he insisted that Christian missionaries had much to learn from Islam. "Mohammedanism in Africa," he argued, "instead of being treated in the off-hand and contemptuous manner adopted by some, who seem to have gathered all their knowledge of the religion from the Arabian Nights, ought to be approached with earnestness and respect; for there is much in it which Christians may profitably study, and from which they might glean important lessons." [102]

His sympathetic portrayal of Islam and increasing contacts with its adherents elicited renewed resistance from members of the Presbytery of West Africa.[103] Thus in 1876 Reverend John M. Deputie, brother of Blyden's nemesis, Robert Deputie, wrote to the Board complaining of Blyden's priorities:

> It was a source of deep regret that Dr. Blyden was not present with us [at a meeting of the Presbytery]. From

> our point of view it appears that he is more interested in the success of Mohammedanism than that of the Presbyterian Church. This may not be the case, but it does appear so. There have been no gatherings of the followers of Islam in our midst from which he has absented himself. This is passing strange! [104]

In 1887 a number of Blyden's previously published studies of Islam and the Christian missionary enterprise formed the core of his "magnum opus," *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race.* [106] Despite its provocative and controversial views, the book was favorably reviewed in many religious and scholarly journals on both sides of the Atlantic. One reviewer noted, "I am not sure but that Dr. Blyden's book, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, may not yet prove the greatest contribution of the age on the gigantic subject of Christian Missions." Among those who commented favorably upon the work were Rev. Cannon Isaac Taylor, the Anglican missiologist and Islamic scholar; Dr. Benjamin Tanner, editor of the *A. M. E. Church Review* ; Professor Hartmann, Professor of Arabic and Oriental languages in the University of Berlin; and Rev. David Swing. [107]

Critics of *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* minimized its missiological contributions and viewed it as proof that Blyden had "left Christianity and joined himself to the Mohammedans."[108] In refutation of this persistent charge Rev. J. R. Frederick of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone and a disciple of Blyden explained:

> Dr. Blyden has not left Christianity, the Christianity that you and I believe in, that Christianity which teaches that God is no respector of persons. . . Dr. Blyden has not joined himself to the Mohemmedans, but he is doing a unique work among them. He is striving to make them understand Christianity as it is taught in the New Testament, and not as it is exemplified in the lives of its representatives from Europe. His knowledge of the records of their religion in the original language and his peculiar method of dealing with them give them confidence in him. Old and young Mohammedans listen to his teachings. . . . He has not "joined himself with theMohammedans, nor has he left the religion of Christ." [109]

IX.

Confusion about Blyden's religious orientation was compounded by his decision to demit his Presbyterian ordination in order to become a "Minister of Truth." This decision, made just months before publication of *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race,* shocked the Presbyterian community in Liberia while puzzling and dismaying his Presbyterian friends in America. Speculation concerning the reasons for his action were rampant on both sides of the Atlantic and usually alluded to his suspected conversion to Islam. However, the factors influencing his decision were much more complicated and reflect the convergence of personal, theological, missiological, ideological, and racial factors.

In his letter of resignation, dated December 8, 1886 and addressed to "Dear Brethren in the Presbytery of West Africa," Blyden stated: "In view of circumstances entirely beyond my control, I have come to the conclusion, after much thought and earnest prayer, that I can no longer be useful or happy in the exercise of my ministry and am compelled to ask the Presbytery to release me from the sacred office and allow me to return to the condition of a private member of the church."[110] The stunned members of the Presbytery reluctantly complied with his request and resolved: "that this Presbytery take advantage of the present occasion to express their high appreciation of the services of Dr. Blyden as rendered to both church and state for the past 28 years and in releasing him from his sacred office they commend him most earnestly to the Father of Mercies to keep him safe from the wiles of the evil one until his life's end." [111]

News of Blyden's action was carried to the wider American Presbyterian community in *The Presbyterian* which reported:

> Dr. E. W. Blyden has given up the sacred ministry and has taken a seat in our church as a private member. It is sad that such a step was taken by so learned a divine as the Doctor. The cause of such action no one can divine. The Presbytery was amazed but granted his request. . . .Liberia is in a sad condition.[112]

Long time friends, such as Coppinger, were especially disturbed by the news of his resignation and the rumors which accompa-

nied it. Coppinger, writing in "profound astonishment and grief," inquired of Blyden: "Is it true that your have demitted the Gospel Ministry, and if so what are the causes of so serious a step?" And in response to rumors that alleged Blyden's conversion to Islam, Coppinger confessed: "I cannot believe that you prefer Mohammedanism to Christianity. . . ."[113] "The Christian world," he warned, "has neither respect nor patience with any one raised and educated in the Christian faith who turns to Mohammedan or who becomes the friend and apologist of Islamism." [114]

In an extensive reply to Coppinger, marked "private," Blyden noted that he demitted his Presbyterian ordination "from my deep love of Africa and for the truth and for freedom." He also reassured Coppinger that he would continue in a broader ministry: "Because I have severed my connection with the Presbyterian ministry I shall none the less be a minister of truth. The spirit of god is not confined to place or office."[115] And in refutation of allegations attributing the remittance of his ordination to an Islamic conversion, Blyden explained, "I do not 'prefer Mohammedanism to Christianity.' But I prefer what is good for my people in the method of its propagators to what is evil in the methods of Christian teachers."[116]

In later correspondence with Princeton minister John Miller, Blyden explicitly linked his estrangement from the Presbytery and demittance of his ordination to missiological concerns:

> My studies, my prayers, my travels, my reading, my conversations with intelligent pagans and Mohammedans in the interior of this county have convinced me that the method and teachings of Missionary Societies will never make any impression upon this continent. Feeling the force of this truth and tired of "playing at missions" while so pressing a work demands earnestness and intelligent energy, I severed my connection with the Presbytery.[117]

In explaining his actions, Blyden also referred to the new theological and missiological perspectives that dared to envision Christianity and Presbyterianism as other than the last and highest revelations of God to man.[118] Quoting Charles Briggs, the controversial Presbyterian liberal and Biblical scholar, who would soon be charged with heresy, demit his ordination, and also leave the Presbyterian

Church, Blyden confessed:

> I had been long of the opinion expressed by Dr. Briggs at the close of the preface to his *History of American Presbyterianism* [*American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History*], that while "Presbyterianism is in advance of all other Christian denominations in the realization of the ideal of Christianity, it is not a finality. It is the stepping stone to something higher and grander yet to come, when the Spirit of God shall be poured out in richer measure and in more abounding gifts and graces upon the Christian world, in order to a revival of religion [sic], which will transcend the Protestant Reformation by its omnipotent energy and world-wide sweep." [119]

He concluded, "This being the view of leading Presbyterian divines, I do not see why they should dread my indications among Presbyterian thinkers of a desire to reach that 'something higher and grander yet to come,' and why they should attempt to limit the manifestations of the Spirit which like the wind 'bloweth where it listeth.'"[120]

Blyden, noting additional developments in the American Presbyterian community, expressed hope that the recent appointment of Francis Patton to the presidency of Princeton would have a meliorative effect on Presbyterian theological and missiological conflict:

> If Princeton follows the program implied in President Patton's epigrammatic declaration in his inaugural address viz.--We shall neither be ashamed to close our eyes in the presence of God nor be afraid to open them in the presence of Nature," the Church will be delivered from the strait jacket of theological conventionalities, and the missionary idea and missionary practice will be freed from rags and trammels of mediaeval superstition.

The breadth and depth of Blyden's theological and missiological posture was hinted at as he proceeded to contrast the perspectives and subsequent fortunes of David Swing, the Presbyte-

rian liberal, and Patton, his conservative nemesis. Both, he explained, were earnest "seekers after truth" but limited in their view of "its many-sided aspects."[121] Comparing his plight to that of Swing who had been harried out of the Presbyterian ministry, Blyden noted the consequences of his own commitment to "truth": "I have been forced, owing to my views and aspirations, to sever my connection with all Missionary Societies and therefore from the assistance to meet my temporal wants which such connection brings. For more than four years now I have had no salary or support."[122]

In correspondence with Miller a week later, a less temperate and more despondent, Blyden alluded to the flaring controversy among Presbyterians regarding liberalism and revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith.[123] In a tone of resignation and finality, he declared, "I do not propose to resume my connection with the Presbyterian Church. The bigotry of ignorance prevails in that body. They *know* that the Confession of Truth, in every word of it, is true. Men in that state of mind are dangerous to deal with. Argument with them is out of the question."[124]

Despite his disillusionment with Presbyterianism and the Presbyterian Church, Blyden maintained cordial relationships with Presbyterians in Africa and abroad. During a 1889 lecture tour sponsored by the American Colonization Society, he interacted extensively with the American Presbyterian community.[125] He preached in Chicago at Dr. Stryker's Fourth Presbyterian Church and Dr. Withrow's Third Presbyterian Church, in Washington at Grimke's 15th Street Presbyterian Church, and in Philadelphia at Matthew Anderson's Berean Church.[126] In attendance at the Chicago "Minister's Meeting," he was invited to comment upon a "most able and discriminating" review of Dr. Charles A. Briggs' new book *Whither? A Theological Question for the Times* presented by Rev. Thomas C. Hall.[127] Unfortunately, Blyden's comments pertaining to this scholarly but polemical work have not been located. In it Briggs portrayed liberals as the real champions of Westminster standards and defended the call for revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith in light of the findings of modern scholarship and science, arguing: "All the profound discoveries of modern science in geology, astronomy, chemistry, biology, and archaeology, have opened up new problems for the doctrine of creation that were not in the minds of the Westminster divines." [128]

During his stay in Chicago, Blyden also lectured students and professors at McCormick Theological Seminary on his most recent work "The Koran in Africa." He later presented this lecture, which discussed the theology and practical teachings of the Quran "in their effect upon the Negro race" and "how effectively, if Christians understood the system, it might be utilized in the Christianization of Africa," before a "large gathering" of white and black ministers at the Presbyterian Ministerial Association.[129]

Although described by *The Presbyterian* as "able, scholarly and interesting," Blyden's lectures on Islam and the Quran in Africa were not received without criticism.[130] A number of his critics were members of the African-American community who charged that his views were threatening to both Christianity and the race. Writing from Chicago to Francis Grimke, a perturbed Blyden responded to the charges of his black critics:

> I regret to learn of the impression which had been received from my lecture, "The Koran in Africa." . . . I read the same lecture last Saturday to the students of McCormick Theological Seminary, 158 in number, and their Professors... I think it will be found that on a closer examination of my views, neither the interests of Christianity nor of the race are threatened -- but there is a difference between comprehension and non-comprehension. From the Seminary several persons have been sent to get me to speak in schools etc.-showing that *there* at least they don't think me heterodox . . . .[131]

Such criticism and Blyden's response reveal the increasing opposition that his scholarship as well as religious and racial convictions were evoking among conservative and more traditional black Christians in Africa and the Diaspora. Blyden and his views, however, were not without support. His religious and racial convictions generated adherents and defenders among a growing number of progressive black Christians on both sides of the Atlantic.[132]

VIII

With Blyden's demittance of his ordination, the Presbyterian mission in Liberia lost its most famous and farsighted member. In the following decade, mission reports, and personal correspondence between members of the Presbytery and the Board chronicle an unabated decline in funding and membership.[133] They also narrate an increasing lack of patience, trust, and understanding between the Board and the members of the Presbytery.

In its 1890 annual report the Board noted that "The growth of our missionary work in Liberia has not fulfilled the expectation of the Home Church in its earlier years. . . both churches and schools have not become strong and self-supporting after over fifty years since the first missionaries were sent to that country." The report also speculated that "this slow progress was owing in part to the change of policy, in sending or supporting in this field only persons of color."[134] The 1891 report continued this litany as did the 1892 report which alluded to the "special and peculiar" situation presented by the Liberian mission and the Board's change in attitude toward it:

> The work in Liberia presents one of the most perplexing problems in the missionary field. It lacks the large importance of the general question of missionary work in Africa, and is differentiated from the general question by special and peculiar conditions which mark the population of Liberia. The elements which enter into the problem are indefinite, and the way in which they can best be handled is undetermined. The whole problem is an interesting one because of the light which it throws on the future of the colored race; But the results which have thus far been attained in attempting to solve it have been unsatisfactory.[135]

Having confessed a loss of confidence in its policy of staffing the mission with only blacks, the Board concluded its 1892 report with an announcement that it would now send "a few qualified white ministers" to Liberia.[136] Reverend Adolphus C. Good, a white member of the Gabon and Corisco Mission, was sent to assess the mission in Liberia and "make recommendations with regard to the further con-

duct of the work." Although his report emphasized the importance of Liberia as a base for operations in the interior and recommended the development of a school to train ministers and missionaries, the Board refused to heed his recommendations. Noting the existence of seven American Boards maintaining Missionaries in Liberia and that the work of the Presbyterian Church was "one of the smallest numerically," the Board concluded that it "is scarcely deemed expedient at present to undertake an expansion of its Liberia mission. . . ." [137]

A year later the Board began the rigorous implementation of a policy that would terminate the Presbyterian mission in Liberia. While noting that "every effort for enlargement of work in Africa [was] being called for in the Gabon and Corisco Mission," it announced plans to diminish its appropriations to the Liberia mission from year to year while "encouraging the West Africa Presbytery to look forward to assuming as soon as possible the complete support of and control of its work." [138] The Board's 1895 report reiterated and defended this policy which entailed reduction of salaries and even the discontinuance of some of its missionaries, teachers, and schools.[139]

Although the Board recorded that its change of policy "has, on the whole, been well received and productive of good results," reports and private correspondence indicate that this new policy did not elicit enthusiastic support from members of the Presbytery. In 1895 the Presbytery felt it necessary to remind the Board that the Liberian mission was a cooperative enterprise: " a work belonging to us and the Board as soldiers belonging to the grand army of the living God and our Christ." [140] They also attempted to make the Board aware of the hardships imposed upon them and their families by its change of policy. Their poignant protests and even threats to take their complaints to the General Assembly, however, had little effect.[141]

In 1899 the Board reported that "The financial help given the Board to the Presbyterian churches in Liberia has been diminished from year to year, until now only two workers are receiving such assistance."[142] It also announced that a decision to further concentrate its support of missionary work in Africa in the West African Mission (specifically Crisco and Gabon) had been "reviewed and reaffirmed with the approval of the Assembly." Consequently, by the turn of the century, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign missions, with the approval of the Assembly, had terminated almost 70 years of Presbyterian foreign mission efforts in Liberia.[143]

A cursory analysis of Board policies that resulted in the termination of the Liberian mission illuminates not only factors unique to the Liberian situation but also changes in the theory and practice of Protestant missions during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[144] Significant among these changes was the development and implementation of a foreign mission strategy that emphasized the cultivation of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating missions. Touted in mission circles earlier in the century by mission stalwarts such as Congregationalist Rufus Anderson of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions and Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society, it was enthusiastically adopted by the Presbyterian Board's new generation of leaders which included mission activists and theorists such as Robert Elliot Speer and Arthur Judson Brown.[145] It was also a policy which Blyden consistently encouraged and championed after he departed Liberia for residence in Sierra Leone and Lagos. However, he, like Henry Venn, shunned the paternalism that often accompanied the application of this policy. [146]

The hardening of racial attitudes in the American Presbyterian Church in the post war era also influenced the policies of the Board of Foreign Missions.[147] The Church's accommodation to increasing racism was reflected not only in its efforts at reunion but also in the Board's increasing reservations about and restrictions on black appointments to its foreign mission posts.[148] Despite Board denials that it was "drawing the colour line" in missionary appointments, an apparent policy of racial exclusion drew complaints from African-American Presbyterians. Arthur Judson Brown, who served on the Board from 1895 to 1929, observed:

> As Negro Presbyterian churches in the United States increased in numbers and were led by more highly educated men, they became more and more restive under what they supposed to be the disposition of the Board to draw the colour line in missionary appointments. Protests were made from time to time and overtures were sent to the General Assembly. The Board invariable replied that it made no discrimination whatever; that the applications of Negro candidates were considered on precisely the same basis as the applications of other candidates; and that decisions were based on the same considerations as to health, educa-

> tional and spiritual qualifications, available funds, and the need of the mission to which the applicant desired to go.[149]

Additional insight into the attitudes influencing the Board's policy regarding the appointment of African-American missionaries is provided by Robert E. Speer. In 1901, Speer, Secretary of the Board and "the most prominent Presbyterian missionary spokesperson of the day," explained:

> The Negroes from America have nether proved immune from disease and fever, nor shown those qualities on enterprise, stability and solidity of work without which a mission cannot be counted as satisfactory. Therefore, while there have been not a few zealous and capable Christian men among them. . . .the hope that the American Negro would evangelize the continent of his fathers has been abandoned, at least until he shall have been brought by education and long discipline to a tenacity and directness of character he does not yet possess. [150]

Arthur Judson Brown concurred, arguing: "Hard as it was for American Negroes to withstand the debilitating effects of the African climate, it was even harder for them to bear up under the spiritual strain of life on the West Coast. . . without a weakening of moral fiber."[151]

Such assessments by American Presbyterianism's foremost mission experts contributed to an unofficial but effective policy that denied black candidates appointment to foreign mission posts from 1896 to 1928. More than thirty years of black exclusion from foreign missions posts was ended when the Board appointed Reverend Irwin Underhill to its West African mission in 1928. It was twenty years later, however, before an African America was appointed by the Board to a non-African country.[152]

IX

Although Blyden commented on the overall problem of the missionary enterprise in Liberia in a number of post-1890 addresses

and works, his perception of and response to the policies of the Board and the fate of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia is unclear.[153] Unclear also is the response of the Board and the wider Presbyterian community both in Liberia and America to Blyden's increasingly radical and iconoclastic missiology.[154] His continued study and interaction with West Africa's Islamic and indigenous cultures had pushed him far beyond the missiological stance that he had taken in the 70's and 80's. Blyden was aware of this transition and its implications. Writing to the African-American journalist John E. Bruce in 1910, he compared the potential impact of his mature missiological writings to that had by higher criticism: "Of course if what I have written is correct, 'it will cut the nerve of missions' as Prof. Park of Andover once said of the 'Higher Criticism.' The so-called Christian public are not yet prepared for such a catastrophe to their enterprise, which nevertheless, so far as Africa is concerned, is hopeless. . . ." [155]

From 1895 to his death in 1912, Blyden lived in Sierra Leone and Lagos, in self-imposed exile from Liberia. A final opportunity for him to actualize his theological, pedagogical, and missiological convictions in Liberia came in January 1900 when he was appointed Professor of Arabic at Liberia College. However, his continued advocacy of Islam and defense of West African indigenous institutions such as polygamy induced controversy and conflict which led to his resignation after only three months.[156] With this final rebuff, Blyden departed Liberia and returned to Sierra Leone.

Although muted in Liberia, Blyden's strident critique of traditional mission practices and indiscriminate Europeanization, coupled with his assertion of African pride and identity, struck a responsive chord elsewhere in West Africa. His racial, pedagogical, and missiological theories stoked the embers of racial and ecclesiastical self-consciousness and helped induce the independent church movement in wider West Africa.[157]

Blyden also served as a general advocate of Muslim education and Muslim causes throughout West Africa.[158] His published works during this era include "Islam in the Western Soudan," "The Koran in Africa," and *African Life and Customs.* Like most of his post-1890's writings, they were devoted to explaining Islam and traditional African customs and institutions to an American and European audience, and in insisting that there was much in both that was worthy of retention and imitation.[159]

It is significant that one of Blyden's last major works was *The Arabic Bible in the Soudan: a Plea for Transliteration.* Published in 1910, it reflected his continued interest in Christianity's missionary encounter with Islam in West Africa. [160] A reviewer noted that Blyden's "main contention is that the Arabic version of the Scriptures prepared and published by the American Missionaries at Beirut (Syria) . . . is calculated to cause needless perplexity and offense to Muslims by transliteration (of) the various Hebrew names applied to the Divine Being." The reviewer concluded, "Into the points of scholarship raised we can hardly follow him, and some of his positions must perhaps be controverted by theologians; but like all that Dr. Blyden writes, this little paper bears the marks of wide reading and original thought."[161]

In 1912 Blyden, who had been the foremost advocate and champion of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia, died and was buried in Sierra Leone.[162] Controversy accompanied him to the grave as his death and burial revived widespread speculation concerning his religious beliefs and affiliation.[163] Although contemporary assessments refute the persistent belief that Blyden spent his final days as a convert to Islam, most also concede that he had far transcended the theological and missiological boundaries of Christian orthodoxy.[164]

XI.

In 1925, thirteen years after Blyden's death, the Presbytery of West Africa unsuccessfully overturned the General Assembly to resume missionary work in Liberia. The Assembly's explanation of its response is illuminating:

> That inasmuch as the Board of Foreign Missions many years ago, with the approval of the General Assembly, decided for good reasons to concentrate its support of missionary work in Africa in the West African Mission, which is now one of the most fruitful missions in the world and in as much as the policy was subsequently reviewed and reaffirmed by the Board with the approval of the Assembly in 1899; and inasmuch as there are four other denominations at work in the small population of Liberia and no other Protestant denomination at work in our large field in Cameroon--it is recommended that the Assembly an-

> swer in the negative the request from the Presbytery in Liberia in Overture 31 for the reestablishment of our foreign work in Liberia.[165]

Three years later, the Synod of Pennsylvania formally severed its nominal relationship with the Presbytery of West Africa and in 1931 the General Assembly ordered the Synod to dissolve the Presbytery.[166] Despite these actions, subsequent reports of the demise of Presbyterianism in Liberia proved incorrect.[167]

Although thrown back on its own resources and devices by the change in attitude and policies of the Presbyterian Church and its Board of Foreign Missions, the Presbyterian community in Liberia managed in the following decades to survive, if not thrive, as an independent and autonomous Church. Some sense of its tenacity is reflected in an address delivered in 1978 by Elder E. Reginald Townsend, moderator of the Presbytery of Liberia in West Africa.[168] Reporting to the Presbytery from historic First Presbyterian Church in Monrovia, he linked contemporary Presbyterianism in Liberia to its nineteenth century roots and recited its achievements:

> Fellow Presbyters, for well-nigh 90 years we have been able by Divine Providence to maintain our cherished Presbyterian heritage bequeathed to us by our sainted fathers and mothers, and it has been a miracle as to how we have sustained our identity. We are by no means a wealthy church; but with unfeigned faith in Almighty God and confidence in ourselves, we have continued to exist and make some progress. We have not only maintained our old church edifices, but we have built some modern edifices and increased our membership. . . . Thanks be to God, the Spirit of Missions has not been dampened within us. Motivated by that spirit, 32 years age we revived our determination and founded the Presbyterian Todee Mission, some 37 miles from Monrovia, to take the light of Christian education to our brothers and sisters in the Todee District and far beyond. And we rejoice in the fact that our efforts, feeble as they were, have not been in vain. . . . Ours has been a remarkable accomplishment. . . .[169] Their "remarkable accomplishment" has

continued into the final decade of the twentieth century. Contemporary reports of the Presbyterian Church in Liberia list 15 congregations with approximately 1500 members.[170]

*Notes*

1. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, Monrovia, Liberia, November 29, 1888, *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, ed. Hollis R. Lynch (Millwood, New York: KTO Press, 1978), 395-396. Swing and Patton were Presbyterian ministers and adversaries in an 1874 heresy trial. The trial was an opening salvo in the prolonged struggle which pitted the defenders of Presbyterian orthodoxy against the adherents of an emergent theological and missiological liberalism. See *The Trial of David Rev. David Swing, Before the Presbytery of Chicago*, ed. by a Committee of the Presbytery (Chicago, 1874) and Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians* (Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1993), 202-203; 226-227.
2. Hollis Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* ( London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Thomas W. Livingston, *Education And Race: A Biography Of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (San Francisco: The Glendessary Press, 1975); and Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism In America, Europe, And Africa* , trans. by Ann Keep (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1974).
3. This corpus includes almost forty years of correspondence with members of the Presbyterian Board of Missions. See Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission (PCUSA/UPCUSA), Secretaries' Files of the West Africa Mission, 1835-1965. These files contain outgoing and incoming correspondence, minutes and reports between Liberian missionaries and the secretaries of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Frederick J. Heuser, Jr. , *A Guide to Foreign Missionary Manuscripts in the Presbyterian Historical Society* (New York, Westport, Ct., London: Greenwood Press, 1988), 3-12.
4. Blyden, "of Ebony hue," took pride in his unadulterated African parentage which he traced to the Ibo tribe in Eastern Nigeria. Lynch, *Blyden*, 3; Livingston, *Education and Race*, 19; John Knox, *A Historical Account of St. Thomas, West Indies* (New York: Scribner, 1852).

5. Lynch, *Blyden*, 4; Livingston, *Education and Race*, 16-17, 20; Edith Holden, *Blyden of Liberia: An Account of the Life and Labors of Edward Wilmot Blyden. LL. D. As Recorded in Letters and in Print* (New York, Washington, Hollywood: Vantage Press, 1966), 11, 20, 930.
6. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 21, 22; Lynch, *Blyden*, 4.
7. Pinney, a white graduate of Princeton, appointed by the Western Foreign Missionary Society to go to Liberia in 1833, became one of the first missionaries to enter a foreign field under the care of a Presbyterian missionary society. He also served briefly as governor of the fledgling colony. See "Black Presbyterianism: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: 175 years of Ministry-1807-1982" (New York: The Program Agency of The United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1982), 30-31 and Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians And The Negro: A History* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), 78. Walter Lowrie, a ruling elder from Pennsylvania, served as corresponding secretary of the Western Foreign Missionary Society which was succeeded by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Heuser, *Guide*, 84-85.
8. Jesse Belmont Barber, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: Story of the Work of the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. Among the Negroes* ( New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1952), 13-14. "Black Presbyterianism," 30.
9. Princeton Seminary, the citadel of Presbyterian conservatism and orthodoxy, played a major role in this development. The professors and most of the students of the seminary were present at the initial public meeting of the society founded by Princeton graduate Robert Finley. Princeton professor, Archibald Alexander would author one of the major apologies of the colonization movement. David E. Swift, "Black Presbyterian Attacks on Racism: Samuel Cornish, Theodore Wright and Their Contemporaries," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (1973): 444-445. Archibald Alexander, *A History of Colonization. on the Western Coast of Africa* (Philadelphia: W. S. Martien. 1846). "See also H. N. Sherwood, "The Formation of the American Colonization Society," *Journal of Negro History*, 2: 209-28 and P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).
10. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 78. Brown observed that "There was a strong missionary spirit associated with this Society, although it was not officially related to any missionary organization." Arthur J. Brown, *One Hundred Years, A History of the Foreign Missionary Work of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. A.* (New York.: Revell, 1936), 204.
11. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United*

*States*, 1832, 365-366; Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 196-197.

12. The Western Missionary Society was founded in 1831 by the Synod of Pittsburgh in response to the failure of the General Assembly to establish its own foreign mission agency. Heuser, *Guide*, xxi-xxiii.
13. See Earl R. MacCormac, "Missions and the Presbyterian Schism of 1837," *Church History* 32 (March 1963): 32-45.
14. MacCormac notes that "Behind this decision to establish church controlled foreign missions rather than to continue to participate in a non-ecclesiastical missionary organization was a long and bitter controversy over missionary structures which had become entangled in the Old School-New School fight." Thus in 1837 "not only were two churches established by division, but two different missionary enterprises resulted; the Old School's founded upon the idea that the missionary imperative was binding upon the corporate Church; the New School's organization based on the premise that the missionary command was given to individuals who united in voluntary missionary associations." See MacCormac, "Missions," 33, 43; Heuser, *Guide*, xxiii; and Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 20-21.
15. Its founding launched an extensive foreign missionary effort by the Old School Church that eventually embraced approximately fifteen countries located on four different continents. During the nineteenth century the Board supervised West African mission stations in Liberia, Spanish Guinea, Gabon, Curisco, Obowe, and Cameroon. Heuser, *Guide*, xxiii.
16. Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 4-5, 8. Black Presbyterian ministers Samuel Cornish and Theodore Wright authored a critique of the colonization scheme. See Samuel Cornish and Theodore Wright, *The Colonization Scheme Considered, in its Rejection by the Colored People—in its Tendency to uphold Caste—in its Unfitness for Christianizing and Civilizing the Aborigines of Africa, and for putting a stop to the African Slave Trade: in a Letter to the Hon. Benjamin F. Butler* (Newark: Aaron Quest, 1840). On the relationship between the Colonization Movement, American Presbyterianism, and the Anti-slavery effort see Moses N. Moore, Jr., "Righteousness Exalts A Nation: Black Clergymen, Reform, and New School Presbyterianism," *American Presbyterians* 70 (Winter 1992): 222-238.
17. In December 1850 the New York Colonization Society, the New York State auxiliary of the American Colonization Society, booked passage for Blyden to Liberia. He was accompanied to Baltimore for his departure by William Coppinger, secretary of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. Coppinger would become the long reigning secretary of the Ameri-

can Colonization Society and a life-long friend and confidant of Blyden. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 24-25.

18. Blyden to Rev. J. B. Pinney, November 26, 1850 in Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 23-24. On "Disinterested Benevolence," a theological modifica tion of Calvinism advanced by Samuel Hopkins and prevalent in Presbyterian and Reformed circles, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1891). See also George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience : A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 34-45. On Blyden's continued support of colonization which he viewed as a key to the regeneration of Africa see Edward W. Blyden, "The Origin and Purposes of African Colonization" (Washington, D.C.: American Colonization Society, 1882).
19. *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, ed. Hollis Lynch, (London: Frank Cass And Company Limited, 1971), 61; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 26-28. See also Tom W. Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 8-9.
20. Livingston, *Education and Race*, 21, 226. The foundation of the school, described as a "lighthouse on a dark continent," was laid years earlier by B. V. R. James and Rev. Harrison W. Ellis "the learned black blacksmith" from Alabama. Ellis, a slave whose freedom was purchased by money from various churches in Mississippi and Alabama, was ordained by the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa and sent by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions as a missionary to Liberia in 1847. Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians In The South: Volume I, 1607-1861* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 442-443 and Livingston, *Education and Race*, 28-30. On the evolution of the school see *Annual Reports of the Presbyterian Board of Missions* ,1849, 1850, and 1851.
21. Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 52.
22. Wilson to Walter Lowrie, October 1, 1851, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 29-30. Impressed by Blyden's potential, Wilson sought additional financial support so that the youth could give priority to his studies. Blyden's education would be subsidized by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and his home congregation on St. Thomas. Wilson to Walter Lowrie July 28, 1851, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 29, 31-33.

23. Livingston, *Education and Race*, 30-31; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 53.
24. Livingston, *Education and Race*, 39.
25. Lynch, *Blyden*, 14.
26. Lynch, *Blyden*, 45-46.
27. Blyden to the Rev. John L. Wilson, Corresponding Secretary of the Presbyterian Board, March 5, 1858. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 50-52.
28. Seminary based education at instutions such as Princeton was gradually replacing apprenticeships to established ministers and denominationally sponsored courses of study. On the evolution of Presbyterian ministerial education see Robert T. Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 3-4.
29. The Board did act favorably upon a similar request from another student at Alexander High School. With the support of the Board, Armistead Miller left Liberia to study at the recently opened Ashmun Institute. Upon completing his studies, Miller returned to Liberia for ordination by the Presbytery of West Africa. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 52. Ashman Institute was founded in 1854 by Presbyterians interested in colonization and educating African-Americans for missionary service in Africa. Originally named in honor of Jehudi Ashmun, a pioneer of Liberian colonization, it was renamed Lincoln Institute after the Civil War. Andrew E. Murray, "The Founding of Lincoln University," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (1973): 392-410; Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 79, 84.
30. Wilson was especially incised by Blyden's tendency to employ Greek and Latin in his letters to the Board. See Wilson to Blyden, June 1859, P.B.F.M. Outgoing Letters to Africa, vol., 2, no. 351; Livingston, *Education and Race*, 43; Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 74.
31. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 52.
32. The Presbytery of West Africa had been established under Old School auspices in Monrovia on December 6, 1848. It was originally attached to the Synod of Philadelphia. Brown, *One Hundred Years* 205 and the *12th Annual Report of the Board of Missions*, 1849, 16.
33. Most members of the new generation of African-American Presbyterian clerics who became active in the 1840's and 50's were affiliated with the New School Church. The New School roster included figures such as Henry Highland Garnet, Andrew Harris, Stephen Gloucester, Amos Freeman, John Cook, and Benjamin Templeton. The Old school roster included figures such as Henry M. Wilson, William T. Catto, Jonathan C. Gibbs , and Elymus Payson Rogers. See Williis J. Beecher and Mary Beecher, *Index of Presbyterian Ministers. . . . From A. D. 1706 To 1881* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1883).

34. Barber reports that in 1860 there were between 12 and 14 Black Presbyterian congregations in the North. The majority of these were affiliated with the New School Church. Barber, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, 30.
35. Barber, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, 24. Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 72-73. For example, on December 29, 1859 the Presbytery of West Africa met at Harrisburg and "admitted to their number" Armistead Miller, James R. Amos, and Thomas H. Amos. The three had been students at Ashmun Institute and upon graduation were assigned by the Presbyterian Board of Missions to its Liberia mission. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 928. The concept of blacks helping to advance the cause of Christianity in Africa had long been advocated within Presbyterian mission circles. Their employment by Old School Presbyterians in its West African mission, however, was additionally occasioned by the commonly held belief that blacks were more resistant to diseases which often incapacitated white missionaries in West Africa. In 1839 the Board resolved "that every practical exertion be made to prepare and obtain coloured missionaries for this interesting portion of the unevangelized world: since all experience shows that the hazard of life in the climate of Africa is far less to colored missionaries than to those of another description."It would later expand its use of black missionaries. Noting that "the principal labor of evangelizing Africa must devolve on her sons," the Board made its last appointment of a white missionary to Liberia in 1866. He died two years later. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 207-208; *Second Annual report of the Presbyterian Board of Missions*, 1839, 38; *Sixth Annual Report of The Presbyterian Board of Missions*, 1843, 12; *10th Annual Report of the Presbyterian Board of Missions*, 1847, 15-16. For a listing of African Americans who served in Presbyterian missions overseas see "Black Presbyterianism," 32.
36. See Samuel Cornish's explanation of his allegiance to the Old School Church that he believed to be "orthodox " in "faith" but "despotic and anti-Christian" in some of its practices. *Colored American*, June 1, 1839.
37. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 138, 139.
38. Wilson departed Liberia in 1858 to recuperate from a lingering malaise. Livingston, *Education and Race*, 41; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia* , 50, 53. Education was viewed by Blyden as an indispensable accessory of the Presbyterian advance in Liberia. Among his concerns was expanding educational opportunities for females in Liberia. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 61. For a comprehensive study of Blyden's efforts as an educator in West Africa see Livingston, *Education And Race*.
39. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 234. Blyden would later roundly denounce

similar expressions of denominational loyality and competition. Lynch, *Blyden*, 223.

40. This appointment marked the beginning of Blyden's long and tumultuous relationship with Liberia College. Although established as a secular institution, the college was rooted in the same convergence of humanitarian and evangelical concerns that inspired the founding of the American Colonization Society and Liberia. A significant number of its trustees and supporters were Presbyterians. Livingston, *Education and Race*, 56-73. Tracy to Rev. Dr. Larabee, August 10, 1861, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 87.
41. The Fulton Professorship was endowed by "a bequest from the will of James Fulton" and administered by the New York Colonization Society. Provisions of the will required that the appointee "subscribe" to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. Tracy noted that although "It may be presumed that he [Blyden] subscribed to it when he was ordained; . . .there should have been formal subscription, duly. . . recorded, in connection with his appointment and induction, so that the fact could be proven in court." Tracy to Mr. H. M. Schieffelin, of the New York Colonization Society, June 22, 1863; Tracy to Pinney, July 22, 1863; August 1, 1863; August 10, 1863; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 127-128.
42. Marsden, *Evangelical Mind*, 213-215. For a short history of this controversy see Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 25-30, 48, 53, 57, 86.
43. Suspicion and resentment of Blyden was also engendered within Presbyterian mission circles because Alexander High School had been forced to temporarily close as a result of his acceptance of the appointment to Liberia College. *New York Colonization Journal*, June, 1862. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 94.
44. Blyden to Wilson, March 15, 1861, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 64, 73.
45. A year earlier Wilson had advised Blyden against coming to the United States because of the great political tensions and hostility toward blacks at the time. As a Southerner, Wilson was especially sensitive to the mounting political and ecclesiastical crisis. With the 1861 division of the Old School Church and advent of the Civil War he returned to his native Georgia where he became an active member of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederated States of America and was elected first secretary of its Executive Committee on Foreign Missions. See Thompson, *Presbyterianism In the South*, Vol. I., 297, 551-57.
46. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 73, 77. See "Address of Rev. E. W. Blyden, from Liberia, Before the Presbyterian Assembly of Scotland," *New York Colonization Journal*, November 1861, from *Scottish Press*, May 22, 1861.

Blyden continued to the United States after his delay in Britain and Scotland. While in the United States he delivered a discourse in the New York Presbyterian Church on Seventh Avenue entitled "Hope for Africa." *African Repository*, Vol. XXXXVII, 1861, 258-271. This address was later published as *Liberia's Offering*. See Edward W. Blyden, *Liberia's Offerings* (New York: John A. Gray, 1862).

47. In 1871 Blyden would be honored with an invitation to deliver an address before the Presbytery of London. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 183-184.
48. Blyden engaged in a rigorous lifelong program of disciplined self-study and research. Biblical, theological, historical, and linguistic studies were major components of his self education. He also kept up with current affairs outside Liberia by reading available British and American journals and engaging in extensive correspondence with scholars in Europe and America. Lynch, *Blyden*, 14, 26, 63.
49. Proficient in Latin and Greek, Blyden began the study of Hebrew "so that he could read passages in the Bible purporting to relate to the Negro." He successfully sought help in this endeavour from Dr. Isisor Kalisch, the distinguished Jewish American scholar. In *A Vindication of the Negro Race* Blyden employed his developing linguistic, theological, and biblical skills to engaged in an extensive analysis and exegesis of sections of the Book of Genesis commonly cited to prove that Africans and their descendants were inferior and under a divine curse. Lynch, *Blyden*, 13, 19. "The Negro in Ancient History" was reportedly "the first article by a Negro published in a scholarly journal." See Edward W. Blyden, *A Vindication of the Negro Race*, (Monrovia, 1857) and Edward W. Blyden, "The Negro in Ancient History," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, LI, January, 1869, 71-93.
50. Successive appointments as Secretary of State from 1864 to 1866, Liberia's Ambassador to Great Britain in 1877, Minister of Education and Secretary of the Interior between 1880-1882, and even an unsuccessful campaign for the Presidency of Liberia in 1885, punctuated and disrupted his activities on behalf of the Presbyterian mission in Liberia. Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, xvi-xviii.
51. Although rooted in pseudo-scientific racial theories common to the nineteenth century, Blyden's distrust and dislike of mulattos was buttressed by personal observations and experiences in Liberia and the Diaspora. See Edward W. Blyden to Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution "On Mixed Races in Liberia," October 6, 1869, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 212-215. Blyden to William Coppinger, October 19, 1874 , Lynch, *Letters*, 173-178.

52. These sentiments were reflected in his advice to both the Colonization Society and the Presbyterian Board of Mission regarding policy in Liberia. Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, xiv,xxix. Blyden's racial theories would have increasing influence on his theological and missiological thought. He would argue that "it is impossible to ignore, even in religious matters, the fundamental distinctions of race." Edward W. Blyden, "Sierra Leone and Liberia: Their Origin, Work and Destiny" in Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967. Originally published London: W. B. Whittingham & Co., 1887 ), 231-232.
53. Lynch, *Blyden*, 52-53.
54. Pinney to Coppinger, January 25, 1872, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 211.
55. Mr. D. B. Warner to Coppinger, January 1, 1873, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 211. In correspondence from Sierra Leone announcing the Presbyter's restoration of his privileges, Blyden implicated mulattoes in the action taken against him and in the subsequent death of President Roye. Blyden to Coppinger, January 7, 1873, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 212.
56. While exiled in Sierra Leone Blyden was hired by Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), to work with Muslims and provide Arabic instruction. Although word of the scandal resulted in the CMS retracting its offer of employment, Venn continued to personally support Blyden with whom he shared an awareness of the need for significant changes in traditional missiological goals and practices. Lynch, *Letters*, 82.
57. As a corrective he suggested that "No applicant under thirty years of age should be examined by Presbytery with a view to licensure who does not produce a certificate of his having pursued a course of liberal studies corresponding to that laid down in our Form of Church Government." Blyden to John C. Lowrie, December 20, 1873; May 28, 1874, Lynch , *Letters*, 157; 169.
58. Lynch, *Letters*, 149-151. John C. Lowrie was the son of Walter Lowrie. In 1838, after serving as a missionary to India, he joined his father as a corresponding secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions. Heuser, *Guide*, 85.
59. All the figures mentioned were clergymen elected to the presidency of Princeton University or the College of New Jersey as it was earlier known. Blyden to Lowrie, December 20. 1873, Lynch, *Letters*, 149-153.
60. Lynch, *Letters*, 152.
61. On the Boards gradual adoption of a "policy of superintending missions

in [Liberia]...on the Home Board method, in connection with the action of the Presbytery." See *54th Annual Report of the Mission Board* (1891), 23 and *39th Annual Report of the Mission Board* (1876), 26. Robert A. M. Deputie to Lowrie, August 28, 1876, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 348-349.
See Blyden to Rev. John C. Lowrie, December 20, 1873 , Lynch, *Letters*, 153-154 and Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 343, 955.

63. On Blyden's role as a proponent of African theological and ecclesiastical independence see Lynch, *Blyden*, 220-227 and Edward Blyden, *Return of the Exiles and the West African Church*, London: W. B. Whittingham & Co., 1891. Blyden apparently felt that such a change would strengthen his influence in the Presbytery and mission. This was also reflected in his suggestion that the Board "send out an experienced and discreet white man—say Rev. A. D. Wilson—to visit the work here and report fully on its present condition and prospects." "Rev. A. D. Wilson" was probably Blyden's former instructor and theological mentor David Agnew Wilson. See Blyden to Rev. John C. Lowrie, December 20, 1873, Lynch, *Letters*, 153-160.
64. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 87. See also 39th and 40th (1876, 1877) *Annual Reports of the Presbyterian Board of Mission.*
Blyden to John Lowrie, June 3, 1875, Lynch, *Letters*, 190-191.
65. Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, xvii.
66. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 445.
67. *The Presbyterian*, June 5, 1880. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 454. Nassau served in the Presbyterian Church's West Africa mission from 1861 to 1906. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 246. Four years earlier, in an article entitled "Christian Missions in West Africa," Blyden had publically criticized Nassau for descriptions of African character that were " gross exaggerations... pernicious in their influences." See Edward W. Blyden, "Christian Missions in West Africa," *Fraser's Magazine*, October, 1876 and Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 46-70.
68. Prior to his departure Blyden wrote to Dr. Lowrie from Monrovia remindinghim and the Board of Missions of "the influence which Presbyterianism has exerted and is still exerting in Liberia." After presenting a roster showing that "All the leading men of the country now are either Presbyterians or have been educated by Presbyterians," Blyden noted, "You will see that Presbyterians are now to a great extent guiding the destines of the Republic and her public policy has never been more truly progressive. There is no Protestant denomination which had done or which it seems to me can do so much for the Negro as the Presbyterian. It is of

the utmost importance to Africa that our church in America should not relax its educational efforts in this country. . . ." Blyden to Lowrie, February 7, 1880, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 11, 442, 447.

69. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 453. Edward W. Blyden, *"Africa's Service to the World" A Discourse delivered at Madison, Wisconsin, during the session of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, May, 1880, and also in the cities of Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York.* The sermon was based on Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." On the significance of this text see Albert J. Raboteau, "'Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Forth Her Hands:' Black Destiny In Nineteenth-Century America" The University Lecture in Religion at Arizona State University, January 27, 1983.
70. The reporter's assessment of Blyden theological posture was based upon his interpretation of Blyden's reference to the Shorter Cathechism during his sermon. Blyden reportedly stated that "while some claim to have outgrown the Shorter Catechism he deemed it one of the most potent powers for the world's evangelization." *The Presbyterian*, June 5, 1880; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 454. The version of this sermon later published in *Christianty, Islam and the Negro Race* contains no reference to the Shorter Cathecism. However, observed Christopher Fyfe, Blyden often "tempered" his words "to the audience he was addressing." Christopher Fyfe, "Introduction" to the 1967 version of Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, xi.
71. Emerging theological and doctrinal conflict would early focus on the call by liberals for revision of the Westminister Confession. See Balmer and Fitzmier, *Presbyterians*, 86.
72. Blyden to Coppinger, May 29, 1880, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 453-454.
73. Blyden to Coppinger, June 10, 1880, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 456-457.
74. Blyden to Coppinger , May 29, 1880, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 454.
75. Thomas S. Malcolm to Coppinger June 20, 1880, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 459; Blyden to Coppinger June 5, 1880, Philadelphia, Pa., Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 454. Blyden described Reeve as a "pure Negro" and tried unsuccessfully to induce him to accept a professorship at Liberia College. Blyden to Coppinger, October 19, 1874, Lynch, *Letters* 173; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 615, 178. On Reeve who was the first black to attend Union Theological Seminary and later served as professor and dean of Howard University see Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary*, 41.
76. *The Presbyterian*, June 5, 1880; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 454.
77. On John Anderson see Beecher, *Index of Presbyterian Ministers*, 18. Ironi-

cally Blyden and the mulatto Francis James Grimké would become especially close friends. See letters of Blyden to Grimké in Carter G. Woodson, ed. *Works of Francis James Grimke Vol. IV Letters*, (Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1942) On Grimke' who graduated from Lincoln University and Princeton Seminary and became one of the leaders of the northern black Presbyterian community see Henry Justin Ferry, "Francis James Grimke': Portrait Of A Black Puritan," (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1970) and Clifton E. Olmstead, "Francis James Grimke'," in *Sons of the Prophets: Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary*, ed. Hugh T. Kerr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 161-175.

78. Blyden to James C. Braman, October 27, 1882, Lynch, *Letters*, 308-309; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 506. Dr. James McCosh who came to the United States from Scotland to assume the presidency of Princeton in the 1860s was one of the first prominent ministers and educators to support the theory of evolution. On McCosh see Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 187-188.
79. Blyden noted that although "the College being a State Institution, is in no way connected with any sectarian or religious organization; yet the design of its founders was to incorporate the teachings of the Bible with its appropriate course of studies, and to conduct all its operations according to the teachings of Christianity. . . ." Edward W. Blyden, "The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans," Inaugural Address as President of Liberia College, delivered at Monrovia, January 5, 1881 in Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 71-93.
80. This took place in 1883 at a meeting for "the promotion of Christian Education in Liberia, West Africa," held in the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Blyden to Coppinger, November, 21, 1882, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 507.
81. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 506.
82. Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, xvi; Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 113-138.
83. Blyden to Lowrie, August 27, 1881, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 484-487. See Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930*, (University of Alabama Press, 1982); William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Mission*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976; William R. Hutchison, ed. *American Protestant Thought in the Liberal Era*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1968);

William R. Hutchison, "Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity, 1875-1935" in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John K. Fairbank, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 110-31; Francis P. Weisenburger, *Ordeal of Faith: The Crisis of Church-Going America, 1865-1900*, (New York : Philosophical Library, 1959); Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vols. I and II, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972); and James R. Moore, *The Post -Darwinian Controversies: A study of the Protestant struggle to come to terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870 -1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

85. Within the British Presbyterian community early controversy centered around the writings of William Robertson Smith. See Warner M. Bailey, "William Robertson Smith and American Biblical Studies," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 1973: 285-308. For a recent analysis of the impact of these developments on the American Presbyterian community see Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Blyden's initial rejection of the new scientific, academic and intellectual currents is reflected in his 1866 comment to William Gladstone regarding the "vagaries of Dr. Colenso." See Blyden to Gladstone, February 3, 1866, Lynch, *Letters*, 69. In later works, Blyden, exhibiting a decided theological and missiological shift, would mention or quote with apprecition such figures as John Tyndall, Charles Darwin, T. H. Huxley, Joseph Ernest Renan, and Frederick Max Muller. See Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*, 4, 120, 241 242, 279.
86. The development of the discipline of comparative religion by European scholars such as Max Muller was directly related to the new biblical and historical scholarship associated with the emergence of theological and missiological liberalism Its growing influence in America was marked by inclusion in the curriculum of institutions such Boston University by 1873 and the founding in 1890 of the American Society of Comparative Religion under the leadership of Frank E. Ellinwood of New York University. See Sydney Ahlstrom, *The American Protestant Encounter with World Religions* (Beloit, 1962). Of its impact within American Presbyterianism, Longfield has noted: "The advent of the study of comparative religions. . . provided another area of contention. Rather than demonstrating the superiority of Christianity to other faiths, the study of comparative religion seemed to place Christianity on a par with all religions. . . . In opening the question of the relativity of Christian truth, the study of comparative religions further agitated the already-troubled waters of Protestant America."

Longfield, *Presbyterian Controversy*, 14.

87. In *What Is Darwinism?* Charles Hodge argued that Darwin's theory was an unproved hypothesis that could not be reconciled with Scripture or Christianity. Charles Hodge, *What Is Darwinism* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1874). In contrast, McCosh noted that Darwin's theory might contain a "large body of important truth." See James McCosh, *Christianity and Positivism* (New York, 1871) and Longfield, *Presbyterian Controversy*, 13-14. For more comprehensive studies of the reformed response to Darwinism see Dennis R. Davis, "Presbyterian Attitudes toward Science and the Coming of Darwinism in America, 1859 to 1929" (Ph. D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980) and Gary S. Smith, "Calvinists and Evolution , 1870-1920," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61 (Fall, 1983): 335-52. On the broader controversy see Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954).
88. In 1874 Patton accused Swing of heresy. Tried by the Chicago Presbytery, Swing was acquitted but continued persecution by Patton and other "defenders of Presbyterian orthodoxy" resulted in his resignation from the Presbyterian ministry. Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 226-227. See also William R. Hutchison, "Disapproval of Chicago: The Symbolic Trial of David Swing," *Journal of American History* 59(1972), 30-47. Hutchinson calls the trial "the first great controversy of the new theology," Hutchinson, *Modernist Impulse,* 75.
89. Deputie to Lowrie, Aug. 28, 1876, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 348-349.
90. It is impossible to definitively categorize the eclectic Blyden's theological posture. It is clear, however, that he had broken with Reformed orthodoxy and shared the perspective and many of the tenets of an evolving evangelical liberalism. Gayraud Wilmore identifies Blyden with the older tradition of nineteenth century American liberalism. He notes that Blyden "did not consider himself orthodox in the narrow sense of most American evangelicals. He felt a greater theological affinity to the nonconformist luminaries of New England Protestantism—the Channings, Parkers, and Emersons, all of whom, he believed were more reliable as friends and allies than the camp-meeting evangelists and sanctimonious clerics of the mainline denominations." Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books,1983), 117.
91. Liberalism's tenets, coupled with the findings of the emerging disciplines such as sociology, philosophy of religion, and especially comparative re-

ligion, radically challenged many of the traditional premises, rationales and policies of the Protestant mission enterprise. The accumulated impact of these changes on Blyden and other liberal proponents of missions was the fostering of a more positive view of the religions of non-Christian peoples and an increased awareness of the historical and cultural relativity of their own Christian tradition. The discipline of comparative religion which provided the most cogent support for liberalism's more positive perspective and attitude toward non-Christian religions and cultures would play a key role in shaping Blyden's progressive missiology. Max Muller and other founders of the discipline early noted its potential contribution to the development of a "new scientific treatment of Christian missions." In his 1876 study of "Islam and Race Distinctions" Blyden quotes Muller's "Lecture on Missions" delivered in Westminster Abbey December 3, 1873. In 1890 Blyden became an "honorary" member of the American Society of Comparative Religion and in 1893 was invited to read a paper on "Comparative Religion" at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Moreover, Frank F. Ellinwood, founder of The American Society of Comparative Religion, quotes sections of Blyden's *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* in his *Oriental Religions and Christianity*. See Frank F. Ellinwood, *Oriental Religions and Christianity*, (New York: Scribners, 1892); Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 646; Lynch, *Blyden*, 82; Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 241; and Olav G. Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education: An Historical Enquiry into the Place of World Evangelization in Western Protestant Ministerial Training with Particular Reference to Alexander Duff's Chair of Evangelistic Theology*, Vol. I, (Oslo, 1955), 307, 351.

92. From the middle of the 11th century Islam had been making a steady advance in West Africa. On the spread of Islam in West Africa see J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) and Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development From the 8th to the 20th Century*, (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1982).
93. Livingston, *Education and Race*, 74-76.
94. Adherence to the theological, pedagogical, and missiological tenets of traditional nineteenth century Old School Calvinism provided little incentive for members of the Presbytery to look beyond the trappings of Western Christianity and culture to examine or appreciate either Islam or indigenous West African religions. Consequently, Blyden's study of Islam and Arabic often illicited opposition, criticism, and ridicule from members of the Presbytery. One of his colleagues, discounting the influ-

ence of Arabic among West African Muslims, "informed the Board that there was but one place in West Africa where Arabic was known, and there but imperfectly: the brain of Edward Blyden and there it would likely remain." Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 74, 102.

95. Blyden to Lowrie August 27, 1881, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 487, 173; Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 75; Blyden to Lowrie, January 23, 1877, Lynch, *Letters*, 234-235.
96. The college was sponsored by American Protestant mission agencies. Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 75-77. Enroute to Syria, Blyden visited Egypt and marveled at "evidence of Africa in Egypt." He also visited and traveled extensively in Palestine. An account of his trip was published in 1873. See Edward W. Blyden, *From West Africa To Palestine*. (Freetown: T. J. Sawyerr, 1873), Lynch, *Blyden*, 47.
97. Blyden lived in the home of Dr. Bliss for three months while studying at the college. Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 78-79. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 142. Bliss had earlier "sent to Liberia College several Arabic books printed in Syria for distribution among Arabic reading people acces sible to Liberia." Blyden to Mr. H. M. Schieffelin , December 7, 1870. See also Alan Austin, *African Muslims In Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York & London, 1984), 433-434, 486-487.
98. Blyden also proposed sending Liberian students to Beirut to master the language so that they could successfully proselytize Muslims in the interior. Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 78.
99. *African Repository* vol. xlv 1869, 127.
100. Blyden's research took him deep into the interior of both Liberia and Sierra Leone where he met with indigenous Islamic scholars. He also studied Arabic manuscripts at Cambridge and the British Museum and established fruitful contacts with European Islamic scholars such as Dr. C. Rieu, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge; Professor Leisher of Leipzig; and Robert Bosworth Smith. Smith, an influential literary figure and master at Harrow, published a study entitled "Mohammed and Mohammedanism" that Blyden favorably reviewed in *Fraser's Magazine*. See Livingston, *Education and Race*, 54 ; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 665; and Lynch, *Blyden* ,174.
101. Blyden's first article on Islam, "Mohammedanism in West Africa," was published in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* and attempted to provide a corrective to the traditional western missionary influenced perception of Islam in West Africa. Edward W. Blyden, "Mohammedanism in West Africa", *Methodist Quarterly Review*, LIII, Jan. 1871, Lynch, *Blyden*, 68-69. See also Edward Blyden, Mohammedanism and the Negro Race,"

*Fraser's Magazine*, November 1875.

102. Edward Wilmot Blyden, "Christian Mission in West Africa", *Fraser's Magazine*, October 1876 and Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 56

103. Contemporary scholars have also noted and critiqued what is described as Blyden's "romanticized" and "uncritical" portrayal of Islam in West Africa. See Livingston, *Education and Race*, 233.

104. John M. Deputie to Lowrie, August 21 1876. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 348.

105. The fifteen articles comprising this anthology were: "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race" (1875); "Christianity and the Negro Race"(1876); "Christian Missions in West Africa" (1876); "The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans" (1881); "The Origin and Purpose of African Colonization" (1883); "Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God; or, Africa's Service to the World" (1880); "Echoes From Africa"; "Philip and the Eunuch" (1882); "Mohammedanism in Western Africa" (1871); "Sierra Leone and Liberia: Their Origin, Work, and Destiny"; "Islam and Race Distinction"; "Africa and the Africans" (1878); "The Life of Lord Lawrence and its Lessons"; "The Mohammedans of Nigritia"; and "African Colonization." They were written over a period of two decades and reflect the theological, missiological, peda-gogical and ideological concerns and insights that mark Blyden's transition.

106. After resigning from the Presbyterian ministry, Swing established an independent church in Chicago and enjoyed additional success as an editor. Swing reported that the book "merits a wide popularity among both the races" and described Blyden as " a pure first -class scholar and thinker. . . educated, learned and an acute and broad reasoner." See Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 597-599; Lynch, *Blyden*, 76-77; Lynch, *Letters*, 397; and *Afri can Repository*, Vol. LXVI., 1890, 23-24; Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 226-227.

107. This assertion was made in *The Christian Recorder*, November 3, 1887. See Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 600. For a valuable contemporary and critical assessment of this work and Blyden's perception of the role and function of Christianity and Islam see Edward Hulmes, "Edward Wilmot Blyden's Understanding of Christianity and Islam as Instruments of Black Emancipation in West Africa, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1990: 44-65.

108. *The Christian Recorder*, January 12, 1888. For one of Blyden's earliest responses to this charge see *African Repository* ,Vol. LXIV, 1888, 134-135, and Holden, *Blyden of Liberia* , 600-603.

109. Blyden to the Presbytery of West Africa, December 8, 1886, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 573.
110. Resolution passed by the Presbytery of West Africa, December 10 1886, Africa Letters file, Presbyterian Historical Society, 7. Additional insight into Blyden's actions and the response of the Presbytery is reflected in correspondence of Rev. Thomas H. Roberts with Rev. E. Webb of Lincoln University. Roberts, pastor of the Presbyterian church at Brewerville, Liberia, reported to Webb, his former professor, that "We pled with the Dr. not to have his name taken from the roll of the ministry, but could not prevail. His reasons in his petition were that he could not be any longer 'useful and happy' in that office and therefore he asked of us to remove him from the roll of the ministry. There were other reasons and causes which he thought best not to reveal as they might discourage us rather then encourage. . . ." Rev. Thomas Roberts to Rev. E. Webb, December 21, 1886, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 574.
111. *The Presbyterian*, January 29 1887, 8, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia* , 574-575.
112 Coppinger to Blyden, February 7, 1887, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 575.
113. Coppinger to Blyden, June 10, 1887, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 581-582.
114. Personal factors which included tribulations occasioned by an unhappy domestic life as well as tensions within the Presbytery were also alluded to by Blyden as having contributed to his decision. In reference to the latter, Blyden wrote "What I have done is to leave a connection in which through prejudices and blindness of those with whom I was obliged to associate and work I might some day have been seriously injured. I felt that some day I should fall by the hand of Saul. . . ." Blyden to Coppinger, April 13, 1887; June 6, 1887, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 580-581.
115. Blyden to Coppinger, March 16, 1887, Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 575-579. In a later article published in the African Repository under the heading "Not a Mohammedan," Blyden contended that "No one who knows my habits, tastes and studies, or who had carefully read any of my writings, would conclude that I had turned Mohammedan." *African Repository* ,Vol. LXIV, 1888, 134-135 and Holden, *Blyden of Liberia* , 600-603.
116. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, November 29, 1888, Lynch, *Letters*, 395-396. Miller was attempting to revive the New Jersey Colonization Society and was interested in developing educational work among Muslims in the Liberian interior. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 612.
117. See John W. Buckham,"Christianity Among the Religions," *The Hibbert Journal*, 7 (October 1908-July 1909) 513-21.

118. Blyden was apparently among those Presbyterians who admired the controversial Briggs as a "champion of liberty and unfettered scholarship against stubborn traditionalism." See Charles Briggs , *American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History together with an Appendix of Letters and Documents* (New York, 1885). Robert T. Handy notes that in this work Briggs, Davenport Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Languages in Union Theological Seminary, "challenged Old School assumptions" concerning the orthodoxy of colonial Presbyterianism. Upon his appointment in 1890 to the Edward Robinson professorship of biblical theology Briggs delivered an inaugural lecture on "The Authority of Holy Scripture" which reflected his appropation of the perspective and methodology of "Higher Criticism." In 1892 he was tried for heresy by the Presbytery of New York and eventually suspended from his ministry by the General Assembly. He subsequently demitted his Presbyterian ordination and in 1898 was ordained as an Episcopal minister. See Handy, *History of Union Theological Seminary*, 41-93 and Max Gray Rogers, "Charles Augustus Briggs, Heresy at Union" in *American Religious Heretics*, ed. George H. Shriver (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 89-147.

119. Blyden to Rev John Miller, November 29, 1888, Lynch , *Letters*, 395-396.

120. Ibid. Patton suceeded McCosh as president of Princeton in 1888. Blyden's hope would not be realized. From his post at Princeton University and later Princeton Seminary, Patton would lead the conservative attack on Charles Briggs and other theological and missiological liberals within the Presbyterian Church. See Balmer and Fitzmier, *Presbyterians*, 202-203 and Handy, *History of Union Theological Seminary*, 76-77.

121. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, November 29, 1888, Lynch, Letters , 395-396.

122. See Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 22-23 and Handy, *History of Union Theological Seminary*, 66-67.

123. Blyden to Rev. John Miller, December 6, 1888, Lynch, *Letters* , 399-401.

124. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 612-613 and Woodson, *The Works of Francis J. Grimke'*, Vol. IV, 11-24.

125. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 616-615. Blyden to Grimke', March 5, 1890, Lynch, *Letters*, 409. Matthew Anderson pastored Berean Church in Philadelphia for nearly a decade and was a leader of the African American Presbyterian community. He attended Oberlin College and was a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary. See his study of the dilemma faced by Black Presbyterians in Matthew Anderson, *Presbyterianism—Its Relation to the Negro*, (Philadelphia: J. McGill, White & Co., 1897) and

Murray, *Presbyterians* , 181-184.

126. Thomas C. Hall was the son of the Presbyterian conservative Dr. John Hall who pastored the Fifth Avenue Church of New York. The senior Hall was also a director of Princeton seminary and a defender of Presbyterian orthodoxy against Darwinism, higher criticism, revision of the Westminster Confession and other liberal currents. However, his conservative views were not shared by his son who graduated from Princeton and Union Theological Seminary and also studied in Berlin and Gottingen. The younger Hall would serve pastorates in Omaha and Chicago before joining Briggs on the faculty of Union Theological Seminary in 1899. Handy, *History of Union Theological Seminary*, 106-107, 140; Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 82.

127. *The Presbyterian*, Vol. LIX, 1889, 12-13; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 616. Hutchinson, *Modernist Impulse, 94.* See Charles A. Briggs, *Whither? A Theological Question for the Times* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889) and Rogers, "Charles Augustus Briggs," 94-97.

128. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia* , 616-618; *African Repository*, Vol. LXVI, 1890, 101-107; Blyden to Miller, December 6, 1888, Lynch, *Letters* , 399; 410.

129. *The Church at Home and Abroad*, May, 1890, 409-413 and Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*,, 624.

130. During this tour Blyden also lectured extensively on the Koran and Islam in West Africa before black church and school audiences in both the North and the South. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 616, 618-620. Blyden to Grimke', November 4, 1889, Lynch, *Letters*, 406.

131. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 618-625. Note Blyden's influence on progressive clergy such as Majola Agbebi, James Johnson, John R. Frederick, and Orishatukeh Faduma. See Lynch, *Blyden*, 98, 219, 238-240, 242, 245-246 and Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leon: Responses to Colonialism 1870-1945* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 108-122.73-74, 111-123. On the emergence of a "progressive element" among African-American Christians see Carter G. Woodson, *History of the Negro Church* (Washington, D. C. : Associated Publishers, 1972), 224-303.

132. *Annual Reports of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church In The United States of America*, 1887-1900.

133. *52nd Annual Report of the Board of Missions*, 1890, 11, 13.

134. *54th Annual Report of the Board of Missions*, 1892, 25-28.

135. *Ibid.*

136. *56th Annual Report of Board of Missions*, 1893, 27; Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 208.
137. *57th Annual Report of Board of Missions*, 1894, 33.
138. *60th Annual Report of Board of Missions*, 1897, 33. One of the major formulators and implementers of the Board's policies was Robert E. Speer who served as its secretary from 1891 to 1937. Balmer and Fitzmier, *Presbyterians*, 93, 214-215.
139. *58th Annual Report of Board of Missions*, 1895, 29-30.
140. Minutes and correspondence of the Board of Mission reveal the personal impact of the Board's change in policy. In response to a letter from D. W. Frazier of the Liberian mission protesting that his cut in salary from $600 to $500 was "a breach of contract," Speer referred him to the "manual" which noted that salaries were " subject to change after sufficient notice" and announced that the Board was holding to its policy of "No Increase but decreases." Speer also refered disgruntled members of the Presbytery "to the China Inland Mission for encouragement" and argued that it was "not an unkindness but a kindness for the Board to ask the churches to support themselves." See Letter from D. W. Frazier of the Liberia Presbytery, December 6, 1894. Speer to R. A. M. Deputie on September 26 , 1895; December 5, 1895; Speer to the Presbytery of West Africa, May 17, 1894, *Africa Letters, Liberia Mission 1884-1901*, Vol. 51, 2.
141. *62 Annual Report of Board of Mission*, 1899, 32.
142. *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 1925, Vol. I., 213. An interpretation of Board policy and its impact as chronicled in the often cryptic reports of the Board is provided by Brown. He notes that "In 1894 the Board withdrew and officially ended more than a half century of mission work in Liberia by deciding to gradually phase out its Liberian mission by diminishing from year to year the amount of its appropriations.... Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 203, 205, 209. Foreign Mission reports by the Board for 1900, 1901, and 1902 make no reference to the Liberian mission. See
143. Henry Warner Bowden, "An Overview of Cultural Factors in the American Protestant Missionary Enterprise" and Charles W. Forman, "A History of Foreign Mission Theory" in *American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1977), 40-62, 69-140.
144. Charles Forman notes that "It was Anderson along with Henry Venn of England, who formulated the goal of missions which came to be generally accepted, i. e., the reaction of self-governing, self supporting and self-propagating churches." Foreman,"Mission Theory," 77-79. On Venn see Wilbert R. Shenk, *Henry Venn-Missionary Statesman* (Maryknoll: Orbis

Books, 1983). For the influence of modernism and liberalism on Speer and the Presbyterian Board of Missions see Longfield , *Presbyte-rian Controversy*, 181-230. Forman notes that Arthur Judson Brown mirrored Speer in "emphases and viewpoints." Forman, "Mission Theory", 93-94. On the Boards gradual adoption and implementation of this policy see Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 87.

145. Lynch, *Blyden*, 85-88; Blyden, *Return of the Exiles and the West African Church*, and J.F.A. Ajayi, "Henry Venn and the policy of development" in *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, ed. by O. U. Kalu, (London and New York: Longman, 1980), 63-75.

146. The Church's capitulation to the prevailing mood of America racism was affirmed in 1906 when the General Assembly agreed to the formation of racially segregated presbyteries and synods (judicatories) in exchange for union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. See David M. Reimers, "The Race Problem and Presbyterian Union," *Church History*, XXXI, No. 2 (June 1972), 203-215. On the protests presented by Grimke' and Anderson see Murry, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, 196-200 and Woodson, *Grimke*, 115-116, 165-169; and especially Henry Justin Ferry, "Racism and Reunion: A Black Protest by Francis James Grimke'", *Journal of Presbyterian History*, vol. 50, Number 2 (Summer, 1972), 77-88. For Blyden's comments on increasing racism in the American Presbyterian Church and community see Blyden, "Christianity and the Negro Race" in Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 35-36.

147. A policy of black exclusion by the Board was illuminated in 1896 when eight students at Lincoln University volunteered for foreign missionary service and were rejected. Murry, *Presbyterians*, 195. The Presbyterian Board of Missions was only one of a number of Protestant Mission Boards which began to restrict the use of black missionaries during this era. For explicit charges of racism within the Presbyterian mission field see the protests of Taka Truman of the Crisco and Gabon mission over discrepancies in support provided black and white missionaries by the Board. See Taka Truman to the Board, October, 10, 11, 1881, *Africa Letters*, 6.

148. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 210.

149. Balmer and Fitzmier, *The Presbyterians*, 93. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 210 and Speer, *Presbyterian Foreign Missions*, 23. Speer would serve as Secretary of the Board for 46 years and was one of the primary architects of its new policies. The issue and problem of race was more comprehensively addressed by Speer in his *Of One Blood: A Short Study of the Race Problem* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions & Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1924) and

*Race and Race Relations: A Christian View of Human Contacts* (New York: Fleming H. Revell,1924). For an uncritical assessment of Speer's racial attitudes see also Longfield , *Presbyterian Controversy*, 196-197.

150. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 210-211.

151. Murray, *Presbyterians* , 195.

152. These include "Liberia as a Field for a Missionary Enterprise." Originally delivered as a lecture in the late 1890's, it has not been located. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 679. The last and perhaps most significant of his commentaries on mission work in Liberia was a lecture,"The Problems before Liberia," delivered in 1909 in Monrovia. See Edward Wilmot Blyden, *The Problems before Liberia: A lecture delivered in the Senate Chamber at Monrovia, January 18, 1909* (C. M. Phillips, London, 1909) and Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 848-850.

153. Occasional references to Blyden's activities were published in *The Presbyterian*. See *The Presbyterian* June 28, 1899 and Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 691.

154. Blyden to John E. Bruce, July 15, 1910, Lynch, *Letters*, 503-504. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 772. For an example of the early controversy provoked in missiological circles by biblical criticism see Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, II, 58, 90-97.

155. Livingstone, *Education and Race*, 150-155.

156. Hollis Lynch, "The Native Pastorate Controversy and Cultural Ethnocentrism in Sierra Leone, 1871-1874," *Journal of African History*, V, 3 1964, 395-413. Lynch, *Blyden*, 84-104. His call for a non-sectarian West African Church inspired the founding of the United Native African Church in Lagos in 1891. Lynch, *Black Spokesman*, xxiv. See also Blyden, "Return of the Exiles and the West African Church."

157. In 1896 he was appointed by the colonial administration in Lagos as Agent of Native Affairs with the primary responsibility of advancing educational opportunities for Muslims in Lagos. From 1901 to 1906 he served as "Director Of Mohammedan Education" in Sierra Leone. Blyden's efforts on behalf of Islam and the Islamic community earned him numerous tributes. Upon retirement as Director of Mohammedan Education in Sierra Leone he was presented with a valuable pen bearing the inscription: "Presented to Dr. Blyden by the Muslims of Sierra Leone, the pen is mightier than the sword." In 1905 he was awarded a medal ("the Decoration of the Order of the Medjidieh") from representatives of the Sultan of Turkey "for the labor expended in pointing out to the better consideration of the world the virtue or true import of their religion [Islam]."Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 808-809, 839. Blyden has been described as the "the

morning star of the Muslim renaissance" in Sierra Leone. See M. Saif'ud Deen Aklharazim "The Origin and Progress of Islam in Sierra Leone," *Sierra Leone Studies,* January 1939, 24-25. For a more critical perspective see Mohammed Bassiru Sillah, "Edward Blyden and Islam in Sierra Leone: a study of African Intellectual Response to British Colonialism," *Hamdard Islamicus*, 14, 1991: 23-42.

158. See Edward Wilmot Blyden, "Islam in the Western Soudan," *Journal of the African Society*, October 1902, 11-37 and Edward Wilmot Blyden, "The Koran in Africa," *Journal of the African Society*, January 1905, 157-171. *African Life and Customs* was the first important attempt at a sociological analysis of African society as a whole. In it Blyden who had been increasingly impressed "by the antiquity and the sophistication of indigenous African culture" argued that many of the institutions condemned by Europeans such as polygamy and secret societies were important and integral parts of the African social system. See Edward Wilmot Blyden, *African Life and Customs*, (London, C. M. Phillips, 1908); Lynch, *Blyden*, 66-67, 81; and Hume, "Blyden's Understanding of Christianity and Islam," 50, 55, 57.

159. Edward Blyden, *The Arabic Bible in the Soudan: a Plea for Transliteration* (C. M. Phillips, Printer, 14 Portugal Street , London, 1910).

160. Holden, *Blyden of Liberia*, 848.

161. *Ibid.*, 1008.

162. One of the most poignant and meaningful tributes paid Blyden in death came from members of Sierra Leone's Muslim community. After a fu neral service conducted at the mortuary by Reverend J. R. Fredericks of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the youth of the "Mohammedan schools" headed a procession to his graveside which included "all the Alfas and Almamis of Foruah Bay and Foulah Town, with the Chiefs and Headmen of the Mandingoes, Foulahs, Seracolis, Mendes, etc." *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, Feburary 10, 1912; Holden, *Blyden of Liberia* ,863, 841-864.

163. Hume concludes his assessment of Blyden noting: "There remains a paradox. The erstwhile Presbyterian minister who became a formidable apologist for Islam, and such a persistent critic of Christian mission, finally abandoned his affiliation to all forms of institutional religion. . . . In his later years he was attracted by the cultivated agnosticism of European luminaries like Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Huxley." Hume also suggests that Blyden's "comparative assessments of Islam and Christianity" made an important contribution to the development of liberation theology: "By several decades he anticipated the work of the liberation theologians who seek to interpret the social, political, and eco-

nomic implications of Christian belief and discipleship." Hume, "Blyden's Understanding of Christianity and Islam as Instruments of Black Emancipation," 45-46, 63- 64. See also Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, 116-120; and Lynch, *Blyden*, 246.

164. *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 1925, Vol. I. 213, Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 208.

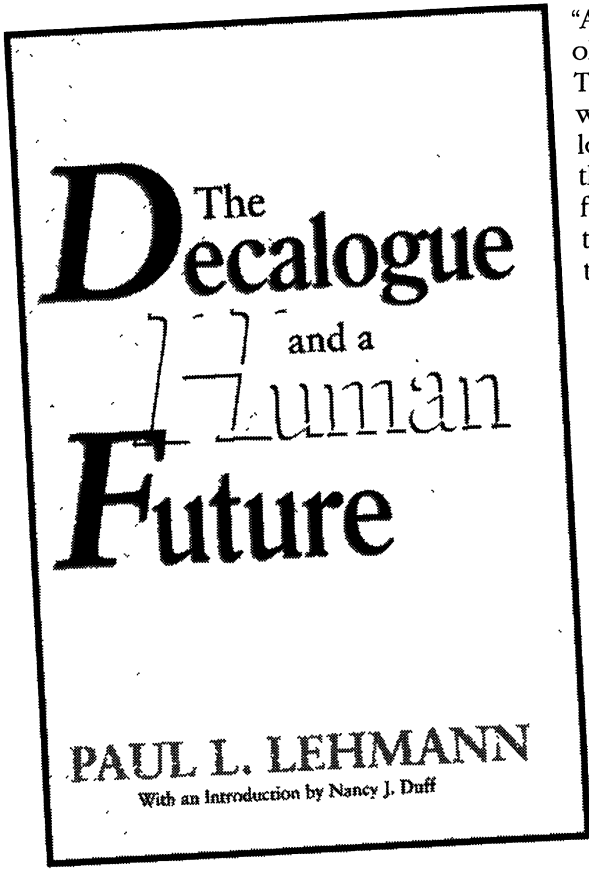
165. Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 209.

166. *Ibid.* See for example Thomas S. Donohugh, "The Christian Mission In Liberia," *The International Review of Missions*, Vol. 34: 1945, 136-143.

167. E. Reginal Townsend, "Message Of The Moderator of the Presbytery of Liberia To the Call Presbytery Convened With The First Presbyterian Church Monrovia, January 15, 1978 (unpublished paper); and E. Reginald Towsend, "Remarks of the Ruling Elder E. Reginald Townsend On The Occasion Of His Induction Into Office As Moderator of the Presbytery Of Liberian In Western Africa, At The First Presbyterian Church, Monrovia, Sunday, November 13, 1977," (unpublished paper).

168. The Todee mission was described as "the pride of Liberian Presbyterianism." Townsend, "Message of the Moderator," 4, 10-12. For an analysis of Liberian developments within the context of the evolving missiology and theology of twentieth century Presbyterianism see John Conventry Smith, *From Colonialism To World Community* (Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1982), 165-170 and Heuser, *Guide*, xxiv-xxv.

169. Patrick Johnston, *Operation World*, ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 155.

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# The Ecumenical Thought of Reinhold Neibuhr

Robert Ayers

In his book *The Secularization of Christianity* E.L. Mascal suggests that the Christian theologian should combine a developed sense of and loyalty to the Christian tradition with the exercise of "all the critical and interpretative gifts which God has given him."[1] It is surely the case that the modern theologian Reinhold Niebuhr was unusually adept at this task. While he claimed that he was not a theologian, not competent in the "nice points of pure theology,"[2] one should understand this disclaimer as a result in part of his personal modesty and in part of the contrast between his style of theologizing and that of those, like Paul Tillich, who build closed theological systems. Niebuhr's theology was open-ended and dynamic. To use Patrick Granfield's expression he was a "prophet-theologian."[3] Yet he sought to show that the truths of faith are credible and to relate the suprarational frame of reference (revelation as a given) to the realities of human existence and the issues of the day in a way that was adequate to experience, coherent, and comprehensive. The distinguished Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel claimed that "in boldness of penetration, depth of insight, fullness of vision and comprehensiveness, Reinhold Niebuhr's system excels anything which the whole of American theology has hitherto produced."[4]

Niebuhr's achievement was due not only to his developed sense of the Christian tradition and his native gifts but also to his use, whether always deliberate or not, of a dialectical methodology, an epistemology similar to the empirical pragmatism of William James, and a process ontology similar to that of A.N. Whitehead.[5] These three enabled him to deal adequately and comprehensively with the contrast-

ing polarities of human existence and of reality with the empirical realities of science and of human experience, and with the organic, progressive and relational aspects of reality in general.

Some interpretations of Niebuhr's thought fail because his methodological, epistemological, and ontological presuppositions and preferences are either misunderstood, minimized or ignored. This is especially true with respect to his dialectical methodology. This dialectic is one of polar opposites, not of contradictions in which there is the assertion and denial of the same property to the same thing at the same time and in the same respect. It is not a Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and unifying synthesis. Rather it is a dialectic of contrary propositions each one of which is incomplete and inadequate in some way but when taken together provide a greater understanding of the issue in question. For example, experience shows that human beings possess indeterminate possibilities for good but also indeterminate possibilities for evil,[6] that human existence and all of nature possess both regularity and creativity.[7] Both must be held together in any adequate view of what is the case. But as Robert McAfee Brown has put it many critics "have listened to Niebuhr with only one ear."[8] In the attempt to provide an accurate descriptive account of Niebuhr's thought we should seek to listen with both ears.

In recent years there has been some renewal of interest in and writing about Niebuhr's life and thought and yet little has been written about his ecumenical views and activities. For example, in the recent Harries and Newhaus collections of essays[9] and in both editions of the Charles W. Kegley collection[10] there are no essays dealing explicitly with this subject. In the second edition of the Kegley collection Ronald Stone acknowledges that Niebuhr "labored hard in the ecumenical movement,"[11] and Kegley in the Preface claims that in this area "his contributions have been immense," but admits that "it was impossible to obtain an explicit study of the ecumenical aspect of his work."[12]

One might be led to infer from the lack of studies concerning Niebuhr's ecumenical thought that he had little to say about it but this would be a wrong inference. He had a great deal to say about the ecumenical movement. If we add to this certain theological positions which provide a context for his ecumenical views, then there is such a wealth of material that the problem becomes one of how to deal with it in a brief and structured way so as not to misrepresent his position.

The approach here will be an attempt to show how Niebuhr's dialectic works out in terms of the following closely related issues: (1) Human nature and existence; (2) Christology and salvation; (3) The Church and the relations between churches or denominations as well as the relations between different religions. Then an attempt will be made to show that Niebuhr's position in each of these issues is carried through consistently in his discussions of the achievements and problems of the ecumenical movement, understanding this term in the larger sense as inclusive of thought and action concerning relations not only among Christian bodies but also among different religions.

*I. Human Nature and Existence*

Niebuhr's dialectical method and empiricist epistemology enabled him to deal realistically with the polar aspects of human nature and existence. One of the polemical theses in his famous Gifford lectures was that the alternative positions of idealism and naturalism or rationalism and romanticism were inadequate because each tends to exaggerate facts of experience which support its own doctrine and ignore those which support the alternative doctrine.[13] The biblical understanding is superior to any one of these alternative doctrines precisely because it is aware of the dialectical character of the human condition and thus is truer to the facts of human experience. Human beings are those creatures who stand at the juncture of nature and spirit. Like other creatures they are subject to the laws and limitations of nature, but unlike other creatures they have the capacity to transcend nature, history and self. It is this capacity for transcendence which is the basis for the uniqueness of the human self and distinguishes the human being from other creatures.[14] It is a causally necessary condition for human misery and glory, for the indeterminate possibilities for good and the indeterminate possibilities for evil, for the presence of sin and the acceptance of God's grace.[15]

Sin is primarily a matter of the will and its most insidious form is pride--pride of power, of knowledge, and of virtue. It is at the higher levels of human life that the pretension of self, the sin of pride, is the most dangerous because it is a mixture of self-sufficiency and insecurity.[16] The human being seeks to make oneself God because one is betrayed by both one's greatness and one's weakness. While sin is universal it is not an ontological necessity, a defect of essential human nature. It is a corruption of the human essence, not its destruction.

Human beings as such possess an uneasy conscience and a vague sense of the divine which provide a basis for the humble and repentant acceptance of the unmerited grace of God made known in Jesus Christ.[17]

The human capacity for transcendence is the precondition not only for the dialectic of human misery and glory but also for the polar opposites of individualization and participation, to use Paul Tillich's expression. Since human beings transcend the limitations of nature and history, they have the capacity for individualization but no individual can be a true self in isolation. The individual is not discrete for "the highest reaches of his individuality are dependent upon the social substance out of which they arise and they must find their end and fulfillment in the community." Yet "there is a point in human freedom where the individual transcends both his own community and the total historical process."[18] Communist collectivism obscures the individual's capacity for transcendence while bourgeois individualism obscures the social substance of human existence.[19] There is, of course, a constant tension between dynamics and form, between freedom and tradition, between individualization and participation, and between individual conscience and the ambiguities of communities. This tension cannot be abolished but rightly directed can be "a constant source for purifying and broadening the justice and brotherhood of the community."[20]

*II. Christology and Soteriology*

Given Niebuhr's dialectical methodology, his dialectical understanding of human nature and existence, it is not surprising that his understanding of christology and soteriology was dialectical. Christology and soteriology were inseparably connected and of fundamental importance in his thought. He became convinced that:

> it is possible to look at the human situation without illusion and without despair only from the standpoint of the Christ-revelation. . ., the 'mighty acts of God' as points of illumination in which the purposes of God are revealed within the flux of history.[21]

While he sometimes used traditional language in his christological discourse, Niebuhr's christology was not that of traditional orthodoxy. The christology expressed in orthodox terms is contradictory. He explicitly charged that the formula of Chalcedon (truly God and truly man) understood in Greek metaphysical terms was contradictory. As Niebuhr himself expressed it:

> All definitions of Christ which affirm both his divinity and humanity in the sense that they ascribe both finite and historically conditioned and eternal and unconditioned qualities to his nature must verge on logical nonsense. It is possible for a character, event or fact of history to point *symbolically* beyond history and to become a source of disclosure of an eternal meaning, purpose and power which bears history. But is not possible to be historical and unconditioned at the same time.[22]

That is, Jesus was not some demigod but a real man in whose life and death was disclosed the loving nature of God and the ultimate meaning of life. The fact that Niebuhr presented a mythical or symbolic analysis of christological doctrine did not mean that he found no truth in the doctrine or failed to take it seriously. Not all myths are to be classified as ridiculous and unreal fantasies. While some myths are *prescientific* and contain elements known to be inconsistent with the ordered course of events in the world, there are *permanent* myths or symbols which deal with some meaning or reality not subject to exact analysis but which are "verifiable" in experience. The myth "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" is verifiable in the experience of anyone open to the mercy and new life which flow from the encounter with God.[23] The Jesus of history is a perfect symbol of the absolute in history because of the perfect love [the divine Agape] realized in the drama of his life and cross. A man became the symbol of God.[24] Here is a functional christology, but one which retains dialectical polarities.

We have seen that in his dialectical analysis of human nature Niebuhr affirmed that human beings are subject to nature's regularities and limitations but also because of freedom are capable of transcending nature and self. Jesus Christ displays the dialectic of human possibilities and limits, but also the larger dialectic of human possibilities

and limits on the one hand and on the other hand of possibilities which transcend the human. In Jesus there is a remarkable coincidence and conformity with the Agape or self-giving love of God. In his freedom he accepts God's purpose for himself, a life in conformity with Agape. Here is the dialectical relations of "a divine Agape which stoops to conquer, and the human Agape which rises above history in a sacrificial act."[25] The Cross is the supreme symbol of the truth of love, the transcendent source of the meaning of life. Such love can have a counterpart in history only in a life which ends tragically because it refuses to participate in the power rivalries of history. Thus the Cross symbolizes the perfection of Agape which transcends all particular norms of justice and mutuality in history. It is the final norm of a human nature which has no final norm in history. In Christ the vague sense of the divine which human life never loses is crystallized into a revelation of divine mercy and judgment and the acceptance of this revelation induces repentance and hope and a new life under the norm of Agape.[26]

In this context Niebuhr in a footnote briefly discussed what he called the "hidden Christ." Since this is of such relevance and importance for our theme, it merits quoting in full:

> While Christians rightly believe that all truth necessary for such a spiritual experience [of divine mercy and judgment] is mediated only through the revelation in Christ, they must guard against the assumption that only those who know Christ 'after the flesh,' that is, in the actual historical revelation, are capable of such a conversion. A 'hidden Christ' operates in history. And there is always the possibility that those who do not know the historical revelation may achieve a more genuine repentance and humility than those who do. If this is not kept in mind, the Christian faith easily becomes a new vehicle of pride.[27]

The talk of a "hidden Christ" certainly suggests that there is a kind of universalism to be found in Niebuhr's christology. Such is also the case with respect to his soteriology. While good and evil remain in history to its end and while even those who accept God's mercy in repentance are forgiven sinners and not sinless saints, Niebuhr does express the conviction that beyond nature-history there will

be the ultimate triumph of God's grace and purposes in an ultimate fellowship in which there is perfect freedom and faithfulness. So he says that the symbol of the second coming of Christ expresses "faith in the final supremacy of love over all forms of self-love."[28] And the doctrine of the resurrection expresses the faith that "the ultimate consummation is not an absorption into the divine but a loving fellowship with God,"[29] a fellowship which ultimately will become all inclusive.[30] Obviously, these basic themes in Niebuhr's theology provided a sound basis for his ecumenical thought and practice.

*III. The Church And the Relations Between Churches or Denominations And the Relations Between Religions.*

A. The Church

An early criticism of Niebuhr was that the question of the church received scant attention in his theology.[31] However, D.B. Robertson in his collection of Niebuhr's articles entitled *Essays In Applied Christianity*[32] demonstrated that this criticism was not warranted. These articles provided evidence that Niebuhr gave much attention to the church. Further, in several of Niebuhr's books there are passages dealing with the church.[33] In view of his personal history which includes his family heritage, his years as pastor of Bethel Church in Detroit (1915-1928) and his years of teaching seminary students at Union Theological Seminary in New York, it is not surprising that the question of the church in both its theological and practical dimensions would be one of his important concerns. Undoubtedly, his caustic criticisms of the actual church concerning its pretensions and failings were motivated by his deep love for the church and his appreciation for its possibilities.[34]

While Niebuhr's theology of the church was influenced to some degree by his Reformed-Lutheran heritage, of equal and perhaps greater influence was his study at the interdenominational Yale Divinity School, his more than thirty years of teaching in the interdenominational Union Theological Seminary, and his ecumenical commitments relative to the National and World Council of Churches.[35] This background helps to account for the fact that there were some Protestant motifs in his view of the church but that it was not partisan or denominational. While forms, "orders", rites and polities are important, "the skeleton of the common life of the church,"[36] they are of secondary

importance because they "belong clearly to the realm of the historically contingent."[37] There is the dialectical reality of polar opposites in the historically contingent. "Human genius creates and human sin corrupts all the historical and relative forms of the church."[38] The forms are not a part of the givenness of the church.

When we look at what Niebuhr had to say of the church as a given, we find that he referred to it in various ways. The church is "the community of faith gathered by the revelation of 'God in Christ'."[39] It is "a community of grace which, despite historic corruptions, has the 'oracles of God,' as St. Paul said about Israel."[40] It is "that place in human society where men are disturbed by the word of the eternal God. . .the place in human society where the kingdom of God impinges upon all human enterprises through the divine word, and where the grace of God is made available to those who have accepted his judgment."[41] It is "the place where the word of mercy, reconciliation and consolation is heard. . . .Here human incompleteness is transcended though not abolished."[42]

So the church is "a community of contrite believers," of forgiven sinners rather than sinless saints, but also it is "a community of hopeful believers" who know that if the divine judgment is contritely accepted "it reveals in and beyond itself the mercy which restores life on a new and healthier basis."[43] Such a community of grace, faith and hope "must be sacramental. It must have sacraments to symbolize the having and not having of the final virtue and truth. It must have sacraments to express its participation in the *Agape* of Christ and yet not pretend that it has achieved that love."[44] Even these historical means of grace, the sacraments, may in fact become corrupted, and become the instruments of pretension or degenerate into magic. They are as perilous as they are necessary.[45]

It is rather obvious that Niebuhr's view of the church incorporates and is dependent upon his understanding of the dialectical relationship of the divine and the human, of grace and faith, of the individual and the community and of the absolute Agape and the contingent forms of symbolizing Agape in history.

## B. Non-Catholic Churches and the Ecumenical Movement

This dialectical view of the Church formed one basis for Niebuhr's dialectical polemic concerning the actual church and the ecumenical movement. He claimed that the ecumenical debate in the United States

had been hindered by the failure to take into account the realities of the sect/church types of Christian bodies as defined by Ernest Troeltsch in his *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*.[46] The sect type of church tends to separate itself from the world, to be informal, non-theological, suspicious of tradition and ecclesiastical authority and non-sacramental while the church type of church tends to be just the opposite, namely, inclusive, formal, theological, sacramental and accepting of traditions and ecclesiastical authority. In Niebuhr's view the ecumenical debate has not given sufficient attention to the problem of resolving "what is true and false in both the church and the sect idea of Christianity."[47] On the one hand, the sect rightly insists upon some tension with the world and rightly protests against such things as empty forms, grace by magic, empty theology and liturgy and abuse of ecclesiastical authority. On the other hand, the church rightly insists that theology is essential for the church, and that the full substance of the church is preserved by such things as sacramental and liturgical observances, by the continual renewal of the faith through the scriptures, and by an ecclesiastical order which preserves the fellowship of the church in the widest possible terms. It rightly maintains a historic continuity and prevents the dissipation of the power of the sacraments through the vagaries of such things as personal preferences or the mood of an age. Yet, it is too often true that in the churchly type of Christianity sacramental observances are vitiated, scriptural interpretation becomes a source of divisiveness, theology is made arid and irrelevant, and ecclesiastical authority serves as a source of unchristian pride. On the other hand, sectarian Christianity has no grounds for boasting for it is one of the paradoxical aspects of this type of Christianity that it ultimately makes more shallow and trivial what it had intended to deepen.[48]

It can be readily discerned that Niebuhr's dialectical view of the church is consistent with his view of the dialectical tension inherent in human life and communities generally. Human existence itself it made up of the polar opposites of dynamics and form, freedom and tradition. So it is also with respect to the community, the church. If the church overemphasizes form and tradition, it absolutizes the relative, claiming a transcendent perfection for itself in history and thus living too much by the pretensions of its righteousness and too little by faith and hope. If it overemphasizes dynamics and freedom (as the sect tends to do), it cuts itself off from the theology, liturgy and forms of the past and falls into all sorts of aberrations and crude immediacies

not checked by the insights of the Christian ages.[49] The task, then, is to eliminate what is false in both sect and church and to preserve what is true. The dialectical tension between them should not be abolished but rightly directed so that it becomes a source for developing a theology, liturgy, and polity "creative enough to embody both the value of the church's institutions of grace and the...insistence of sectarian Christianity...that the grace of God is bound to no institution."[50] The inclusive church of Christ needs the peculiar treasure of each, church and sect. Niebuhr insisted, however, that humility is a necessary condition for the development of a common denominator between these two, a humility in which churches of whatever type are moved to repentance and faith in the Gospel of Christ and thus renewed. Such renewal would mitigate the scandal of disunion and lead to a wider unity because it would separate 'the traditions of men' from the truth of the gospel.[51]

The theme that the renewal of the churches in repentance and faith is a *sine qua non* condition for the ecumenical movement runs throughout Niebuhr's writings on the reunion of the churches. In Protestantism such renewal must transcend the typical individualistic faith of most Protestant churches and include an awareness of communal reality so that there is the attempt to deal with the issue of justice in the social sphere. Despite their universalistic principles, Protestant churches in the area of race relations, for example, in contrast to Catholics have been among the most segregated communities in the nation. So there is the need for repentance and renewal which will spur creative action for the sake of transcending the gulf of race. However, the Black churches and their interdenominational agencies such as those led by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. should be preserved and should receive white support.

In Niebuhr's view King was the most creative Protestant of the times, white or black. Largely because of him the Black Church had moved away from pietistic irrelevance into the struggle for justice. At the height of the civil rights movement Niebuhr was in poor health. Yet he enthusiastically supported King's struggle and was jubilant over his victories. Also he called for the churches of the white majority to establish open membership, integrate denominational and interdenominational boards, agencies and meetings, and support various programs, civil and religious, to combat racism.[52]

In his address to the First General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, the theme of which was *Man's*

*Disorder and God's Design*, Niebuhr insisted that the Christian churches should first of all experience repentance. They need to repent of their tendency to lobby in the courts of the almighty for special advantages for their causes, and for their involvement in the social sins of the day. In humility they need to acknowledge that the final victory over human disorder is God's and not theirs, without at the same time abandoning responsibility for proximate victories.[53] In the address entitled "Our Dependence is On God" written for the 1954 Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Niebuhr makes this point crystal clear in a passage which merits quoting in full:

> The most thrilling part of the ecumenical enterprise has been not so much the increasing unity which we have experienced, but the increasing purity of the gospel message by the elimination not only of nationalistic and other parochial heresies, but of all those forms of worldly wisdom which colored and obscured the plain truth of the gospel, with its exaltation of the righteousness of God against all human righteousness. The ecumenical movement does not try to establish one unified church with the power to convict this or that church of heresy. Rather it establishes a place of encounter in which we can instruct each other by bringing our cherished treasures of grace and where, by allowing the criticism of our fellow Christians to aid us in separating the 'precious from the vile,' we may all draw closer together by all coming closer to the truth in Christ. Thus it is God's judgment and grace and not any virtue of our own which works mightily among us to heal the broken body of Christ and make us one.[54]

C. Intra-Christian Relations and Endeavors.

As the discussion above has indicated most of Niebuhr's work in the ecumenical movement took place in the context of an ecumenical Protestant life-situation. He played an important role in the National and World Council of Churches and wrote extensively in support of familial dialogue and closer cooperation between non-Roman Catholic Churches. Yet at the same time he did have a good deal to say

about Catholic Christianity and its relations with non-Catholic Churches and with the world. Much of what he said was critical but then he was just as critical, if not more so, of Protestant churches. In the Introduction to his 1965 book, *Man's Nature and His Communities*, he claimed that he "was never a polemical Protestant Christian, trying to score off the Jewish and Catholic faith."[55] Yet, later he admitted to the Catholic theologian Patrick Granfield that as an impatient young man he had held a needless polemical *attitude* toward Catholicism. While he now rejected the *attitude* certain nonnegotiable differences in positions remain.[56]

As might be expected, Niebuhr's positions with respect to Catholicism are stated in a dialectical fashion precisely because of the dialectical *realities* he finds in this institution and its relations. Similar to his analysis of sect and church he finds that which is true and that which is false in Catholicism.

In his analysis of human nature and existence Niebuhr had emphasized not only human sin and goodness, but also the dialectic of the social substance of human existence and the individual's capacity for transcendence or freedom.[57] One of the chief virtues of Catholicism, he believed, had been its firm hold on the social substance of human existence.[58] While this had its source in the organic collectivism of an agrarian and feudal culture, once the church was freed from this culture by the forces of modern history, it was able to deal in a relevant and relatively effective way with the moral and social problems involved in the communal reality of the modern technical, industrial and collectivist world. "Catholic theory," Niebuhr proclaimed, "is superior to all forms of individualism, which betray no awareness of communal reality."[59] By way of contrast, the most grievous of the many weaknesses of Protestantism is its indifference to the social substance of human existence. Having created an individualistic culture it is not able to exercise a critical function over its own handiwork. It is persistently individualistic in a collectivist age. It is both too individualistic in the faith proclaimed and too sentimental to come to terms with social evils or give much guidance with respect to justice in the industrial, political, social and racial spheres.[60]

Then too "the Catholic Church has been truer to the principles of Christian universalism than has Protestantism."[61] Although tainted to a degree by European parochialism, the transnational character of Catholicism is an embodiment of Christian universalism which serves as a guard against national, ethnic, and racial parochialism. The Catho-

lic Church is not just a collection of middle-class white Christians. It preserves a universalism and a unity because it insists on the whole church. In turn the universalism and the unity are guarded by the doctrine of the church as an extension of the Incarnation, the Kingdom of God on earth or a sacred reality, and by papal absolutism.[62]

Another factor which accounts for the relatively greater effectiveness of Catholicism than Protestantism with respect to the social issues in our modern technical and collectivist society was its tradition of natural law which made the standards of justice normative for corporate relations. Niebuhr was impressed by the insistence of Pope John XXIII that justice is the basic norm of collective morality and love is the driving force.[63] A weakness of the Protestant Reformation was that it relaxed the criticism of political institutions upon the basis of their conformity to natural law, and attempted to substitute capricious biblical norms which gave free reign to rulers.[64] In addition there are the modern relativists who "in their obsession with the changing aspects in the human situation" fail to discern the permanent structure of human existence.[65] This also contributes to the moral confusion of the age.

While there are many values in the Catholic sense of the social substance of human existence, its unity and universalism, and its natural law, it should not surprise us that Niebuhr also refers to the contrasting poles of authoritarianism as exemplified by papal absolutism, the church as an extension of the incarnation and thus a sacred reality possessed of transhistorical wisdom and so the guardian of ultimate truth, and natural law as absolute which results in inflexible positions on such contingent issues as overpopulation, birth control and divorce. Inflexible norms are inadequate to guide the conscience in new situations especially those of genuine historical novelty. The adaptability of the Catholic Church in mastering the moral problems of an industrial collectivist society stops short with the Church's dated norms equated with God's moral law. The notion of the Church as a continuing sacred reality guaranteed by the special character of its teaching authority, the Pope, obscures a proper awareness of the contingency and relativity of the historical, the finiteness of all human knowledge, and the dialectical reality of sin and righteousness in all human existence including the communal. This along with the absoluteness of natural law norms too often results in an authoritarianism which does not acknowledge the indeterminate character of human freedom and the variety and unique character of historic occasions. It seeks to stifle

the freedom of individuals and groups and to prohibit dissent, the life blood of the church. Without a prophetic voice directed against itself the church, any church, is subject to the pride of knowledge and virtue (truth cannot associate with error), and dialogue with other communions and religions made virtually impossible.[66]

In the conclusion of a 1960 article analyzing the Pope's encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, Niebuhr succinctly summarized his dialectical view of Catholicism when he said:

> It [Catholic Church] is really a very impressive survival from medievalism, which has managed to apply its ancient wisdom to the comfort of a harassed generation in a nuclear and technical age. Occasionally the wisdom does not quite fit. Always it is presented with a note of pretension. That note is inevitable when a human and historical institution claims eternal, transhistorical and divine reality.[67]

Although Niebuhr's dialectical analysis of the Catholic Church included criticism as well as praise, in several articles written prior to the Second Vatican Council he deplored the unwarranted stereotypical misconceptions of each by both Protestants and Catholics, and called for more genuine dialogue between these two branches of Christendom. Such dialogue frankly acknowledging nonnegotiable differences but pursued in charity and faithfulness to a common Lord could lead to the transcendence of those differences in common endeavors for the benefit of humankind.[68]

Niebuhr was favorably impressed by the Second Vatican Council and the changes it had brought about in the Roman Church, including greater openness to other Christian bodies and to other religions. The new ecumenical spirit in Catholicism which made possible increased ecumenical contacts and dialogue deserved an ecumenical response from Protestants. While he did not expect there to be an organic unity between Catholicism and Protestantism in the foreseeable future, Niebuhr was pleased that serious dialogue between Catholics and Protestants was taking place.[69] These dialogues can be more creative and proceed more hopefully if it is "realized that these two versions [of the Christian faith] are imbedded on either side of a watershed of history,"[70] and that nonnegotiable differences remain, namely, contrasting beliefs about the nature of the church and the authority and su-

premacy of the Pope as the instrument of its unity, order and discipline. As Niebuhr put it, "Protestants after all these years cannot yield obedience to the Pope. But Catholics cannot afford to discard a voice and instrument of authority which guarantees their survival as a universal religious community."[71]

However, Niebuhr entitled one of this last major articles "Toward New Intra-Christian Endeavors."[72] In it he declared that his own response to Catholic ecumenical developments had been stirred particularly by the surprising developments in the Jesuit order. The Jesuits who historically had been the paladins of papal monarchy were showing themselves to be among the most thoughtful critics of the Pope's position on issues such as birth control, and obviously were in the process of recovering liberty. Their leadership in such areas as science, philosophy, social problems and theology is outstanding. Of course the nonnegotiable differences between Protestants and Catholics have not been abolished, but given the new ecumenical spirit they are being mitigated in intensity. Protestants and Catholics do share a common inheritance and each emphasizes important virtues. On the one hand, there is the pluralism, liberty, and individual's transcendence of community in Protestantism and on the other hand the unity, order, and social substance of human existence in Catholicism. These are contrasting but supplementary values. Recent developments such as the Jesuits becoming the proponents of liberty and the Protestants seeking a spirit of unity in the organization of the World Council of Churches have shown that the contrasting sets of virtues are not the exclusive possession of either side. A perfect balance between these sets of virtues is not possible in history but there is now a *greater degree* of balance than previously. Even though an organic unity of Catholicism and Protestantism is unlikely, sufficient ecumenical progress has been made to justify describing "the two proponents as two branches of the same Christian community."[73]

D. Jewish-Christian Relations

In the discussion above concerning Niebuhr's attitude toward Catholicism it was indicated that in his mature years he rejected the polemical attitude he had held as a young man. With respect to Judaism Niebuhr, due undoubtedly to his appreciation of the Jewish capacity for civic virtue and social justice, never held a polemical attitude and for the most part was deliberately uncritical. In the semi-autobio-

graphical introduction to *Man's Nature and His Communities* he declared that during his pastorate in Detroit (1915-1928) there were two outstanding persons who influenced him greatly. One was the liberal Episcopal Bishop Charles Williams whom Niebuhr quoted as having said: "In the weightier matters of social justice there are only two Christians in Detroit, and they are both Jews."[74] The other was the Jewish lawyer Fred Butzel who was associated with Niebuhr in the work of the first interracial commission in Detroit and concerning whom Niebuhr said: "Fred Butzel's capacity for magnanimity and social shrewdness was so impressive that it began my long love affair with the Jewish people."[75] It is rather singular that at the beginning of his career one of his closest friends was Jewish and, as his wife Ursula tells us, that his closest friend during the last twelve years or so of his life was the noted scholar of Jewish ethics and mysticism Abraham Heschel.[76]

Although a Christian pastor and theologian, Niebuhr while still at Bethel church in Detroit had come to the conviction that Judaism was not simply a prelude to Christianity but was an authentically autonomous religion. Along with his brother H. Richard, he advocated removing Jews from the scope of Christian missionary activity and chided Protestant ecumenical councils (NCC and WCC) for failure to question the legitimacy of such endeavors.[77] This does not exclude individual conversions from one faith to another whether from marriage or other personal reasons. For Niebuhr, however, Christian missionary activity among Jews is wrong for two reasons. For one thing it is futile and secondly "the two faiths despite differences are sufficiently alike for the Jew to find God more easily in terms of his own religious heritage than by subjecting himself to the hazards of guilt feeling involved in a conversion to a faith, which whatever its excellencies, must appear to him as a symbol of an oppressive majority culture."[78] Any conversion prompted by Christological debates obscures the common spiritual and moral factors in both religions which generally are a Christian inheritance from the older parent religion, Judaism.[79] Among the things the two faiths share are a common text (The Hebrew Bible), a common approach to the ultimate, and a common attitude toward history. Both hold to an ethical monotheism and believe that this God is an active dynamic creator of nature and history. For both, God is revealed primarily in history, especially in a covenant community the faithfulness of which, as emphasized by the prophets, is to be demonstrated in terms of justice and mercy in social, economic and political

as well as individual relationships. There is in both faiths, then, a common sense of historical responsibilities and of God as related to the community in terms of both judgment and mercy.[80] Given all this, there is both some irony and much "pathos in the fact that the gap between the polemical attitudes of Christianity and Judaism, is, in fact, more pronounced than between entirely unrelated faiths."[81] Christians because they have been the majority group and the subject of so much anti-semitism, bear a greater burden of debt and guilt.[82]

The Christian churches have a responsibility to attack all forms of anti-semitism, but especially when it is clothed in religious terms. Among other things they should make known to as many lay persons as possible that it was the contingent historical situation of the contest between the early church and the synagogue which produced echoes of anti-semitism in the New Testament. In this connection, Niebuhr approved the document of the Second Vatican Council on the relation of Christians and Jews. Even though he thought the statement denying the guilt of the Jews in the crucifixion of Christ was rather late coming in the history of the church, and that the declaration was remiss in failing to acknowledge the church's guilt of involvement through the ages in the persecution of the Jews, he did commend the Council for implicitly recognizing the authentic autonomy of the Jewish faith and for its explicit condemnation of anti-semitism and its plea for universal respect for all persons. He also approved of the work of a commission of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish scholars the task of which was to remove religious bigotry from the texts used by the churches in religious education.[83]

Just as in his analysis of the relation between Catholics and Protestants so also in his analysis of the relation of Jews and Christians, Niebuhr held that mutual respect depends on the recognition of nonnegotiable differences in the symbols and instruments of the two faiths. "We cannot," Niebuhr declared, "climb over our presuppositions but we need not be their prisoners. If we were absolutely prisoners there would be no solution for the problem of fanaticism."[84]

While the uninformed might find a number of radical contrasts between Judaism and Christianity, these are generally differences of emphasis. There is only one genuinely nonnegotiable difference and that has to do with Christology. For Niebuhr "the Christological center of the Christian faith lies in the assertion that God has been finally and definitely revealed in the Christ drama, and that the burden of that revelation is the divine mercy and forgiveness,"[85] a mercy which is

paradoxically related to the divine judgment. In this connection Niebuhr quotes Martin Buber's famous statement: "To the Christians, the Jew is a stubborn fellow who in an unredeemed world is still waiting for the Messiah. To the Jew, the Christian is a heedless fellow who in an unredeemed world affirms that redemption has somehow or other taken place."[86] For Niebuhr the vague "somehow or other" might be taken by the Christian to designate the contradiction between historical achievements and divine perfection and the transcendence of the divine mercy over divine judgment.[87]

Whatever the historical problems associated with the biblical narratives of the Christ drama and whatever metaphysical accretions may have come to be associated with Christology such that the religious difference between Christians and Jews was needlessly intensified, it is the case for Niebuhr that devotion to Christ is a nonnegotiable difference. However understood, Christians find a depth of meaning in the symbolic significance of the entire Christ drama, his life, teaching, death and resurrection. Two major themes which Christians find in this drama, namely, the sacrifice of self as the pinnacle of human virtue and the paradoxical relation of divine mercy to divine judgment are themes which Judaism had earlier projected especially in the prophets and also continued in Rabbinical Judaism. The belief that Christianity is a religion of grace while Judaism is a religion of law is simply mistaken. Both contain mixtures of grace and law even if in differing degrees. The fundamental difference between the two has to do with the different symbols used to express the two themes and on that it is probably impossible for the two faiths to agree.[88] Yet, if Christians would recognize Judaism as an authentic religion containing the themes of sacrifice, judgment and redemption and if Jews would recognize that for Christians the universality and persistence of a Christ-centered faith is not due merely to the influences of legends and metaphysical dogma, then there would be a sound basis for creative ecumenical dialogue between the two and greater cooperation in attacking the great social problems of the times.[89]

According to Niebuhr, an important issue for Jews, one which sometimes causes friction between Jews and others, is centered in the problem of particularity and universality. In Judaism there is the dialectical contrast of a universal ethical monotheistic faith standing on the base of a particular nation. Christians claim to have solved the problem of particularity and universality in the universal significance of a particular individual, Jesus Christ. While this solution may be

true in principle, it is certainly not true in practice for history is full of examples where Christians have sought to use appeals to Christ in order to sanction their own parochial national, ethnic and racial interests. There is no basis for Christians to be self-righteous. The problem Niebuhr affirms is a universal one. Still it is a problem which remains unsolved in Judaism. In fact it is unsolvable and no one should demand that it be solved.[90]

With the emergence of Hitler in the 1930s Niebuhr was active in attempts to help Jews and others escape from Germany and to persuade the U.S. government to admit more Jewish immigrants. From this time on he was a firm though sometimes qualified supporter of the Zionist cause. In the article "Jews After the War" published in *The Nation*, February 1942, Niebuhr argued that Jews not only had individual rights but also collective rights. The collective rights included the right not be assimilated, the right to exist as a people in their own homeland, and the right to cultivate their own unique identity.[91] Yet, while the establishment of the State of Israel is a glorious achievement, Niebuhr also declared that "the Jewish ethic and faith, so impressively universal in the diaspora, so fruitful in leavening Western Civilization, is not morally safe when it becomes embodied in a nation like all other nations."[92] It is a spiritually dangerous enterprise to relate a vigorous monotheistic faith to the ambitions of a single nation, for out of such fanaticism often results. Far safer is it to have a purely secular state in which there is a religious pluralism.

In the late 1960s Niebuhr expressed some optimism with respect to the life situation and status of Jews, especially in the United States. He declared that it was possible to "take some satisfaction that the beneficent impulses of an open society, plus the distinction of Jews in all our cultural, business and political life, have refuted the most odious racial libels against them....The anachronistic pockets of anti-semitism that remain...are too absurd to have a long life in our pluralistic democracy."[93] However, the achievements must be supported and extended by an informed ecumenical spirit and dialogue which banishes *all* religious and racial bigotry.

E. The Judeo-Christian Tradition and Oriental Religions

Given the fact that Niebuhr inherited Western culture, was a Christian theologian concerned with the relevance of the Christian faith to a critical analysis of the political, economic and human rights issues in

Western culture, and gave a great deal of attention to the issues associated with the ecumenical relations of churches and of the three major faiths in the West, it is not surprising that he did not write extensively about other world religions. However, he did say some things, and in what he did say there appear to be three major themes.

First, there is an emphasis on the contrast between the Eastern and Western religions with the former predominantly pantheistic, mystic, and passive with respect to nature and history and the latter predominantly monotheistic and active with respect to history, nature and the human community.[94] In Niebuhr's view the religions of the East are basically religions of self-abnegation seeking for the annulment of the ego.[95] There is no spiritual basis in either the philosophy of self-abnegation of pantheism or in the family oriented view of humanistic Confucianism for both individual dignity and sense of responsibility to the larger community.[96] Both require the dialectical understanding of human beings as saints and sinners, and as social beings who nevertheless possess the capacity for transcendence or freedom.

A second theme is that every faith involves an existential commitment to what is regarded as the truth.[97] As we have seen, this entails the existence of some nonnegotiable differences between religions.[98] For the Christian, the belief that the vague sense of the divine common to all human beings was made vivid in the historical revelation of the divine judgment and mercy in Jesus Christ and that the forgiving divine Agape is mediated through Christ is nonnegotiable.[99] Along with this are the Judeo-Christian convictions concerning human freedom, responsibility and sin, divine creation, judgment and redemption, and the fulfillment of individual egos rather than annulment in the ultimate universal agapistic fellowship in the kingdom of God. These are basic presuppositions which Christians cannot climb over, but they need not be their prisoners.

The third theme involves the dialectic of genuine commitment to a particular religion on the one hand and genuine tolerance for all religions on the other. The existential commitment should not be so restrictive as to prohibit persons "from recognizing truth and grace in other lives with other commitments."[100] As we have seen, Niebuhr suggested that there is a "hidden Christ" operating in history. While for Christians the historical revelation in Christ is nonnegotiable, at the same time they should be aware that it does not give them an *exclusive* possession of the truth. The love of God and neighbor may be recognized and practiced more adequately in specific instances by those

who do not know the historical revelation than by those who do.[101]

This does not provide justification for the invidious comparison sometimes made to the effect that the religions of the East generate a spirit of charity far superior to any moral quality in the West. Recent brutal religious wars in the East as well as elsewhere provide ample evidence to falsify such a claim.[102] Human beings are both saints and sinners, whether as individuals or groups, though the latter are less moral than the former.[103] In practice all organized religions are subject to the pride of virtue, to absolutizing relative, contingent and nonessential beliefs and practices such that they become the touchstone of orthodoxy and serve to intensify differences with other religions. Often this results in sanctioning, if not outright fomenting, violent conflict with communities and nations the citizens of which are of different religions.[104] In order for religions to contribute to peace rather than hostility in the world, adherents of religion need both to be freed from enslavement to their nonnegotiable presuppositions and to ignore, abolish or greatly minimize the relative, contingent and nonessential differences. To this end open encounters and dialogue could lead to the knowledge necessary for understanding the reasons for the differences and such understanding could contribute to a greater appreciation for the unique values which may be learned from other religions. For examples, the religions of the East and West could learn a great deal from each other. From the Orient, the West could learn much in the art of living, especially individuals living with serenity. From the West the East could learn much about historical dynamism and the responsibility of individuals to the larger community.[105]

While an exchange of values between religions is possible in principle, recent events in history show that the prospects for much actual exchange do not appear to be very bright.[106] The human situation is always ambiguous, a mixture of good and evil. There are indeterminate possibilities for good and indeterminate possibilities of evil. There are social and technical advances but also the increase in fury and violent conflict between peoples. Utopianism is untenable but so also is fatalism. While a world in which the various national, ethnic and religious groups live together in total peace and harmony, a kingdom of God on earth, is not obtainable in history, changes for the better are possible. So persons of *good will*, of whatever religion or of no religion, can and will act in whatever ways are available to them to maxi mize the good and to minimize the evil so that life on this planet improves.[107]

*IV. Conclusion*

In this essay an attempt has been made to explicate Reinhold Niebuhr's positions with respect to theological method, certain key issues in Christian theology, and ecumenism in non-Catholic Christianity, in Catholic-non-Catholic relations, in Jewish-Christian relations and in Judeo-Christian relations with other religions. An obvious conclusion to be drawn on the basis of even this brief descriptive analysis is that Niebuhr was truly an ecumenical theologian. To be sure, he was deeply committed to a particular religion, the Christian faith, which, he believed, illumined the truth about humanity and God, about humanity's freedom, responsibility and sin, and about the grace which makes freedom tolerable and which overcomes the sin.[108] As we have seen, Niebuhr held that Jesus Christ plays an essential role in illumining the truth about humanity and God. The Jesus of history is a perfect symbol of the absolute in history because the divine Agape, self-giving love, is vividly realized in the drama of his life and cross.[109] God's nature is Agape. It is the one absolute. It is the source of both the divine forgiveness and the divine norm of new life for those who accept God's acceptance. Even though only approximations to this norm are possible in history, Agape remains relevant as both the norm in light of which the relative configurations of justice in history are judged and as the driving force for ever greater approximations. It is precisely at this point that Niebuhr's commitment to a particular religion takes on a universal scope. The norm of Agape prohibits anyone from making his faith into a vehicle of pride, separatism, and oppression. It requires that all persons be treated with respect and justice whatever their creed or race. So while Niebuhr held that Christians should seek to remain true to and act upon their best convictions, he also insisted Christians should understand that in light of the Agape norm truth must always remain subject to the paradox of grace. The various versions of Christianity must be evaluated in light of Agape and in practice this means the application of the test of tolerance.[110]

In light of this, it is certainly clear that those who view Niebuhr as a patron saint of the so-called new conservatism seriously misrepresent his positions, almost to the point of a caricature.[111] Most often they ignore or do not take seriously his dialectical analysis. Listening with only one ear they conclude that he was a supporter of conservative causes both social and religious. But no one was less of an ideo-

logue in theology, social theory and practice, and ecumenism than was Reinhold Niebuhr.

Perhaps no better conclusion to this essay on Niebuhr's ecumenical perspective can be found than his own personal testimony in the 1965 book, *Man's Nature and This Communities*, in which he said:

> I must close this introduction with an obviously autobiographical conclusion about my increasing devotion to the principles of religious pluralism in an open society which allows the various religious faiths and traditions to contribute their treasures to our common fund. This pluralism must necessarily include the right of nonbelievers to convict the believers when faith is not fruitful of justice. It also includes the right and duty of the empirical and historical disciplines to subject religious symbols to scrutiny and criticism. Without this latter development, religious traditions may, and frequently do, degenerate from an obscurantist degradation of faith as 'basic trust' into faith as belief, belief in propositions which may be historically dubious, though the symbols are bearers of the mystery of human existence....Only a great multitude of diverse, and sometimes contradictory, traditions can serve to illumine the meaning and mystery of human existence.[112]

*Notes*

1. (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1966), 36.
2. *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought*, Charles W. Kegley & Robert W. Bretall, eds., 1st edition (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956), 3 (hereafter referred to as Kegley).
3. *Theologians at Work*, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967) p. xxi (hereafter referred to as TAW).
4. Kegley, 392.
5. See Robert McAfee Brown, (ed.) *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), XI-XXIV (hereafter referred to as Brown); David Griffin, "Whitehead and Niebuhr on God, Man and the World," *The Journal of Religion*, April 1973, 149-175; Reinhold Niebuhr, "Introduction," in William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 5-8; Robert H. Ayers, "Methodological, Epistemological and Ontological Motifs in the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr," *Modern Theology* January, 1991, Vol.7, No. 2, 153-173.

6. See *Beyond Tragedy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937) 126 (here after referred to as BT); *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943) VI, 170; V2 125 (hereafter referred to as NDM).
7. "Mystery and Meaning" in Brown, 237-249.
8. Brown, p. XXI.
9. *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Times*, Richard Harries (ed.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986); *Reinhold Niebuhr Today*, Richard John Newhaus (ed.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989).
10. *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religions, Social and Political Thought*, Charles W. Kegley (ed.) (New York: The Pilgrim Press), Second Edition.
11. *Ibid,* 47.
12. *Ibid.*, XI.
13. NDM 1, 1-92.
14. NDM 1, 3, 99; BT, 292-293; *The Self and the Dramas of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955) pp. 3-5 (hereafter referred to as SDH).
15. Kegley, pp. 434-455; BT, p. 17; NDM 1, 170; NDM 2, 256; *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Charles Scribner' Sons, 1953), 197 (hereafter cited as CRPP).
16. NDM 1, 186-203.
17. NDM 1, 242, 265-80; NDM 2, 109; SDH, 18.
18. *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944) 3-5, 48, 79 (hereafter cited as CLCD); *The Irony of American History* (London: Nisbet & Co., LTD, 1952) 6-10, 53 (hereafter cited as IAH).
19. CLCD, 49, 50-64. The expression "the social substance of human existence" was as much a favorite of Niebuhr as "the human capacity for transcendence." He used it time and again, not only in the reference cited above but also in numerous books and articles.

A small sample is as follows: *Man's Nature and His Communities* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965) 19, 107 (hereafter cited as MNHC); IAH, 9; Granfield TAW, 53; "The Crisis In American Protestantism," *The Christian Century*, Dec. 4, 1963, 1498; "A Plea For Tolerance," *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1962, 74; "The Eternal Church and the Modern World," *The Christian Century*, Sept. 20, 1060, 1106. Some interpreters seem to ignore or minimize Niebuhr's emphasis on the "social substance of human existence," claiming that his theology was really predominantly individualistic. See Judith Vaughn, *Sociality, Ethics and Social Change* (Lanham, MD: The University Press, 1983) 27.

20. CLCD, 83-84.
21. Kegley, 438-439.
22. NDM 2, 61. Italics are mine.
23. SDH, 97-98.
24. *Reflections on the End of an Era* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934) 287 (hereafter cited as Reflections).
25. NDM 2, 61.
26. *Ibid.*, 72-74, 109.
27. *Ibid.*, 109-110.
28. *Ibid.*, 290.
29. *Ibid.*, 297.
30. SDH, 238, 239.
31. Kegley, 249.
32. (New York: Meridan Books, Inc., 1959) (hereafter cited as EAC).
33. BT, 51-68, 122; NDM 2, 225; *Faith And History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949) 147-148, 238-243 (hereafter cited as FH)
34. Kegley, 437; EAC, 13.
35. See EAC, 23. Also Richard Wrightman Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) (hereafter cited as Fox). Niebuhr was an active participant in the ecumenical movement in the U.S. and the World. He had one of the leading roles in the Oxford Conference of 1937 and in the beginning of the World Council of Churches of Amsterdam in 1948. He was responsible for major addresses to the assemblies of the World Council at Amsterdam and at Evanston, IL in 1954.
36. EAC, 273.
37. NDM 2, 225.
38. BT, 122.

39. Kegley, 20.
40. *Ibid,* 437.
41. BT, 62
42. *Ibid.*
43. FH, 238.
44. *Ibid.*, 240.
45. *Ibid.*, 242.
46. (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1931) 2 volumes.
47. EAC, 267.
48. *Ibid.*, 272-275.
49. FH, 239.
50. EAC, 278.
51. *Ibid.*, 281.
52. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Negro Minority and Its Fate in A Self-Righteous Nation," *Social Action*, vol. 35, Oct. 16, 1968, 53-64; Kegley, Second Edition, Ronald Stone, "The Contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr to the Late Twentieth Century," 60-68.
53. CRPP, 105-117.
54. EAC, 337-338.
55. MNHC, 16.
56. TAW, 55.
57. See Section I above and footnotes 18 and 19.
58. See "Mater ET Magister," *Christianity and Crisis*, August 7, 1961, 142. Niebuhr made this point in his early book *Does Civilization Need Religion?* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1927) Chapter V (hereafter cited as DCNR).
59. "The Eternal Church and The Modern World," *The Christian Century*, Sept. 20, 1960, 1106; See also "Catholics and the State," *The New Republic*, Oct. 17, 1960, 13-17; "A Plea For Tolerance," *The Atlantic Monthly,* op. cit., 73-77; TAW, 61; MNHC, 19-20; "Mission and Opportunity: Religion in a Pluralistic Culture," *Social Responsibility in an Age of Revolution*, Louis Finkelstein, editor (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1971) 177-211, especially 183-185 (hereafter cited as Finkelstein).
60. "The Crisis In American Protestantism," *The Christian Century*, Dec. 4, 1963, pp. 1498-1501.
61. *Ibid.*, 1500.
62. "A Plea for Tolerance," 75; "Catholics and the State," 14.
    "The Eternal Church and the Modern World," 1106.
    SDH, 171.

63. FH, 180.
64. See articles listed under note 58; "A Protestant Looks at Catho-
65. lics," *Commonweal*, May 8, 1953, 117-120; CRPP, 157, 172-173.
66. "The Eternal Church and the Modern World," p. 1108. Also see Niebuhr's "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," in Kegley, pp.
67. 445-446.
    See "A Protestant Looks at Catholics," "A Plea For Tolerance," "Catholics and the State," "The Eternal Church and the Modern
68. World."
    TAW, 55-57.
    Finkelstein, 211.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *The Christian Century*, Dec. 31, 1969, 1662-1667.
71. *Ibid.*, 1666.
72. MNHC, 18.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 60; See TAW, 60; Fox, 92-93, 109.
74. John C. Merkle (ed.), *Abraham Joshua Heschel* (New York:
75. Macmillan Co., 1985) 37.
76. *Ibid.*, Also Finkelstein, 202-203; Fox, 209; Niebuhr, *Pious and Secular America* (New York: Scribner's, 1958),108 (here
77. after referred to as PSA); "The Unsolved Problem in Christian-Jewish Relations," *Christianity and Crisis*, Dec. 12, 1966, 279-283 (hereafter referred to as UPC-JR).
78. PSA, 108.
79. RPC-JR, 280.
80. *Ibid.*, 280-281, PSA, 86, 96.
81. Finkelstein, 201.
82. *Ibid.*,202.
83. UPC-JR, 281-283; Finkelstein, 201-203.
84. PSA, 98.
85. *Ibid.*, 100.
86. UPC-JR, 280; Also in PSA, 98; Finkelstein, 191.
87. Finkelstein, 191.
88. PSA, 101, 105; Finkelstein, 197.
89. Finkelstein, 203.
90. PSA, 107-112.
91. D.B. Robertson (ed.), *Love and Justice* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957) 132-142.
92. PSA, 110.
93. UPC-JR, 283.

94 IAH, 100-109.
95. MNHC,117.
96. IAH, 107-108.
97. Kegley, 450.
98. See above, Section III D.
99. NDM 2, 109.
100.Kegley, 450.
101.See above, Section II; NDM 2, 109-110, note 6.
102.Editorial, "Moslem and Hindus," *Christianity and Society*, Autumn, 1947, 7.
103.See *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936); MNHC, 22.
104.See "Moslem and Hindus," *op. cit.* 7-8; "A Protestant Looks At Catholics," 117-120.
105.IAH, 100, 103-104, 108; DCNR, 184, 186.
106.DCNR, 186.
107.IAH, 52-55; NDM 2, 244-286.
108.Kegley, 450.
109.*Reflections*, 287; See also Section II above.
110.NDM 2, 220, 236, 243.
111.See Ronald Preston, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the New Right," *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Times*, Richard Harries, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing CO., 1986) 88-104.
112.MNHC, 27.

# Christian Love:Transcending the Values of Capitalistic White Liberal Guilt

Craig Livermore[1]

> Black Americans have been patient people. . . but everywhere, "time is winding up," in the words of one of our spirituals. . . . In spite of years of national progress, the plight of the poor is worsening. Jobs are on the decline as a result of technological change, schools North and South are proving themselves more and more inadequate to the task of providing adequate education and thereby entrance into the mainstream of society. Medical care is virtually out of reach of millions of black and white poor. They are aware of the great advances of medical science--heart transplants, miracle drugs--but their children still die of preventable diseases, and even suffer brain damage due to protein deficiency.[2]

The most disheartening aspect of these words of Martin Luther King, Jr. is that their assessment and critique of the status quo remain appropriate twenty-seven years after he wrote them. This nation has shown no progress regarding the unjust situation of the underclass, specifically the black underclass, and has in fact seen the plight of these people worsen. What are the all-elusive answers to the many questions raised by the extremely difficult lives of these people? What, moreover, is the content of Christian responsibility to the black

underclass? Do Christians of relative privilege bear an obligation to these people, and, if so, to what degree does that obligation extend?

William Julius Wilson, in his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*, chronicles the increasingly desperate situation faced by the black urban underclass.[3] He sets out to refute the conservative claim that what he calls "pathological" social trends in this class are caused by a "culture of poverty," or values among the underclass which fail to properly motivate them to partake in the economic benefits of society. He further attempts to discredit the related argument that liberal social welfare policies are behind the detrimental trends in out-of-wedlock births, female-headed households, and welfare dependency. Wilson largely accomplishes these two tasks. He cites numerous studies and creates convincing arguments to support his thesis that the primary cause of the social disorganization of the black underclass is unemployment, specifically among young black males. He then attempts to offer suggestions for public policy to address these issues by stressing the interrelatedness and dependence of the underclass on the economic organization of the larger American society. This is a crucial recognition and Wilson exhibits even more promise in his policy appraisal by referring often to the need for reorganization in the American economy. I feel, however, that the ultimate practicality of his policy proposal must be questioned. Although many of the specific programs he suggests are important, I am not convinced that his "Hidden Agenda" is workable. Wilson accepts the predominate ethic of group self-interest in our society and attempts to effectively work around it. This approach, I hope to show, is problematic.[4] I further wish to enter the Christian love ethic into the discussion in an attempt to challenge and develop the values which must be the basis of governmental and nongovernmental solutions to the problem. Only when we develop a more absolute ethic of moral obligation for all people in our society, I shall argue, can the problems of the black underclass be significantly addressed.

Wilson describes two predominant approaches utilized by liberal policy makers and social scientists in the attempt to protect minority rights. The first system relies on antidiscrimination legislation in an attempt to guarantee minorities equality of individual economic opportunity by eliminating unfair barriers, particularly in the theater of employment.[5] This principle, however, continues Wilson, does not adequately deal with the effects of pervasive racism and racial subjugation, which remain after these overt barriers are removed. He thus

outlines the development of a second policy approach which stresses the equitable distribution of group rights. This theory advocates affirmative action programs which are designed to assure the equal representation of minority groups in those areas in which they have been traditionally under-represented.[6] Although Wilson does not deny the importance of these two methods, he claims that they ultimately benefit the most disadvantaged members of the African-American community very little. The more advantaged members of minority groups, he explains, have been in the position to "reap disproportionate benefits" from the above outlined programs, and thus the black community has been increasingly economically polarized.[7] The black middle and upper classes have been gaining economic status while the black underclass has been increasingly mired in communities of poverty. Wilson asserts that a new approach is needed if the problems of the underclass are to be addressed.

He thus advocates the principle of equality of life chances which is directed not at specific problems of race, but at issues dealing with economic class-background. This principle is based on the premise that individuals of lower economic class are not given the proper chance to develop their potential in society. Wilson proclaims that this approach will better the plight of the white poor, and will also most effectively deal with the situation of the black underclass. He states: "Only programs based on the principle of equality of life chances are capable of substantially helping the truly disadvantaged."[8] Wilson thus begins to introduce his policy proposals based upon universal programs. His proposals would address issues concerning the American economic organization as a whole, and thus shy away from the stress on race-specific policy. This is what Wilson terms his "Hidden Agenda." The agenda is hidden in that although these programs would be introduced as universally beneficial, the *underlying* concern in their implementation by policy makers would be to alleviate the problems of the black urban underclass. As Wilson describes it, "The hidden agenda for liberal policymakers is to improve the life chances of truly disadvantaged groups such as the ghetto underclass by emphasizing programs to which the more advantaged groups of all races and class backgrounds can positively relate."[9] I believe, however, that the applicability of this hidden agenda must be questioned.

In one sense the hidden agenda appears to be extremely practical. It is founded upon Wilson's correct recognition and analysis of the public values predominant in American society today. Wilson's

program de-emphasizes race-specific programs because he realizes the difficulty in gaining a consensus of support for such policy. He explains that "the more the public programs are perceived by members of the wider society as benefiting only certain groups, the less support those programs receive."[10] In other words, if individuals in society do not see the benefit of programs, for which they will ultimately have to pay, to groups they identify with, and thus to themselves, they are likely to oppose the implementation of such programs. Wilson assumes this behavior as a constant and attempts to work around it. He believes that programs can be created which produce economic benefits for all groups of society, and which will thus gain public support, but which will disproportionately benefit the black underclass. This analysis is based on Wilson's assumption, which he adequately proves, that the black underclass has been especially damaged by economic downturns and the dynamic structure of the economy which has involved a dramatic decrease in goods-producing jobs in the central city areas, where most poor blacks are located. The question is, however, does it necessarily follow that the black underclass will significantly benefit from economic expansion as Wilson believes it will?

This is one of the questions which makes the ultimate practicality of Wilson's program doubtful. I am afraid that if his proposal of a hidden agenda is followed, then either the agenda will not be achieved, or it will not remain hidden. In other words, there are two possible outcomes of an attempted hidden agenda. The first is that the ultimate goal of significantly addressing the problems of the black underclass will remain unattainable. If the agenda is to convince privileged groups that they also will benefit, I believe it will inevitably be too broad to possess adequate power in relation to the black underclass. For example, much of Wilson's scheme involves the concern for general economic growth. Some important concepts include a tight labor market, rising wages, increasing the competitiveness of American goods in the international market, and decreasing the deficit.[11] These concerns, which are admittedly important if Wilson is to gain public support given his conception of public values, seem to me to be a traditional approach to poverty. Such a system of economic growth, however, makes the false assumption that the privileged sectors of our society can achieve higher levels of privilege while the poor are pulled out of the underclass. In other words, it does not consider the limited resources available regardless of the state of the economy. I question Wilson's assumption that general economic growth will disproportion-

ately benefit the black underclass. In fact, I propose that such growth, without further systems of redistribution, would benefit the privileged members of society the most.

Wilson, however, includes what I consider to be essential programs in his hidden agenda that are not merely concerned with general economic growth and would more sufficiently address the issues concerning the black underclass. These may be part of his secondary, or hidden level of policy, but if they are included they will introduce the second possible outcome of Wilson's package of reform. They will simply not remain hidden, and thus his goals again will not be achieved. He suggests job training and apprenticeships to elevate the skills of the truly disadvantaged, reform and expansion of child-care programs and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), as well as national labor-market strategies which will allow for better adaptability by the underclass to available employment opportunities.[12] Although Wilson seeks the availability of these programs for lower class people of all races, they will inevitably be identified with the black lower class for two reasons. Firstly because, as Wilson demonstrates, the underclass disproportionately consists of African Americans and secondly, and related to the first reason, is our society's well-developed talent of stereotyping.[13]

Thus, according to Wilson's reliance upon the prevailing public ethic, they will not gain a consensus of support. This point is further revealed when we consider the manner in which Wilson begs the all-important questions of costs, except for a brief section on the last page of chapter seven. The cost of Wilson's package, including his proposals which will be disclosed as directed toward the black underclass, will be enormous. These costs will, to a great extent, quite simply have to come out of the pockets of the privileged in society, and not just those at the very top rung of the economic ladder. This ties in with the first problem of the hidden agenda which was described above. The economic status of the relatively well-off simply cannot increase if programs for the underclass are to be adequately implemented. There must be a re-funneling of resources from the top to the bottom. According to Wilson's acceptance of public values of self-interest, this will never happen.

In spite of my critique of Wilson's approach, I do find his analysis convincing and feel that many of his policy proposals are a positive, even if ultimately insufficient, step in the right direction. My claim, however, is that we need a different approach if the neces-

sary proposals are to be realized. Instead of assuming public values of self-interest and then trying to work around them, we must challenge these very values themselves. It is at this point that I feel the Christian concept of love can greatly enhance our cause. Christian love, if worked out and adhered to in the Christian community, can have a tremendous impact by itself. I also believe, however, that although this love will be grounded in ultimate reality for Christians, it can, at least in a theoretical sense, challenge atomistic individualism in the larger society in the form of a philosophical concept. We must, however, be willing to ardently challenge currently predominant public values.

The Christian love ethic is founded in the Gospel as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus. It is perhaps most profoundly summed up in the golden rule: Love thy neighbor as thyself. And of course we know that Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, as well as many other teachings, reveal that love is to be indiscriminate and not just confined to those with whom we most closely identify.[14] What, however, are the possible implications of this love for a public ethic? To begin with it overturns the capitalist-liberal conception that one has a right to all the wealth one earns [the fruits of one's labor] because one has "worked hard for it." To love one's neighbor, which includes all members of society, as oneself must imply that we possess a concern for the well-being, including economic well-being, of our neighbor which is equal to, or greater than, our concern for our own well-being.

Thus, the love ethic, understood in its radical essence, annihilates the market hegemony over our public ethics. A hegemonic order is one in which normative understandings are determined by the contingent viewpoint of the current power structure. Hegemonic systems influence everyone, and thus become so pervasive that they are unthinkingly accepted as natural and inevitable, without full realization of the persuasive power they exert on us as we formulate our preferences and motivations.[15] Out of a self-rationalizing process, those who have benefited from capitalistic liberalism have created a hegemonic public morality based upon self-contained autonomous spheres which we have all accepted as "common sense." Ignoring descriptively the interdependence and interconnectedness of all political, cultural, and economic systems, we have acquiesced in an ethic which legitimates behavior as long as that behavior remains within one's particular sphere. One can justifiably segregate oneself (geographically, spiritually, economically, etc.) as long as one does not affirmatively "reach" outside of one's sphere to "actively" harm an-

other. Grossly unequal accumulations and concentrations of wealth are thus legitimated. This pervasive market-value hegemony has removed the Gospel from our public lives. Indeed, market hegemony has become an impure ooze, seeking to penetrate into the interstices of our very being.

The ethic of love, however, revealed and lived by Jesus Christ, instructs us that we have an absolute moral obligation for our neighbors who are struggling. Not only do the privileged not have a right to their wealth and resources, but their very ownership of such wealth is morally corrupt as long as there exists a group of people with very limited resources. I am not just speaking of the mansion-dwelling upper tier of society. There are many of us in this consumer culture who possess much more than we need and are thereby dodging our obligation of love to the black underclass. In the spirit of love, however, it is especially important, given the historical circumstances of the United States, that we not allow this obligation to appear patronizing. By giving up our privilege we will not be committing an act of charity, but we will be attempting to rectify an unjust system from which we have benefited and from which the black underclass has suffered.

In fact, the concepts of Christian charity and capitalistic philanthropy are two of the most dangerous, legitimizing ideas within the prevailing politico-ethical paradigms. We must extend beyond the vision that out of "niceness" we are giving to poor, unfortunate, helpless souls. It is this type of systematic ideology which has created such a disempowering welfare state. We hand out checks backed up by our "hard-earned" money to those pathetic creatures who, for whatever reason, cannot work as hard as us so as to earn money in a "legitimate" manner. This worldview creates comprehensive stigmatization and forces welfare recipients to perceive themselves as hopelessly outside the bubble of integrated societal participation. The solution, however, is not to absolve ourselves of all public responsibility by relying on some mythical Father Flanagan. What is needed is for Christians to begin to return to the radical teachings of Christ on love as a basis for decision in all aspects of life. Only when we begin to develop such a sense of moral responsibility will Wilson's proposals, and the necessary radical reconstruction extending beyond Wilson's proposals, gain public support.

Thus, I am primarily directing my moral analysis toward those of the privileged (from the middle class up) white sector of society.[16] Yet, to create a lasting solution to the problem of the black underclass, there will have to be more than just society-wide structural changes as Wilson suggests. He is correct in his critique of conservativism's exclusive emphasis on the behavioral impediments of the black underclass, but there are detrimental values which have undoubtedly developed among the poorer sectors of the African-American community. The important thing to realize, which conservatives never do, is that such values have developed as a response to the racist classism of the larger society. Cornel West elucidates this fact:

> We must acknowledge that structures and behavior are inseparable, that institutions and values go hand in hand. How people act and live are shaped--though in no way dictated or determined--by the larger circumstances in which they find themselves.[17]

Thus, West asserts, the structural developments of the larger society, and within the black community, are inextricably related to "the monumental eclipse of hope, the unprecedented collapse of meaning, the incredible disregard for human (especially black) life and property in black America." This is what West terms the "nihilistic threat" to the existence of the black underclass.[18]

When I first began contemplating the value of Christian love in attempting to minister to the social injustices reaped upon the black underclass, I focused on the inherent radical equality in Jesus' command to love thy neighbor as thyself. I envisioned an egalitarian line above which exists the economically privileged of white society and below which are situated the black underclass. Thus, in order to reach the egalitarian line it would be necessary for the privileged to realize that they love themselves too much and begin to relinquish their unwarranted privilege in the name of love for the underclass. I further perceived the reciprocal situation in which the black underclass would need to assert an empowering love for themselves in the face of historical, economic and racial negation in a white society. I have since come to the recognition that although this scenario holds some truth, it needs a further, more subtle, development.

Cornel West reveals the insight that not only self-love, but also the love of others, is empowering, and in fact the existence of both of these types of love cannot exist independently. As he explains, "self-love and love of others are both modes toward increasing self-valuation and encouraging political resistance in one's community."[19] One cannot only love oneself. It is the love of others which fuels the love of oneself and empowers both oneself as well as those whom one loves. This love can affirm the worth of one's existence as well as the existence of others in the face of all-encompassing negation. West explains that it is the development of such non-market values--love, care and service--which can do battle with the nihilistic hopelessness in the black underclass. Love can create networks of nurturing which grant support, hope, and spiritual well-being.[20]

An interesting example of this empowering aspect of love is described by Dr. Ronald David as he relates his experiences as an African- American neonatologist in a city that at one time had one of the highest rates of black infant mortality in the country--Pittsburgh. He explains the apparent paradox that while Mexican American women are of an even lower economic status than African-American women, and have less access to medical care than black women, their infant mortality rate is equal to or lower than privileged European American women.[21] Dr. David offers the following insightful explanation of this phenomenon which differs drastically from the current medical paradigm of more health care, greater technology, and more money spent equals better health.

> You must look at the different ways in which the community mobilizes around pregnant women in Mexican-American culture as opposed to African-American culture. Typically, other Mexican-American women who have had childbearing experience gather round, embrace, and support the pregnant female. The African-American mother, in contrast, is often isolated from nourishing social relationships.[22]

It must be emphasized, before conservative analysts begin to twist such ideas, that this cultural difference is most likely the product of very the different social histories of African-American and Mexican-American people in the United States. The important aspect of Dr. David's insight, however, is his stress on "nourishing social relation-

ships." This is the love, care and service which Cornel West describes. It is the recognition that nurturing love is spiritually empowering. It can allow the human body and soul to defend against the life-threatening and life-shortening diseases and malefic health effects from which African Americans disproportionately suffer in this country. It can grant hope and worth in a seemingly hopeless world. It can develop caring networks to help members of the black underclass struggle against the nihilistic threat.

I have also, however, been rethinking my initial formulations concerning the "love one's neighbor as oneself" ethic in relation to the privileged members of the white community. I initially claimed that such people need to love themselves less and love others, such as the black underclass, more. Upon further reflection, however, I have come to the conclusion that overabundant self-interest is not the same as self-love. Such self-interest, in fact, may precisely be the absence of self-love. Was not the development of the slavocracy, and the perpetuation of racism in the United States since the slavocracy, a manifestation of extreme insecurity (which is a result of the absence of self-love)?: an insecurity which needs to define an "other" as subhuman in order to affirm the full humanity of oneself? which is reliant upon the continual disadvantaged economic plight of the other so that one can feel economically secure? which today says that we require all of our techno-appliances and entertainment devices to feel content? which declares that a luxury sedan and a $300,000 house in the suburbs is the true measure of success? according to which most of us see the maximizing of our income as the primary goal in career choices? Such values appear to betray an extreme lack of self-love. The value of love is necessary among the privileged not only to foster a stronger moral obligation to the underclass, but also to simultaneously develop a deeper sense of self-love that extends well beyond mere self-interest. As previously stated, true self-love and indiscriminate love for one's universal neighbor are inextricably connected and dependent upon one another. This assertion possesses a Christological basis. Jesus Christ not only taught the ethic of love, but also lived it. Christ is the archetype of self-love and the universal love of others. Only by possessing an extreme self-love based on his faith-relationship with God was he able to exhibit the great strength necessary to sacrifice himself out of universal love for all mankind.

So what shape would the development of such a Christian understanding of love take among the white middle and upper classes?

As has been explained before, it would necessitate the relinquishment of the claim to an absolute right to all monetary remuneration one receives. Christian love implies a radical equality, an absolute moral obligation to one's neighbors in the black underclass. It requires the realization that one did not "get where you are" because one has worked harder than the black underclass, but because one has most likely enjoyed opportunities to work hard, and has been free from the many restraints with which the black underclass must live. Love demands that one cannot feel satisfied, cannot claim success, until the injustices of racist classism are eradicated and until one person does not prosper at the expense of another who suffers. This is the absolute moral obligation of love. A program of Christian love in this context would possess two aspects: voluntary [not legally posited] action and public policy based upon values of absolute moral obligation.[23] The analysis shall proceed by exploring the possibilities of the first point.

When I speak of voluntary action according to the proposed ethic of love, I am utilizing the word voluntary to mean *not legally required.* Such action, however, would be, and is, morally mandated. As previously mentioned, the present analysis extends beyond the traditional concept of Christian charity in which one helps those who are less fortunate by the giving of something which is rightfully one's own--time, energy, money, etc. As we have already seen, if one possesses a disproportionate amount of resources in comparison to another human being, those extra resources are not rightfully his/her possession according to the stipulation that one must love one's neighbor as oneself. It is thus a moral duty, not a moral option, to redistribute those resources, in the form of money, time and energy, to those who lack such empowerment. Love states that it is ethically required for the relatively privileged of society to dedicate themselves to the betterment of the black underclass.

The greatest barrier to such "voluntary" action lies in the geographical, economic, social, political, and spiritual segregation that plagues our society. The most obvious example of this segregation is what in many cases are brown inner-cities and "inner-suburbs" and white outer-suburbs. This, however, is merely an explicit example of a much deeper dilemma facing our nation. Whites stay away from black neighborhoods in the city for many reasons. One major impetus is a deep-seated fear of these areas and the people who inhabit them. Images of gun-toting, drug-dealing, angry black teenagers ready to gun down anyone who crosses their path create a palpitation in the

hearts of many sedan-driving white Americans.[24] Such fears, unfortunately, are not completely unfounded. Yet, because of complete separation we white Americans fail to understand black victimization--we are only concerned about our fears. We fail to discern that the majority of black violence is directed toward black victims. We do not perceive those many blacks in such communities working, studying, struggling to resist the nihilistic tendencies. We cannot understand "their" culture: the young anger revealed in rap, the need to prove one's own worth through violence, the espousal of so-called "terrible reverse racism." We do not investigate their history, examine the socio-historical circumstances that have created the black underclass, or explore the creative and dynamic responses of this people throughout American history to all-encompassing negation. In short, we do not listen. We thus shrug off the nihilistic threat as a tragedy and escape to the burbs.

The necessity of love for overcoming this segregation is elucidated by one of Cornel West's categories for modern prophetic thought--connection. Love demands connection that is manifested in the value of empathy. Dr. West explains:

> Empathy is something that is, unfortunately, waning in our time. Empathy is the capacity to get in contact with the anxieties and frustrations of others. To attempt to put yourself in their shoes. An attempt to get inside their skin. . .The moment of human connection means never losing sight of the humanity of others. Always attempting to remain in contact with the humanity of others.[25]

Of course, no white person can ever fully understand what it means to be black and living in the United States. This fact, however, does not abdicate our responsibility to listen, study, and interact in an attempt to gain as much comprehension as possible. Love implies connection, spiritual as well as physical. Once this process is begun it will multiply itself. If love motivates one to gain closer connection, the connection will foster improved understanding and empathy, which will then develop even greater care and love. As this empathy and connection thus expand, the values and the willingness to support public policy that redirects resources will also grow. We will eventually examine policy based on such values but presently we shall continue to explore

"voluntary" action that is motivated by empathy.

Thus, in lieu of our present analysis, not only the development of nurturing networks within the black community is essential, but interracial nurturing based on love is also necessary. There are many programs now existing in urban areas that are designed to provide tutorship, recreation, and positive reinforcement for African-American children and teenagers--all as an alternative to the life on the street. The purpose of these programs, which are sponsored by churches, schools, community centers, etc., is to combat hopelessness by instilling the children with a sense of purpose and self-worth. Such programs are extremely important. In order to have a very significant long-term impact, however, they must be greatly expanded by increased voluntary participation and greater access to public funding (we shall explore the issue of public funding later). Whites must realize, as some have, that they can, and must, help this purpose a great deal through participation in such projects. Many of the black children who are served by such programs go to overcrowded, under-funded schools. Their teachers are too overburdened, underpaid, frustrated, and scared to offer individual attention to the pupils. These children are told by society that they will never amount to much; will never be able to go to college or hold a job. One of the most depressing experience is to see two of these black youth call each other "stupid" back and forth. These children are expressing outwardly what they have internalized from the entirety of their surrounding environment.

The opportunity that the programs described above offer to those children fortunate enough to participate in them is very important. Staff members in such programs are trained to give the children much more individual attention, whether in tutorship, recreation, or other events. Staff members are also trained to always stress positive reinforcement. Whether the child is correct or incorrect in an answer to a problem, they are applauded or told they are doing very well in their attempt. When a child expresses an interest in eventually becoming a doctor, lawyer, policeman, or carpenter they are supported in their aspirations. This is love in action as nurturing. This is a direct assault on nihilism. The important thing to realize is that whites can, and must, provide such nurturing. Black role models are very important for these children, but on a very personal level, especially when they are younger, these children are often reaching out for any human affirmation of their worth--black, white, yellow, or brown. Whites can take an active and important nurturing role in programs such as

these, as well as a wide variety of other programs involving interaction with members of the black underclass.

One specific possibility for Christians is the development of sister churches. White churches in the suburbs, or in other areas of town, can seek to develop a relationship with a black church which serves an underclass area. The development of this relationship can proceed along two related paths. First, by exchanging preachers and choirs, and having cross-church congregational visitations, these churches can begin to develop important cultural understandings and the empathy necessary for connection. Secondly, the white church can work with the African-American church to develop programs like the ones described above for the children of the area it serves. The members of the white church can make commitments to give voluntary time to such programs as well as substantial monetary support. One would think that the most logical avenue through which to develop empathetic bonds of Christian love would be through associations of Christian churches. Yet, although some attempts at such connections are sometimes made, the black church and the white church remain to a large part segregated and unconnected.

These suggestions outlined above serve only as examples of the type of activities that can be entered into by privileged white Christians dedicated to the love of their neighbors. It is the values of love, empathy, and connection that are the most important aspect of this analysis. Such values must lead those of privilege to seek involvement in, and contribute monetarily to, such projects, and to creatively and energetically invent many other programs. Such values based on love, however, must also be developed as the foundation and impetus for public policy proposals. As Cornel West explains, however, such values are non- and even anti-market values and thus their development will require a great deal of energy and creativity in our society. It is this creativity in which many devoted to a more just society are now engaged in their attempt to forge alternatives to hegemonic capitalism. It is indeed a very difficult task to propose a system that resists market-driven consumerist capitalism but still remains democratic as it eschews a completely state-controlled politico-economic system (with its proclivity to corruption and tyranny). It often seems impossible to de-inculcate ourselves in order to seek a worldview that proclaims the pre-political sacredness of all life as the basis for human rights, but recognizes the "rights" to unlimited wealth claimed by the privileged to be based on post-political market constructs. I firmly

believe, however, that values influenced by the idea of love espoused in this paper are an important starting point in the development of such a system.

It is probable that the road to public policy based on values such as love and empathy will involve a great deal of government regulation, public redefinition of so-called "private" economic systems, and government mandated redistribution of resources made available for use by private associations and programs such as the ones mentioned above. There will, however, be a need for government programs, at least until such a system is fully reached (which we all know is an extremely long way off). One may recall that the discussion above of some of William J. Wilson's proposals exhibited a great deal of support but questioned whether such policy proposals could be attained without first developing ideas of absolute moral obligation for all members of our society. Some positive programs included job training and apprenticeships to elevate the skills of the disadvantaged, AFDC and child care proposals, and national labor-market strategies that will allow for better adaptability by the underclass to available employment opportunities. As we have already stated, however, such important programs will never be extensive enough to make a significant impact if those with money in our society are not willing to pay for them--one form of such payment being a more extensive form of a progressive tax system. This will in turn never happen, as we have already stated, until the values upon which policy decisions are made are dramatically changed.

However, many of the Wilsonian proposals, and any tax-based redistributive system implemented to fund such proposals, remain within the welfarist paradigm and must eventually be transcended. The long term vision must look to the attainment of racial and gender egalitarian *economic* democracy, without which true *political* democracy cannot be realized. One means by which this vision may be approached involves the necessary radical reform of labor law and workplace relations.[26] Labor law reform offers the possibility of much greater participation by working people in economic and political decisions, more egalitarian distribution of revenues, and less absolute dominance by the managerial class (and their hired guns, the professional class) in the formation of our political/economic/cultural public values.[27]

In conjunction with labor law and other reforms, government involvement in determining the contours of "private" economic rela-

tions must develop. I am suggesting a legislated, nationwide plan in which the highest paid employee of any company can earn no more than a set rate above the amount that the lowest paid employee earns.[28] There are many reasons why such a requirement would be just, but the one most pertinent for our discussion here is the most obvious. The earnings of the companies would be much more evenly distributed and the remuneration of those at the bottom end of the scale would be raised. The fact often overlooked by those who seek to have those on entitlement programs enter the work force is that the low paying jobs, which such people attain, often pay about the same or less than government entitlement programs. This certainly does not offer much incentive to seek employment. The fact is that given the amount of resources available in this country, and the inordinately high salaries of those in the upper ranges of the wage scale, the amount of money available for the lowest paid working people is far too low. Thus, in order to make Wilsonian proposals effective, they must be supplemented by labor law reform, and reworked, regulated wage scales. Of course, none of these suggestions will be possible without the willingness of the privileged members of our society to give up their unwarranted benefits. This, in turn, will never be realized until an absolute moral obligation based on love of one's neighbor is developed.

We shall finally turn to an important example of significant government-directed funds being made available for private organizations seeking to develop areas containing large numbers of the black underclass. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) are private organizations which lend to low-income citizens, including members of the black underclass, and provide technical assistance to such people in order to foster the growth of businesses in underdeveloped areas which commercial banks have abandoned. CDFIs stress the inefficient bureaucracy of public agencies and emphasize the private initiative and self-sufficiency they encourage among those to whom they lend.[29] These organizations, however, also emphasize the overwhelming unmet demand for affordable capital in distressed urban areas in the United States. They thus state that, although they receive very significant private donations, much of which comes from church organizations, there exists a tremendous need for extensive federal grants if they are to meet their goals of community development. They also claim the necessity of government regulation directed toward the commitment of funds to community lending by commercial financial institutions. Thus, CDFIs remain private organizations

completely devoted to encouraging private development of underclass areas, while proclaiming the need for federally directed funds to support such community development. Greatly expanded public funding could also do a great deal to aid the development of the nurturing programs mentioned previously as well as many more private projects. We must once again, however, emphasize that such proposals rely on the proper development of values of love and obligation upon which they must be based. Government regulation regarding the redistribution of resources will always imply less unwarranted privilege for some, and more opportunities for others.

The proposals made in this paper with regard to public policy and voluntary programs are not proposed to constitute an extensive plan, and are offered by one who is neither an economist or political scientist (my only claim is to be a Christian). They are meant to be examples and ideas pointing toward the direction in which to proceed. The central thesis of this examination is the necessity of an ethic of love which proclaims the absolute moral obligation for the black underclass, and all members of society. It may seem impractical to espouse Christian love as a public value in our pluralistic society. However, the primary purpose of this analysis is to challenge Christians to love their neighbors as themselves. It is to proclaim the Christian necessity to attack segregation, and develop values of empathy, connection, and nurturing in relation to the black underclass. It is, moreover, to challenge Christians to carry the value of Christian love into the public sphere. Love, empathy, and absolute moral obligation may be theologically mandatory for Christian ethics, but they can also be developed outside the Christian community. Once again, these are anti-market values and thus will be vehemently resisted. They, however, must exist as distant goals which should always motivate Christians to action and involvement in the search for a just society. These values are imperative upon the Christian community for the indiscriminate love of our neighbors, and thus the absolute moral obligation to these neighbors, is revealed as a Divine command in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Postscript on Idealism and Naivete

Based upon experience, it would seem a safe wager to bet that many of the ideas in this essay will be termed hopelessly idealist, naive, and even sophomoric. I thus feel it appropriate to give a brief

anticipating response.

The first response is based on the analysis in the essay itself. If an idea is idealistic and naive then, I suppose, it does not pragmatically adhere to the prevailing "common sense" of the day. Common sense is another Gramscian concept, referring to that which is uncritically accepted as inevitable, without recognition that it's origin lies within a historically contingent hegemonic order. The obvious point is that Christ's love is a concept which was dreadfully naive in first century Palestine, and remains dreadfully naive today. What a ridiculous concept for one to believe that He could save the world by ministering to the poor and outcast and, in conformity with Divine will, by accepting the pain and suffering of sacrifice on the cross. What a laughable idea, moreover, to believe that this love remains a divine mandate and that we must attempt to overcome our public and private self-interest in an attempt to achieve justice through love. Simply put, the distance of the ought from the is does not reduce the power of the ought as a normative vision, or the quintessential nature of the ought as existing within the will of the Almighty.

Finally, Christians must be willing to live a life of love regardless of the societal result. Although we must have a vision of God's utopian kingdom constantly before us, we must struggle to follow Christ's example even if that vision is never realized. We must speak the truth that Christians are infinitely separated from the Gospel, and thus from God, even if we doubt the capacity of most humans, Christian or otherwise, to traverse the gulf of separation. We must have the fire of love in our bones, and accept whatever consequences result from that fire.

A good friend and colleague of mine once described her experiences as a union organizer. "You have to be ready to go in there, look behind you, see no one there, and keep going!" (expletives deleted) Laura did not know she was waxing theological, but, it seems to me, this statements describes exactly what the life of a follower of Jesus Christ must be like.

*Notes*

1. For my parents, who taught me how to love.
2. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Showdown for Nonviolence," in James Melvin Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King., Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 71.
3. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
4. This paper must in some sense, especially in light of contemporary political context, be considered a friendly critique. With the popularity of Charles Murray's *Bell Curve* theories, the Gingrichian seizure of power, and the concomitant, but not coincidental, rise of conservative economics and xenophobia [prop. 187, etc.] as populist movements, Wilson may be seen as an ally with some of the ideas here presented.
   Yet there is also a prevalent danger in a close alliance with Wilsonian-type proposals. Candidly put, sometimes the lesser of two evils is more invidious as it serves to legitimize the larger evil. Reform proposals which seek to remain too enmeshed in prevailing preference and value paradigms risk perpetuation of the most fundamental bases of inequality. This paper argues that what is needed is a Christian critique calling for a radical reorganization of economic systems and reconstitution of social mores and obligations. We must extend ourselves well beyond the patronizing, capitalist-legitimizing, welfarist-state mentality.
5. *Ibid.*, 112.
6. *Ibid.*, 114.
7. *Ibid.*, 115.
8. *Ibid.*, 118.
9. *Ibid.*, 155.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 151.
12. *Ibid.*
13. It is also important to consider these potential dangers in the con text of the present analysis which is based on a simplified bi-polar model. Most welfare recipients, for instance, are not black, and this fact must be constantly remembered. The fact that African

Americans constitute a disproportionate number of the underclass, however, reveals a systemic racism, which much be attacked.

14. There will undoubtedly be those who will charge me with engag ing in an exercise of Nietzschean masterhood, imposing my post-modern radical egalitarian values upon the text of the Gospel. I prefer to think in terms of a James Cone-like dialectic between text [revelation] and tradition [historical and social context]. A full discussion of theological and hermeneutical methodology, however, is beyond the scope of this essay. I am, justifiably I believe, relying upon the prevalent acceptance of the idea of universal love within the Christian community, and the powerful example of the self-sacrificing love of Christ revealed in the Gospel. I am attempting to pragmatically create a consistent application of a value which is already accepted, not seeking to provide a theological foundation for such a value.
15. For further elaboration on the manner in which market hegemony subtly and invidiously removes Christian values from our lives, especially within the legal culture, see Craig Livermore, "Postmodernism: Ally in the Search for the Gospel," *Christian Legal Society Quarterly* (Winter 1994), 9.
The concept of hegemonic dominance was developed by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci while imprisoned under the fascist regime. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1992), 323-35. For a helpful secondary description of Gramsci's concept, see Alan Hunt, *Explorations in Law and Society: Toward a Constitutive Theory of Law* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 227-48. The concept of hegemony, as an analytical tool, has become very influential within contemporary progressive critique, especially within the critical legal theory movement.
16. There is also, to be sure, a responsibility for non-white, including black, people of the privileged sector to the black underclass. However, the upper-classes of our society are disproportionately white. Moreover, the undergirding cross-currents of racism and classism are so complicated, while remaining in many ways interrelated, that an examination of the responsibility of black people of the upper class requires a subtle analysis which cannot here be entered into. Such relatively privileged African Americans, in many ways, are forced to deal with many injustices from the larger white society while still bearing a responsibility for the black

underclass.

17. Cornel West, "Nihilism in Black America: A Danger that Corrodes from Within," *Dissent* (Spring, 1991), 221.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 225.
20. Of course, the confidence and power-building result of the love of others was a central aspect of Dr. King's espousal of nonviolent love for blacks in the United States. He maintained until the end of his life, even in the face of an increasingly strong and popular challenge from Black Power advocates, that it was love which produced the most strength and pride in blacks. Hate and violence, he vehemently proclaimed, only produces more nihilistic hate in the black community. Of course Dr. King asserted the need not only for the love of others in the black community, but also the necessity of love for the enemy--the white oppressor. Cornel West also hints at this type of love when he speaks of "a universal love ethic." An examination of the relationship between universal love by blacks and an intra-community love, and whether one can exist without the other, is very difficult. It may be that the existence of an intra-community love alone, one that fosters an ideology of chauvinism, which fails to realize significant tangible results, will eventually turn inward to contribute to the nihilistic attitudes of which Professor West speaks.

    This is not, however, to deny the existence of a positive aspect of nationalism, only to declare its limitations. An analysis of intra-community love must also take place with proper regard for context. The chauvinism espoused by Malcolm X [in the years before his hajj] and the Nation of Islam, for example, is not as invidious as the ideology of the Klu Klux Klan, societal support for segregation, or individualistic liberal capitalism which maintains white privilege. Racism is about power, and powerlessness. There is a different moral quality to an ethic which looks inward out of the necessity of survival, and one which justifies unwarranted privilege.
21. "The Demand Side of the Health Care Crisis," *Harvard Magazine* (March-April, 1993), 31.
22. *Ibid.*
23 This type of analysis, used for purposes of simplification, may appear to legitimate the clear line traditionally drawn between public and private action and preference determination within tra-

ditional philosophical liberalism. This, however, is not the case. The creation and sustenance of values in the legal, cultural, and economic arenas involves a complicated, interconnected, and dialectic [or "trialectic"] process. Nothing in this essay is meant to suggest other wise.

24. These images are part of the overwhelming inculcation of visions of blackness subtly implanted in our brains by virtue of existence in a racist society. We are constantly bombarded with images of angry, violent black males, lazy welfare mothers producing progeny for profit, and spicy, exotic, and promiscuous black women. As whites living within such a society, we cannot help but be racist. Yet Christian love mandates that we pray, sweat and cry in an attempt to break free from the chains of racist hegemony. The first step, of course, is to come to terms with and openly admit the evil racism that exists within us. We must then ask God for the strength to undergo an internal apocalyptic transformation, in a constant struggle to reformulate our psychological being in a less invidious manner.
25. Cornel West, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism, Vol. I: Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993) 5.
26. For a critical and persuasive argument for the need for radical and *comprehensive* labor law reform see Mark Barenberg, *Democracy and Domination in the Law of Workplace Cooperation: From Bureaucratic to Flexible Production*, 94 Colum. L. Rev. 753 (1994). Barenberg offers a very thick descriptive analysis of the managerial hegemonic domination endemic in the workplace structure, and the need for a move toward flexible economic production, in conjunction with labor law reform, in order to greater worker empowerment.
27. It is, of course, this upper-class and corporate dominance of preference formation which has created the beliefs and attitudes that the lower-underclasses are the economic enemies of the working class, and that black working folk are the enemies of white work ing folk. Only when we begin to destroy this asymmetry of preference forming, can we seek truly redistributive paradigms in which the managerial and professional classes are viewed as the economic enemies of working and underclass people.
28. Such pervasive governmental regulation is necessary not only to ensure more equal distribution of revenues, but to create a system

in which costs (of governmental programs, for example) are also more equally shared among the working and managerial classes.

29. It is not necessary to deconstruct all differences between public and private action, only to possess a more critical and accurate descriptive understanding of the pervasiveness of public decision-making in what is often called private action.

When we act as "private" economic actors we are indeed relying upon systems constructed legislatively by governmental actors, or, in the case of common law economic systems, democratically acquiescing in constructed, not natural and inevitable, formulations. In this sense private economic action may be considered public, because it relies upon the state for its authority and existence. Yet this kind of public action, in the form of government definition and redefinition of economic systems, must be considered only semi-public. Government definition may be contrasted to government bureaucratic control. There may be instances, as the CDFIs believe, when government reconstitution may be necessary but where optimal solutions mandate that government ownership and control be limited.

# Review Essay

*A Troubling In My Soul: Womanist Perspectives On Evil & Suffering,* by Emilie M. Townes, ed., New York: Orbis Books, 1993. 257 pages

*A Troubling In My Soul: Womanist Perspectives On Evil and Suffering* is a collection of fourteen essays artfully woven together with the helpful introduction of Emilie M. Townes, editor. The readers of this review are strongly encouraged, at least, to browse through the Table of Contents; the topics one encounters there constitute a veritable "clenched fist" in the face of suffering, and "uplifted hands of support" for sisterhood and community. The text is divided into four parts which, Townes tells us, "are based on the definitions of womanist found in Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*" (p.1). The chapter headings are quite arresting; there are homiletic gems to be derived from their contents. Additionally, the essays offer engaging prose and analytic insights into the problems of evil and suffering. What is readily noticeable is that the articles are searching, candid, and insightful; they provide an introductory, and often in depth, analysis of the struggles, failures, successes, pain and pride of African-American women's experiences.

Thus, as I read the collection of essays in this ground-breaking volume I had a deep reflective pause followed by a strong rhapsodic urge. My reflections led me to the door of the labyrinthine catacombs of the 'progressive' abuse, marginalization, exclusion and abandonment of my sisters.[1] I paused there long enough to hear the demurring echoes of a history of enduring courage reverberating in my consciousness. I must confess that my first response thereafter was not to review the standard arguments associated with the paradox of the coexistence of evil and an omnibenevolent/omnipotent God,[2] but to rhapsodize through the words of Jeremiah thus:

> Hark, the cry of the daughter[s] of my people from the length and breadth of the land: Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her [Sovereign Power] not in her?...For the

> wound of the daughter[s] of my people is my heart wounded, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter[s] of my people not been restored?[3]

Yes, the cries of *the daughters of my people* have been hushed, scaled down to a sigh, or muffled, but every now and then the troubling in their souls, like "a fire shut up within" (Psalm 39:3; Jeremiah 20:9), makes them shout, thereby gaining relief *through their own expressions*. It is here that we see the cathartic value of the Black Church tradition, as well as the rhythmic release through the spirituals and blues (see p. 2 and pp. 150 ff.). Let it be known, however, that the expressions relayed by this text are neither maudlin, somber nor shrill; they are accounts of audible and intelligible expressions of the intractable dimensions of womanist life. The trenchant analyses of the contributors are evocative, provocative, celebrative and resolutely active. They serve as a verbal prod to jolt us out of historical amnesia; as a challenge to the passive acceptance of the limits of the permissible; and as a replacement of permissions with the celebration of the possible, concretized in womanist convictions and actions (see chapters 2,4,6, & 11).

According to this text, what is troubling in the souls of African-American women is neither a theological hiccup nor the paroxysmal results of socioeconomic pressure; rather, it is a socio-political hegemonic structure which has been allowed to run rampant, without any sustained organized challenge, thereby stifling personal and communal growth as it sires dysfunctional patterns of relationship. Like an undetected virulent pathogen it has found refuge in God-talk, even within the Black Church! As a result, the Church is strangely infected with a family of virus; namely, race, gender and class, inter alia. Sadly, it is African-American women, while exercising roles as principal caregivers, who have been/are most at risk. It is fitting therefore to review the issue of evil and suffering from their perspective (as part of the phenomenology of evil)...a veritable expression of pathos and well earned pride.

First, the text attempts to build bridges between theory and practice, thought and action, and expression and reflection. The articles succeed in bringing the cracks and faults to thematic awareness by addressing the dualities, dichotomies, and duplicities which face

African Americans. However, Jacquelyn Grant rightly points out that while there is a double nature to Black consciousness, there is a "triple nature [to] Black women's consciousness" (p.212). She therefrom reasons that "Womanist theology is committed to bringing wholism to Black women." This means that the servant-hood of Black women translates into *service to the redeemer* to struggle against all forms of oppression. Additionally, she states that even "if the source is white women...then Black women must continue to challenge the oppressive notions" (p.213). But the problem is not simply interracial, it is also intra-racial; that is, as patriarchalism and classism. Frances E. Wood announces the issue of church patriarchy thus:

> Within the African-American church community the silence about the realities of women's experience and how it differs from men's experience has taken the proportions of a version of the "big lie," and is a deadly yoke. This yoke consists of silencing, ignoring, degrading, and dismissing women's experience, especially those experiences that reveal the nature and extent of opposition perpetuated against them within the community (p.39; see also pp.44-46).

It can be seen that the *wholism* advocated by Grant and Wood not only identifies the faults to be corrected and the bridges to be constructed, but exemplifies the nascent dialectical force of womanist will to overcome. This is uniformly expressed by all the contributors. What emerges is a new framework for socio-political and theological discourse and praxis. According to Grant, "For liberation to happen the psychological, political, and social conditions must be created to nurture the processes. Servant language does not do this." She recommends parity, expressed as empowered and empowering discipleship. "Women must be invited into the power houses of the church and society to participate at all levels," she avers (p.214).

While I agree with the general tenor of Grant's analysis and proposal I find the notion that "women must be invited," the imperative mood notwithstanding, to be an unfortunate lapse into a stereotypical female passive mode of speech and behavior, much like 'men need to open doors' for women. If this is what Grant means by the creation of conditions to nurture the processes of liberation (mentioned above) then her social psychology is recidivistic, though forgivable;

her socioeconomic and political aspirations compromised; and her theology of liberation disempowered. While it is highly unlikely that Grant intends any of this, it is nevertheless important to point out that women do not need men to open doors to the houses of power or from the houses (homes?) of detention. *Women can achieve their liberation in spite of men.* Of course, cooperative community ventures serve the cause of wholism through parity, but these ventures should not obviate women's initiative and organizational power. The overall focus of Grant's article underscores this point; her emphasis on empowerment through discipleship is a clear expression of the gospel.
In the editor's "Introduction" to the text Emilie M. Townes is unequivocal about the intention and actions of womanist hermeneutics:

> Womanist thought is intentionally and unapologetically biased. Its bias is for a diverse and faithful community of witnesses. These witnesses are an active force for love and justice in the midst of oppression and fallenness. With such a bias, all forms of theological discourse are open for reconsideration and critique. This includes womanist discourse as well (p.2).

What is immediately noticed is that whereas the declared bias is for *gynofocal attenuation*, the objective is for *extensional conviction.* This position is in no way *gynocentric*...it is not focused on itself for itself, but moves from a base of bias (for a wholesome/diverse community) to an elevation of the practice of love and justice towards all. If this sounds like double-talk, it isn't simply an expression of the double-consciousness previously mentioned, or even the skillful exercise of dialectical reasoning. Rather, it may very well be that these women are anointed with a locutionary force which is "sharper than any two edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). The extent to which womanists are prepared to be self-critical, as acknowledged, becomes the criterion for testability of this claim.

Healthy self-critical reflections tend to mend the broken, extend horizons, acknowledge weaknesses, and recover and reemphasize the neglected or forgotten. In this regard, Clarice J. Martin uses Maria Stewart's autobiography as a medium through which to review the issues of suffering and evil. Martin, adroitly and sensitively, amplifies Stewart's voice of protest and acts of courage (in the midst of

suffering) as an exemplary *tour de force.* By means of the autobiographical, the traditional theodicy issues are given fresh and concrete expression, while maintaining logical cogency. What Martin and Karen Baker-Fletcher (chapter 10) do by means of the autobiographical, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan does by means of the spirituals. The former seek to identify and expose evil through narrative while the latter shows how evil has been/can be confronted and exorcised through song. Kirk-Duggan maintains that the spirituals are not merely musical they are also lyrical narratives which function as a sustaining source of meaning. "The study of the narrative-dialectic midst the music reveals how stories are formulas for garnering meaning from chaos," she contends (p.155).

Additionally, Delores S. Williams writes about the value of the community (and its resources) in African-American sociocultural and intellectual development. Here the genres mentioned above are elegantly restated in a wider context which affords analysis of Black women's defilement, consciousness of sin, and hopes for a salutary social balance. Williams' presentation seeks to balance the multi-sided plank of injustice on the fulcrum of a liberation grounded in justice. The documented reports of slaves, ex-slaves, and successive generations of women in bondage to a false consciousness of sin and devalued self worth is most instructive. Having named "the demons" which conduce to a false consciousness of sin, Williams has laid the groundwork for a prolegomenon to a diversely focussed soteriology, bereft of the Euro-cultural baggage which often parades as morality and genuine Christianity. However, Williams notes that in spite of the religious and cultural endorsement of their defilement several nineteenth century Black women had their consciousness of (alleged) unworthiness healed by their encounter with Jesus. "Thus, Black women could survive and achieve well-being in spite of the devaluation of Black womanhood, which America incorporated in its social ideology of white supremacy" (p.143). This chapter is worth reading and rereading by pastors, therapists, social workers, ethicists and church study groups.

Correspondingly, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes further "incarnates" the notion of Black women's defilement by focusing on the conflicts of bodily form:

> If we are dark and full-featured we are often made to feel unloved and unlovable, and if we are light and fine-featured we find ourselves asking, like Alice Walker's Squeak/Mary Alice, "do you really love me, or just my color?" If we are dark and full-featured, particularly if we are large, members of our community presume that we are ready to take charge of our church organizations and our little brothers and sisters before our childhoods are over. If we are women clergy who are dark and large, we are attacked for embodying a mammy stereotype; however, if we are light and thin we are told that we are "too pretty to preach" (p. 235).

What the reader is likely to glean from the analyses of these genres is how theology functions in African-American communities. For example, God is a given in every article. God is the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem.* What follow from this strongly rooted theism are the following: First, critical reflections on the racist, sexist, classist and cultural distortions of the divine. We find an expression of these reflections in Patricia L. Hunter's "Women's Power-Women's Passion." Here Hunter introduces a major discussion on the nature of divine/human goodness, particularly as it relates to the nature of women. She reasons thus: "If all God created was very good including humankind, then all women, regardless of ethnicity, class, varying abilities, or sexual orientation, are a part of God's very good creation...it is my belief that all aspects of our being as women are good, including our emotions, or spiritual, physical, and sexual being" (pp.189-190).

It is questionable whether the goodness attributed to the created order by God, in the Genesis account, is ontological; it might very well be aesthetic (good to behold) or quite pleasing to the Creator. However, even if we assume that it is ontological it does not follow, as Hunter's article and Townes' summary of it on page 6 imply: (a) that because X is good at $t_1$ necessitates X's goodness at $t_2$-$t_n$; (b) that because X is good everything which issues from X has to be good; and (c) that the goodness of the whole implies the goodness of each of its parts. What is collectively true of a class is not necessarily true (distributively) of each member of the class. There is no doubt that Hunter is definitely onto something quite powerful (psycho-so-

cially, politically and even theologically) namely, the underlying goodness of the created order--male, female, familiar and unfamiliar. Nevertheless, it is a quantum logical leap from the "very good" assertion of God in regards to creation to the claim that everything in creation is good. This is a 'classroom' example of the fallacy of division. For example, one may claim that since the forest gives shade, and tree 'A' is a part of the forest, then tree 'A' gives shade. Yet, it maybe the case that tree 'A' has no branches or leaves.[4] Thus while the spirit of Hunter's argument is inviting and instructive the logic is not compelling. However, Townes has perceptively magnified the fallacy as this summary shows: . . .'it would seem that if believing that all God created is good, that women are created by God and in the image of God, and a significant aspect of womanliness is passion-power, then it would stand to reason that a woman's passion-power is also good" (p.6).

Secondly, a further implication of the strong theism mentioned earlier leads to a reaffirmation of God as personal though not the exclusive friend of any one person. God is therefore incarnated in Jesus who cares for individuals enough to place them in communities, and for communities enough to seek out the lost, outcasts, et. al, in order to enlarge and deepen community spirit. Thirdly, that theology functions most effectively as conversation with God; people speak to God and God ostensibly answers by inspiration, revelations and sometimes through proxies. In any case, African-American God-talk is not so much talk about God (pun intended)--except as testimonies--as it is conversation with God.[5] Fourthly and finally, the theodicy issue for African-American women does not fit neatly into any contrived category. The most general linkage is that evil and suffering are mostly due to immoral acts. In fact, the devastations occasioned by floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes, or the heartbreak caused by cancer and AIDS, on the surface, may not seem to be more problematic for African Americans than for any other group. However, when one considers the socioeconomic and political structures which force people to live in areas where they become vulnerable to these natural disasters, or when we think of the additives and carcinogens which are placed in poor people's food and dumped in their communities, respectively, it can be seen that evil and suffering are not as accidental or benign as some would have us believe. Thus womanist theologians are rightly vigilant in their attacks on the evil structures which reenergize and finance the tridimensional injustices of racism, sexism and classism.

The bottom line is that if natural disasters were all that African Americans in general, and African-American women in particular, had to deal with they would quite likely take a realist view and move on. It is the evil structures against which they remonstrate, and quite rightly so. Jamie T. Phelps and Marcia Y. Riggs (chapters 3 & 4 respectively) call for a personal and communal confrontation with social sin and socially sinful structures. Phelps recounts the strides (and hurdles) towards liberation within the Catholic Church, but laments the fact that Black Catholics continue to suffer segregation. She claims that "Even today, African-American Catholics are generally segregated within all Black parishes or marginalized in predominantly white parishes." This is true for both Northern and Southern states. Thus, Phelps concludes that [Catholic] "Church institutions still manifest patterns of racism, sexism, classism, which are destructive to African-American Catholics and others" (p.57). Marcia Y. Riggs sketches the development of the Black Women's Club Movement as a positive response to sex, race, and class discrimination. It is refreshing to note, as Riggs reminds us, that:

> Black club women knew that Black people had to analyze the context in which Blacks found themselves. Yet, they also insisted that black people not allow that context to define their response, that Black people be self-critical and self-assured, rejecting racist, sexist, and classist norms for Black life and promoting community as functional unity for the common good instead of individualism (p.73).

One can understand then why the philosophico-theological theodicy responses, taxonomized as (a) Augustinian (b) Irenaean and (c) Process,[6] while very useful and engaging, may scratch the intellectual itch of Black people but are unlikely to soothe and heal their existential sorrows and wounds. The resolution to begin the process of doing the latter is a compelling part of why *A Troubling in My Soul* should be required reading in seminaries and universities. The other compelling part is evident in the subheading: "Womanist Perspectives On Evil & Suffering."[7] What makes the whole text so compelling is that it is not just another bibliographic entry in the theodicy index; it is a testament of undaunted courage

and unapologetic resolve. The stories relayed and the analyses proffered by these African-American scholars are neither an exercise in nostalgia nor a mere exhibition of erudition. Rather, these women have served notice--a habeas corpus ad subjiciendum writ, as it were--that they will not tolerate being servant-tenants in the households of the family, community, nation and church any longer.[8]

In plain language, they have named the demons to be exorcised. Frances E. Wood states that "Before we can take on the yoke of Jesus we must name the burdens and claim the memories under which we struggle and labor" (p.43). Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan does so by declaring that "At its core, racism is American's *original sin* against the Holy Spirit" (p.151). Thus she seeks to champion "a womanist hermeneutic concerned about liberating the tridimensional victimization of African-American reality via race-sex-class." (ibid) The necessary steps in removing these demons have been clearly articulated, instead of ritualized. This is why Rosita de Ann Mathews encourages a firm resistance to evil without using the means and methods of evil. However, she cautions that "Allowing oneself to be abused by a person or a system does not change the person or the system. Rather it gives the offender permission to continue such onslaughts" (p.92). I believe that this statement serves as a challenge (and open defiance) to all forms of suffering and evil, and that the theologies of passivity which encourage the endurance of indignity are themselves suspect of siring evil. M. Shawn Copeland gets to the heart of the matter when she writes that:

> It is ironic, perhaps, that a theology of suffering is formed from resources of resistance. It is not womanist perspective that makes it so, but the Christianity of the plantation. In its teaching, theologizing, preaching, and practice, this Christianity sought to bind the slaves to their condition by inculcating caricatures of the cardinal virtues of patience, long-suffering, forbearance, love, faith, and hope. Thus, to distance itself from any form of masochism, even Christian masochism, a theology of suffering in womanist perspective must reevaluate those virtues in light of Black women's experiences. Such reevaluation engages a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of resistance; but that

> reevaluation and reinterpretation must be rooted in a critical realism that rejects both naive realism and idealism as adequate foundations for a theology of suffering (p.122).

It is on this note of challenge and open defiance that this text takes its stand against all forms of injustice, particularly race, gender and class.

This is a book worth reading, owning and sharing. When it is reprinted, as I hope it will, the editor may want to encourage the contributors to use "African-American" or "African American." However, irrespective of what form the locution takes, it should not only be uniformly used in the book but, most definitely, throughout each chapter. As it stands, most of the authors move back and forth in their usage without any apparent nuance, declared emphasis or justifiable semantic warrant. Nevertheless, this text has set a high standard for any further discourse on theodicy. Those who omit this text from the ongoing debate on evil and suffering may lose an opportunity for fresh air in the dungeons of logical conundrums. And as Katie Geneva Cannon states: "The substantial omission of African-American sacred rhetoric from the theological discourse on the nature, explanation and remedy of evil flows quite naturally from scholars using analytical frameworks that take the European-American religious experience as the norm" (p.220). This is further supported by Patricia L. Hunter who declares that: "If we start from a new premise that God is no longer male and God is not made in the image of the dominate culture, women of color can begin to reimage ourselves. Women of color can believe that we are also created in the image of God. If we, as women of color, are willing to reimage and redefine ourselves not as other but as Godlike, then innumerable ways of lifting self-esteem and claiming the right to live whole, healthy lives can emerge" (p.191). Here is a formidable challenge (collectively delivered) to the community of scholars to begin to develop a hermeneutic of evil and suffering that is diverse in scope and sharply focused in analysis.

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*Notes*

1. "Sisters" denotes the entire family of African women past and present, but particularly those dispersed in the Americas.
2. See Jane Mary Trau's *The Co-existence of God and Evil* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991) in which she argues that evil may have positive value. See, in particular, the concluding pages 102-103.
3. Jeremiah 8:19, 21-22 records the prophet's lamentation over Judah. My response is more of a renunciation of those structures which continue to oppress my people--a theme forcefully articulated by the authors in the text being reviewed.
4. I am indebted to my friend and colleague Guy Stroh, from Rider University Department of Philosophy, for this "Tree/Forest" example.
5. See James M. Washington's *Conversations with God* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1994) as a possible source for pursuing this claim. This text came to my attention too late for any informed comment, suffice it to say that it contains prayer selections of African Americans from the 18th century to the present--prayers from people like Maria Stewart, for example, are contained therein.
6. See John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4th edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 39-55. Also, his *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillian, and New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
7. Although this is a minor point, it is ironic that the force/power of the text is a sub-heading and not a co-heading. That this is standard form is true, but that women's perspectives shape the focus of the book and stand disproportionately small beneath "Troubling" is symbolically instructive. I believe that it rightly evinces the role, voice, and place of women in a world of troubles, the most severe of which is meted out to African-American women, among others.
8. See my unpublished paper, "Women Under Church Arrest," in which I argue that even though an increasing number of women have been "released" or have "escaped" from house arrest, they are still being subjected to "hard labor." The majority still experi ence the arrest of their gifts for ecclesiastical leadership while being expected to continue in the untenable position of ecclesial servitude.

# Book Reviews

*Fundamentalism & Gender*, by John Stratton Hawley, ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 220 pages.

Nearing the end of the American century, it has become commonplace to apply the term 'fundamentalism', which on strict account designates elements in American Protestantism, to various religious movements throughout the world. The suppressed premise in this (what some might call) terminological imperialism runs something like this: Resemblances between the attitudes, beliefs and behavior of American fundamentalists and other recent religious revival movements warrants a broader extension for the term. Political militancy and a commitment to scriptural inerrancy are often taken implicitly as hallmarks of the new category. This premise is by no means uncontroversial however. One can object, for instance, that these resemblances do not sufficiently justify the application of a broad category term because contextual differences preclude any legitimate subsumption of the diverse phenomena under a category.

*Fundamentalism and Gender,* a volume of essays edited by John Stratton Hawley and growing out of a faculty seminar at Columbia University, has the notable virtues that it both carefully weighs this question and highlights another, generally overlooked, resemblance between American fundamentalism and some foreign candidates for inclusion under this rubric. A couple of years ago Harold Bloom observed that, "'Inerrancy'... is an unconscious metaphor for the repression of all individuality."[1] Most of the scholars contributing to *Fundamentalism and Gender* likewise see a cross-cultural pattern of "social inerrancy" (p. 4) characterizing fundamentalism, in particular an anxious concern with the comportment of women. In the American arena, opposition to abortion and the E.R.A. vividly illustrate this feature of fundamentalism.

*Fundamentalism and Gender* comprises an introductory essay, four case studies and two more theoretical pieces. The introduction by John Hawley and Wayne Proudfoot lucidly describes the history of fundamentalism in America, poses the issues which recur throughout the volume, and frames the comparative use of 'fundamentalism.' 'Fun-

damentalism' as here defined denotes militant religion in self-conscious political opposition to certain aspects of modernity. It chafes at the modern separation of church and state and promotes an often factitious image of traditional society. A sense of besetment or persecution by the forces of modernity also characterizes fundamentalism. Ironically, this posture often leads fundamentalists of one stripe or another to feel sympathy or solidarity with fundamentalist groups from another religious tradition. It insists, furthermore, on the inerrancy of scripture. Finally, and serving as the focus of this collection, fundamentalism exhibits "an ideology of gender control." Several of the authors contend that the construction of gender roles in fundamentalism illuminates the larger fundamentalist phenomenon.

The four case studies explore gender and contemporary politics in four religious settings. In the first, Randall Balmer traces the rise of the feminine ideal espoused by fundamentalists in America. He points out that the mode of domestic life exalted in fundamentalist circles only appeared with the industrial revolution. For the fundamentalists, Balmer argues, the foetus functions as a potent symbol of themselves. The innocent foetus at the mercy of modern immorality comes to represent the morally pure fundamentalists overwhelmed by an evil world. Peter Awn analyzes, in the second case study, a notorious supreme court case in India, the Shah Bano case. Here, a divorced woman's suit for financial support pitted conservative defenders of the *shari'ah* against more secular, progressive Indians. The third case study, written by John Hawley, concerns the *sati* of Roop Kanwar. In this thorough essay Hawley demonstrates how the conservative reaction to the *sati* exemplifies several of the features labeled fundamentalist in this volume. The defenders of *sati* see themselves as an embattled political minority fighting modern secularism. Hawley notes both the conspicuously constructed character of the "tradition" to which they look and the centrality of women's roles to their ideology. The final case study, by Helen Hardacre, assesses the role of gender in the Japanese New Religions. Although the New Religions have no analogue to textual inerrancy, they do, she insists, share a number of other features with fundamentalism: selective opposition to modernity and political conservatism, for instance. The New Religions, moreover, strive to reinstitute the traditional *ie* household which limited the roles of women to wife and mother. Each of these case studies addresses the issue of female gender in relation to a contemporary religious movement exhibiting some of the distinguishing elements of fundamentalism.

Predictably, the final theoretical essays form the most provocative portion of *Fundamentalism And Gender.* These two articles read as point and counterpoint and in one sense only really succeed in relation to one another. Jay Harris, the author of the first, labors to draw at least two conclusions. First, he wishes to argue that the term 'fundamentalism' does not serve to elucidate, but rather works to level important differences between religious groups. Truly careful study produces particularities rather than similarities. What's more, the term 'fundamentalism,' he claims, functions as part of the "politics of nomenclature" (one variety of terminological imperialism, I suppose) whereby scholars pejoratively label phenomena they don't like so to render their viewpoint the norm. This move enables them to either dismiss the phenomena or find a condescending explanation of them. The political judgment embedded in the use of the term 'fundamentalism' contributes, therefore, to the tendency to obscure difference. As an antidote, Harris suggests scholars limit the use of 'fundamentalism' to communities with that self-ascription unless it "provides us with an accurate picture of a common feature of religious life" (p. 142). His second conclusion aims to vacate this proviso. Careful attention to Jewish "fundamentalism" and its contexts, he argues, reveals no close similarities with American Protestant fundamentalism. Clearly, Harris implies that similarly careful attention to the contexts informing other groups would dissolve any claims to have produced "an accurate picture of a common feature of religious life" called 'fundamentalism.'

The estimable worth of Harris's contribution lies in its value as a reminder. He makes, to borrow the words of Steven Katz, "a plea for the recognition of differences."[2] A too quick assimilation of diverse phenomena, while in many ways satisfying, distorts. To really understand any cultural phenomenon one must attend to the historical and social complexities that produce it. Essentially, Harris reminds scholars to do their homework, their thick description. He also reminds scholars always to inquire suspiciously into the agendas which their terminology and method harbor. Harris, unfortunately, converts a salutary reminder into a manic prescription. To illustrate my complaint, consider the terms 'religion' or 'mysticism.' The history of both these modern Western labels reflects theological and political agendas. Neither term, furthermore, identifies a "common feature of religious life" in the strong sense. They point to a series of family resemblances rather than any essence. The scholar should always keep these facts in mind

and also note whether the subjects of study themselves employ the terms in question, but no one (save perhaps W. C. Smith) would suggest that the scholar abjure their use. A more practicable solution inverts Nietzsche's famous apothegm that one can define only those concepts with no history. The scholar should abide by the precept: "Terms with a history *must* be *stipulatively* defined." But why use them? Because (aside from the obvious utility of general terms) they *do* elucidate "a common feature of religious life," but not in the strong sense. Good comparative work which attends to difference and particularity can suggest new avenues of inquiry by which to reconsider familiar territory. Good comparative work also helps us understand human beings in all their complexity. The many valuable and suggestive insights gathered in *Fundamentalism and Gender* alone should vindicate the careful use of the term 'fundamentalism.'

At first regard, Harris's tone seems inexplicably angry. Indeed, the article reads like a veritable philippic. Only as a response to the final essay does Harris's allergy to theory or any comparative use of 'fundamentalism' make sense. Karen McCarthy Brown breathlessly explains the antiabortion movement in two pages, uncritically describes object-relations theory in two pages, confidently defines the function of religion in three pages, discusses neurophysiology in two pages, considers each case study in about a half page each, and finally condemns the Enlightenment without so much as an argument. (In this last judgment she shares something with Harris. Both seem to resent the Enlightenment.) Throughout this litany her essay reflects the style and outlook of a New Age self-help bestseller. Witness this passage from her conclusion, "We need help in accepting ourselves as organic creatures enmeshed in our world rather than continuing to posture as cerebral masters granted dominion over it. This requires that we learn to trust the wisdom of our mute flesh and accept the limitations inherent in our humanity." (P. 197) No wonder Harris so polemically insists on careful respectful attention to detail and nuance.

One can find, however, some ore amid the slag. Brown provides the arguably most valuable nugget one can mine from *Fundamentalism and Gender.* She makes the astute observation that one can view all the major concerns of fundamentalists as matters of strict boundary-maintenance. (p. 177) Further, she links the fundamentalist preoccupation with controlling women, the "other within," to the fundamentalists' uneven fortunes with regard to the larger society, the "other without." Her reliance on object-relations theory to explain this char-

acteristic of fundamentalism, however, can only reinforce the long-standing methodological principle associated with Durkheim and Evans-Pritchard not to explain social facts through individual psychology. Sociology and anthropology might have lent more convincing theoretical material. Brown's observations naturally bring to mind the work of Mary Douglas whose theories on the power invested in anomalies could profitably be extended here. Douglas has argued that social groups with threatened external boundaries tend to have rigid internal categories and abominate anomalies as dangerous. Anomalies such as homosexuals and women who usurp male prerogative might, therefore, serve as the focus of considerable social regulation. Sherry Ortner's famous essay analyzing culture and the perceived proximity of women to nature might also help explain women's anomalousness and contribute to an explanation of why fundamentalists so strongly feel the need to control them.[3] In any case Brown leaves a profound insight undeveloped.

*Fundamentalism and Gender* recounts an informative and stimulating discussion of a neglected aspect of contemporary religious revivals. The vastly divergent stances taken in the final theoretical articles only augment its value as a reasonably wide-ranging look at the topic. To its credit, furthermore, it uniformly avoids one danger that accompanies the discussion of gender in contemporary academe. *Fundamentalism and Gender* never succumbs to obfuscating jargon.

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*Notes*

1. Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).
2. Steven Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 25.
3. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Michele Rosaldo and Louise Lampere, eds., *Women, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) 67-88.

*Textural Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* by Emanuel Tov. Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992. 456 pp.

While the subject matter of this impressive study may seem most interesting and comprehensible principally to specialists in the Hebrew scriptures, few who encounter either the Hebrew text, (whether in the original or in translation), or commentaries on or scholarly studies of it, can gainsay the value of being able to grapple intelligently with text-critical problems, or perhaps even more frequently, of being able to understand what is at stake in the results of the experts who do. We now have the perfect resource for this in Emanuel Tov's monumental work, which though approached, is not matched by any previous treatment of this kind, and which surely is destined to become the standard manual on Hebrew Bible textual criticism for many years to come.

Tov is one of very few scholars well qualified to produce this type of work. Not only is he in the midst of a distinguished career as J.L. Magnes Professor of Bible at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, but he also is one of the editors of the Hebrew University Bible project, and since 1990, the Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication enterprise. In fact, it is precisely the discovery of the Scrolls which makes a reassessment of the aims, procedures, and presuppositions of Hebrew Bible text criticism a pressing necessity, for it is from the study of the more than 190 (mostly fragmentary) biblical manuscripts from Qumran and its vicinity that a fresh approach to this discipline becomes a serious desideratum. Himself both a Qumran textual and Septuagint scholar, Tov is closely familiar with the whole array of issues and implications this manuscript discovery raises for the study of the textual witnesses to the Hebrew Bible, and he presents them both brilliantly and thoroughly in this monograph, distinguishing it from most previous works of this nature, which were either published prior to the Qumran discoveries, or took advantage of them in only a limited and inadequate fashion.

Before describing the major--and sometimes controversial--contributions of this book, a few preliminary comments are in order. First, this is not a volume one curls up with on a listless summer evening in anticipation of an exciting 'read.' One best approaches it as a reference work than as an artful literary composition. This means the reader can dip into it at almost any point, and because of the repetitious ap-

proach employed, linked with extensive cross-referencing, can find a relatively comprehensive discussion of whatever topic interests him or her, without having to traverse a good deal of what precedes or follows.

Secondly, Tov gives detailed coverage of most of the matters one expects in a work focusing on textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, from a thorough description of the various textual witnesses to the biblical text (including the Qumran evidence and the ancient translations), their dates, origins, and special characteristics, to a close account of the copying and transmission of the biblical text with all the particular phenomenology involved (materials used, writing practices, script, orthography, etc.). Easy accessibility to all of this is enhanced in two ways: by a highly detailed table of contents at the beginning and a very comprehensive subject index at the end. Moreover, Tov has increased the user-friendliness of his book by providing throughout frequent illustrations of the textual phenomena he discusses, further illumined by the 30 plates at the back of the book which give the reader a more vivid sense of the different types of manuscripts involved.

But what makes this work of unusual importance is the contributions Tov makes to the often contentious discussion of the methodology and assumptions underlying the text critical task for the Hebrew Bible which now must be looked at in new ways in light of the unprecedented manuscript discoveries at Qumran. Because of the necessary brevity of this review, only a few of these can be mentioned here.

First, the issue of what the aim of the Hebrew Bible text critic should be. Most would agree that it is to establish a form of the biblical text that is as free from error as one can get it. But *what* form of the text should that be? Many older as well as present day critics think that it must be the original autographs (*Urtext*) of the biblical writers. Tov argues (I think persuasively) that this is impossible, even given the vast amount of earlier evidence provided us from Qumran. With the possible exception of the books of Daniel and Qoheleth, there is still too much distance between the manuscript evidence we have (virtually nothing antedating the 3rd century B.C.E.) and the initial composition stage of the biblical books. While it is legitimate to speculate about the original form of these books, it must be recognized that the conclusions drawn are hypothetical, and not susceptible to evidentiary demonstration.

For Tov, then, the Hebrew text that it is the critic's aim to reconstruct is that of the finished composition, that is, when any biblical writing was acknowledged and accepted as a completed integral whole and henceforth copied in this form without any major changes. We may call this the transmission form of the text, and it is this rather than the literary stages which preceded it which constitute the primary focus of text criticism (the former is the province principally of literary criticism, in Tov's view). But establishing the transmission form is also not without its problems, since the vast majority of Hebrew Bible books were finished and in transmission well before the 3rd century B.C.E. Perhaps more secure would be the goal of establishing the masoretic (or proto-rabbinic) form of the text, which had been largely adopted by Judaism as the preferred text by the end of the 1st century C.E., and which would become the basis of subsequent editions of the Hebrew Bible.

A second issue has to do with the history of the development of the biblical text. Tov is doubtless correct that the phrase 'the biblical text' is an abstraction, since what our evidence bears witness to are biblical *texts*, not a singular biblical one. At the same time, Tov thinks it valid to posit the existence of an original biblical text, even though its detailed character is hard to reconstruct, and the date of its provenance not easy to ascertain. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the Qumran biblical evidence confronts us with a great multiplicity of biblical texts, and the question is can one discern among them certain discrete families, text-types, or recensions of a more or less pristine biblical text?

Frank Cross of Harvard has argued that this is indeed possible, and he has defined basically three text types or families which he characterizes as 'local texts' because they are associated with the three geographical areas where historical circumstances forced the Jews to dwell in some numbers: Palestine, Babylon and Egypt. Tov strongly opposes this characterization of the textual situation, averring that except for the Samaritan tradition (= Palestinian), neither the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint (= Egyptian) nor the proto-rabbinic/masoretic texts (= Babylonian) manifest sufficiently distinct typological features to warrant their categorization as text-types, much less recensions, which by definition refer to textual revisions with a specific intention in mind (as e.g., the recensions of the LXX, which revised the Old Greek translation to bring it into greater coherence with the proto-rabbinic Hebrew form of the text). Tov's study of the Qumran data

moves him to posit five textual groups, to which he also attaches the label 'vulgar' (i.e. popular and somewhat less precise) or 'nonvulgar' (more conservative and meticulously preserved): 1) those written with a particular orthographic and morphologic scribal practice peculiar to Qumran (20% of the texts, all 'vulgar'); 2) those containing the masoretic consonantal framework (60%, 'nonvulgar'); 3) those reflecting most of the characteristic features of the Samaritan tradition (fewer than 5%, 'vulgar'); 4) those closely identifiable with the presumed Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX (fewer than 5%, 'nonvulgar'); and 5) those not really close to any of the above, sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing with them, what Tov labels 'nonaligned' texts (15%, 'nonvulgar'). While all of these textual forms presumably originated in Palestine, and one (no. 4) became associated with the Jewish community in Egypt, another (no. 2) with that in Babylon (though actual evidence for this is meager), their association with a particular geographical context is not very obviously evident in any of them. At the moment it would appear that Tov has the better argument in describing the development of the biblical text on the basis of the Qumran evidence, but we need to remind ourselves that we are still only at the beginning of the assessment of the biblical data from Qumran (not all of which is published yet), and it will probably take decades of further study before we can judge whether Tov or Cross or someone else has presented the most plausible analysis.

A third issue of importance has to do with the evaluation of variant readings to determine which, if any, are the more preferable or better readings (which may differ in some cases from what one decides may have been the original reading!). Assuming that difference between or among readings is not due to a transmission error, there are certain rules and guidelines that have been traditionally held up as the proper procedures to follow in arriving at a preferred reading. Tov describes and evaluates all of these, and concludes that while each has its value, none is decisive (including the dicta *lectio difficilior praeferenda* and *lectio brevior potior*), and each has its problematics. Perhaps the best guideline is simply to exercise common sense when one looks for the reading that is textually most appropriate, given also the strictures of lexicography, grammar, and syntax.

But what if there are two or more readings which in the final analysis seem equally appropriate? Though Tov concedes that more than one authentic reading may reflect more than one pristine text, he thinks this is rather unlikely, and that between or among such readings

there is only one that was original. But it may be impossible to decide with any assurance which one that is, at least on the basis of the tools of text criticism. If the critic is required to make a translation, perhaps a sensitive exegetical analysis will tip the balance, or if one of the readings is represented in the MT, it may be advisable to go with that reading, since it represents the *textus receptus*.

There is much more that could be said about this magnificent work, but perhaps I have said enough to pique the reader's interest to investigate it further. Certainly no Hebrew Bible scholar can ignore what Tov has done, and even the non-scholar who has not only some training in Hebrew Bible but also makes regular use of it in teaching and preaching should become acquainted with how this valuable resource can help deal constructively with text critical headaches.

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*The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels,* by Raymond E. Brown, SES. New York: Doubleday, 1994. "Anchor Bible Reference Library." 2 vols. 1608 pp.

The popular press has touted this magisterial (a word I have never before used in a review!) work by the renowned Emeritus Professor at Union Theological Seminary as 'radical'. To the scholar, on the other hand, it reads as middle-road, or even 'conservative'. How are such different readings possible? The answer becomes apparent already in the long (89 *pp*.) introduction to the commentary itself.

In this introduction Brown lays out his approach and intentions. As a *commentary* the focus must be on the text as it stands. And for the author this means primarily the *intentionality* of the authors. On the one hand this focus necessitates a subordination of questions of historicity (that is, about Jesus as a historical figure) and of pretext traditions. Brown is as aware as any scholar that such matters are real and important. In fact, it seems to be the case that the author violates his asserted limitation, turning a number of times to historical issues, much to the advantage of his readers. The reader, however, who ex-

pects Brown to affirm the literal historicity of the Gospels, is doomed to frustration.

On the other hand, Brown also dismisses from his vision recent scholarly interest in structuralism or narratology. He acknowledges that the text may "convey" meanings the author did not "intend" (pp. 6-9), but such matters "are not a primary focus of this commentary. My concern is above all with the meaning that emerges from positing a general correspondence between what the author intended and what he conveyed" (p. 8).

It is this scepticism about the 'before' and the 'after' which earns him both 'radical' and 'conservative' titles. The press (which rarely seems to be aware of what actually goes on in scholarship) sees any work on the Gospels not centered on the 'historical Jesus' as radical and threatening. Current scholarship, which can be faddish and today is quite taken with complex theories of narratology, is likely to read Brown's treatment as a throwback to an earlier era.

One check upon excessive scholarly imagination Brown insists upon is his appeal to the likely sensibilities of the original audience of the texts. This introduces one of the strong assets of Brown's interpretations -- a common-sense appreciation of what a popular audience would or would not have 'heard' when the texts were read. Key in this approach is the author's view that a believer is not hearing or reading the story for the first time. "They would interpret what they hear through what they already know" (p. 10). This approach may "supply a control on the tendency of scholarly commentators" to read into the texts elaborate and overly subtle interpretations (p. 11). A critic might object that such reading reduces the possible profundity of an author to the lowest common denominator of the popular audience. In my judgment, however, such a control is needed and Brown's continued reference to this principle is one of the strongest weapons in his scholarly arsenal. As he would, I think, admit, the danger is always that such a reading may in fact eliminate profound intentions of the gospel author. This danger is perhaps borne out in his summary of the theologies of the various gospels. They tend to be straightforward readings of the narrative flow. Many contemporary interpreters of the gospel narratives will feel themselves locked out of legitimate appreciation.

The contents of the "Introduction" pertain largely to traditional issues of the interrelationships among the gospels. Who is literarily dependent upon whom? What sources are involved in the creation of

the present texts? While Brown is focused, of course, on the passion narratives, the material is a masterful survey of contemporary assessments and could serve as a helpful introduction to the general issue of gospel interrelationships. His general conclusions, based on the priority of Mark, are that Matthew and Luke are dependent upon Mark and Q but on no other specific narrative, and that John is likely independent of all of the synoptics.

The commentary proper, approached as a drama, is divided into four acts and appropriate scenes within each act. Each scene is often further divided into sections. All told, he isolates 32 sections in the entire narrative. For each section he provides a "literal" translation of the relevant portions of all four Gospels, and a "Comment" verse by verse. An "Analysis" of the material seen as a whole usually follows after several small sections.

The publisher has given the author the luxury of unlimited space. This means that Brown has the opportunity to deal with problems in the detail he feels is helpful. This reviewer, however, does not have unlimited space to describe Brown's judgments about the material. Suffice it to say that about most issues of interest to students of the material the author will inform completely and clearly what the issues are and why he comes to the conclusions he does. Comparisons among the Gospels are fulsome and the differences in the accounts are carefully noted and explained.

Despite his disclaimers, he continually turns to the issue of historicity. Did it happen as the narration says? Mostly not, since he assigns the narrations to tradition and composition. The theology of the gospel writer is present everywhere. Yet there is pre-gospel tradition and some historical memory is embedded in traditions. Thus Brown refuses to consign the historical question to the oblivion that much contemporary scholarship does.

In fact, Brown gives detailed treatments of many historical questions. For instance 70 pages are devoted to the unraveling of the knotty question of Jewish legal authority with regard to the trial of Jesus and to the related issue of anti-Judaism in the Gospels. He devotes attention to matters related to crucifixion -- e.g. how Jesus was attached to the cross and the physiological cause of his death. In an appendix, Brown wrestles with the vexing problem of the dating of Jesus' death. These historical investigations are models of clarity and present the full complexity of the problems without losing sight of the larger issue. They show at first hand a seasoned, historical mind which

refuses both to ignore difficulties or to indulge in flights of fancy. When this learned author thinks the evidence insufficient to reach probable conclusions, he says so.

No commentary can do everything. About matters of textual interrelationships, text and traditions, historical backgrounds, and authorial involvement in the stories, Brown's work is masterful. His wry humor pervades his discussions and makes the reading delightful.

What some will feel is missing is a more sustained and coherent view of a distinctive theology of each Gospel. In part this is due to the arrangement of the commentary; Brown has decided to place parallel passages side by side, rather than presenting each Gospel in order. This makes sense, of course, but it does make it more difficult for the reader to get a picture of each Gospel on its own. In part also, the missing dimension is due to Brown's skepticism about what he thinks are overly-subtle descriptions about authorial intention in much recent scholarship.

Raymond Brown remains an historian from beginning to end. Deeply wedded to a common-sense approach to traditions and their life and function in the nascent Christian communities he will not budge from his instance that one must interpret the Gospels from that history. If this stance earns him both 'radical' and 'conservative' labels, I suspect the author is proud of both! In any case, for anyone who takes seriously the narratives of the death of Jesus, whether viewed as salvatory and/or tragic, this commentary will be an appropriate discussion partner for a long time to come.

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*Shattered Dream: America's Search for Its Soul* by Walter T. Davis, Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994. 193 pp.

All books about human suffering are at least once removed from their subject. A review of such a book is twice removed. It is almost an insult to the suffering recorded in this book to say more about it than: "For America's sake, fellow Americans, read it!"

The dream shattered is America's, the place it shattered was Vietnam, and the Americans who experienced the shattering as a descent into the "heart of darkness" were our soldiers: that is the thesis of the book. Its moral judgment is that most of the rest of America has yet to listen to the cries of pain that still rage inside those who survived the war, "My country sent me to do evil and then hid from me because I reminded them of it."

Davis has not hidden from these veterans. He bases his book on hundreds of interviews with them and dozens of the books and films that portray their suffering in ways that only art can. Davis (Union M.Div. '61) is one of those theologians whose past might tempt some to assume that he must belong to the ranks of those American "patriots" who pressured the Smithsonian Institution recently into canceling its history lesson on the Hiroshima bomb. Raised in the southern Presbyterian Church and a longtime missionary of that church in Zaire, he knows the poignancy of the remark made to General Stonewall Jackson by a Confederate soldier struggling along at the rear of his column: "Ah hopes to God, General, that ah never loves another country." The remark has echoes in the bitter experience of many Viet-nam veterans, the only other group of soldiers in our national history who lost a war.

They want a country to love, however, and so does Davis, but the war experiences recorded here cry out for another kind of country than the one that sent two and half million Americans to fight this, our longest war. The country that sent them was sure of its good mission to the world. We were a national exception to the imperialist ambitions of the countries from which many of us emigrated. We were a "New World," founded on humane democratic principles, Lincoln's "last best hope" for a just and lasting peace. Such hope impelled Woodrow Wilson to say of US. entry into World War I: "When men take lap arms to set other men free, there is something sacred and holy in the warfare. I will not cry 'peace' as long as there is sin and wrong in the world." In this context, the violence of our fronsoldiers

frontier-ethic got converted to the cause of good against evil worldwide.

Vietnam veterans returned to a country likely to insist on the tenability of the same dream, but many of them could no longer entertain it. That dream died in the paddies and villages of Vietnam, as soldiers found themselves undertaking evil deeds that most wanted to forget but could not.Thousands, still living in our midst, have not recovered from it personally and, says Davis, the nation has not recovered from it, either. One remembers the rush to righteousness in President Bush's justifications of the Gulf War of 1991. "Putting Vietnam behind us" was the formula that brought joy to so many Americans in that crisis, as if by killing 100,000 Iraqis at small cost to the lives of Americans we could rectify the squandering of lives, wealth, and political myths in Vietnam.

Davis makes clear that the waste in it all occurred on many levels beginning with the internal sanity of a huge number of veterans. Three statistics alone from the book should bring pause to any reader tempted to brand these pages as unpatriotic leftism: At least 60,000 veterans (more than those killed) have committed suicide in the past twenty-five years; one in three of the homeless on our city streets is a veteran; and, of the two and a half million men and women who served in Vietnam, 800,000 suffer from what military psychiatrists call "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder."

To read this book is to understand the inner spiritual destruction that is the abiding legacy of the war for thousands of these survivors. Reinhold Niebuhr used to say that it may be possible for Christians to carry a gun, but they will carry it "with a heavy heart." For these veterans, it would be more accurate to say that they carried their guns until their hearts broke.

We are invited by the book to enter into their brokenheartedness, after the image of one said to "bear our sorrows and carry our diseases" in Isaiah 53. If we dare to take seriously this startling theological proposal, we may find ourselves facing with these veterans some deeply unwelcome truths about the United States of America: "What was 'wasted' in Vietnam," concludes Davis, "was the continuity of the American story. To face the demise of the American national identity was too painful then, and for most it is too painful now." It was so painful in the 1960s and 1970s that, once veterans had served their year in Vietnam, they returned to an America divided between those who blamed the soldiers for losing the war and those

who blamed them for becoming soldiers at all. Hardly a neighbor was ready to listen to the pain that these men and women brought home with them. For years many bottled up their memories, only to have the memories explode into self-destruction, alienation from family, and alienation from themselves. But the deepest alienation, the one most unwelcome to neighbors, was from the "American dream" itself.

My only major criticism of this important book is that, in the final chapter as Davis suggestively wrestles with his own hope for a new sort of American patriotism, he might have been wise to follow the method that rightly and powerfully dominates the rest of the book: letting veterans speak for themselves. True enough, many must speak more of pain at the decay of old visions than of any stirring of a new one. As Davis says in his last chapter, we all may now be living through a time of "exile," in between the country the veterans lost and the new one they wish they could return to. Perhaps the veterans are not up to telling us what a rebuilt American Jerusalem should look like. But to patient listeners, many are willing to say how the old dream betrayed them. Perhaps we will never find our way through the wilderness of a lost national identity until we learn to listen to this particular group of our neighbors.

I ended my reading of this painful book, in fact, sure that pastors and other leaders of the Christian churches of the land have a pastoral/prophetic task that few of us have ever been trained to undertake: to minister to hurt spirits of individuals and the hurt spirit of a nation at one and the same time. A certain tender toughness will be required in this task. Who does not resist being told that a trusted friend is a spouse-abuser, or a trusted business partner an embezzler? A lot of neurotic hostility from unrepentant patriots in our congregations can be expected in this ministry. Neither politicians nor voters among Americans find *repentance* a suitable medicine for ailing patriotism. But of what use is the Christian message to patriots if it does not equip them to face the unpleasant truths about their past? What is more a denial of love for our neighbors than a refusal to hear their account of the cost they paid for our collective folly?

Collective repentance is a concept hard to justify in the ears of most Americans, but it is not too late for religious leaders and political leaders to ask each other if there is any other way to recover from a traumatic evil past. Among Davis's most striking suggestions for an overdue political therapy is "bipartisan governmental admission of error, public confession by top-ranking

government and military officials, and a request that the vets forgive the nation for sending them to fight" the wrong war, in the wrong place, for wrong reasons, with wrong tactics, followed by wrong refusal of care for them. Even if he waited twenty-five years to do it, Robert McNamara has now carried us another step down the way of such confession. Anyone willing to endure the pain of reading *Shattered Dream* will be putting a foot to the same path .

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*The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Martha C. Nussbaum. Princeton University Press: 1994. 558 pages.

In her new book, *The Therapy of Desire*, Martha Nussbaum reflects on several themes in Hellenistic ethics and finds there some pertinent correctives for contemporary philosophers. Although the preponderate part of her book is devoted to interpreting selected Epicurean, Skeptic, and Stoic writings, her intent is not exhaustive story nor even systematic outline. She promises that her book "will be a somewhat idiosyncratic account of certain central themes, guided by an obsessive pursuit of certain questions—taking as its central guiding motif the analogy between philosophy and medicine as arts of life."(p. 6) That philosophy should reclaim a therapeutic function is the major corrective urged by the author; that Epicurean accounts of emotion and Stoic ideals of universal human dignity should contribute to this reclamation is her foremost historical claim.

Nussbaum is University Professor and Professor of Philosophy, Classics, and Comparative Literature at Brown University. Her training in Classics is evident in her uncommonly broad and nuanced knowledge of Hellenistic literature and philosophy. Judgments regarding the details of her textual interpretations are best left to scholars sharing her philological background. I shall assess her larger philosophical project which is the reassertion of the analogy between philosophy and medicine.Its classical expression is well exemplified by a quotation from Epicurus which introduces her book's first

chapter: "Empty is that philosopher's arguments by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated. For just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out the sicknesses of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul."(p. 13) Reclaiming philosophy's therapeutic function obviously involves acknowledging and responding to human suffering. Given the immensity of suffering in the contemporary world, and the moral urgency of its redress, Nussbaum does a real intellectual service by reminding philosophers of both their tradition and their vocation in this regard.

The book's title signals its thesis that the therapeutic arguments of Hellenistic philosophers anticipate the procedures of Freudian psychoanalysis. Indeed, the author provocatively argues that Epicureans first attended to the human unconscious in the practice of healing the soul--of alleviating the human unhappiness wrought by habitual behaviors and emotional excesses. Yet her text is delightfully free of psychoanalytic jargon, and even contains scant mention of Freud and his ilk. More importantly, Nussbaum avoids a banal reduction of Hellenistic ethics to psychotherapy by offering a precise philosophical description of therapeutic arguments. I summarize her account. Therapeutic arguments have the practical goal of bettering the persons they address—of making them healthier, happier, and more virtuous. They acknowledge people's particular circumstances, shunning philosophy's frequent pursuit of abstract generality by appealing more to personal values than to eternal laws. Although such arguments may be delivered to a numerous audience, they are directed at the health of individuals. As the Epicureans especially demonstrated, arguments on the medical model are likely to posit large communities as agents of noxious beliefs and values. The author rightly warns that this sort of individualism can devolve into a posture of resignation and indifference.

In therapeutic arguments the formal virtues of clarity, consistency, and simplicit are instrumentally apprised in the sense that their attainment, along with the whole rational procedure for achieving human flourishing, is not counted as part of the flourishing itself. Also, alternative views are considered only to the extent necessary to allow for the full efficacy of correct views; there is no presumptive valuing of diversity in belief. On the contrary, the philosopher\ doctor is assumed to be more knowledgeable than the student\ patient, and so the teaching relationship is portrayed as quite asymmetrical. Illustrative

of this point is how Epicurus was regarded by some followers as a "savior." (p. 119) Nussbaum sees the Epicureans as the purer exponents of therapeutic argumentation, yet she lauds the Stoics for their rational ethos of human dignity that makes the exercise of philosophical reason intrinsically valuable and reciprocally communal.

The organization of *The Therapy of Desire* is effected by a dramatic device of introducing Hellenistic philosophical schools by the agency of Nikidion, an ancient Greek female in pursuit of philosophical therapy. Diogenes Laertius says that there was a female pupil of Epicurus by this name. Nussbaum gives a fictional account of "Nikidion's polymorphous search for the good life" (p. 145) in which she sequentially encounters the leaders of the Aristotelian, Epicurean, Skeptical, and Stoic schools. This device insures that issues of gender are considered in each phase of the discussion of the analogy of philosophy and medicine. Questions of class rather consistently arise, while sexual orientation and race are rarely mentioned. The device reveals Nussbaum's philosophical aspiration of crafting thoughtfully distinctive interpretations while shunning radical positions and polemics. Her moderate temperament is likewise revealed in her critical appraisal of Michel Foucault's treatment of Hellenistic philosophers in the third volume of his *History of Sexuality*. He fails, in her judgment, to appreciate the importance of the commitment to reason in Hellenistic philosophy because he regards knowledge and argument as tools of power not categorically different from other practices for cultivating a distinctive sort of self. Behaving rationally makes a positive difference for Nussbaum.

Readers who enjoyed the author's most recent full length study, *The Fragility of Goodness*, will find in the present volume related topics and common virtues. In her previous book, Nussbaum recommended a conception of the human life that risks loss and grief by allowing vulnerability to circumstances beyond one's control, e.g., to external relationships of friendship and citizenship and to internal dynamics of emotion and sexuality. *The Therapy of Desire* most thoroughly assesses the risk and promise of anger and lust, inquiring whether Epicureans and Stoics were justified in saying that reason requires their avoidance and extirpation. Ultimately, Nussbaum refrains from affirming these extreme options, but not after judiciously weighing their arguments and granting more credence to curbing these feelings than much current feminist and psychotherapeutic theory would allow. A thoughtful resistance to liberal academic truisms is

one of the author's most commendable traits.

Having given this praise, I should qualify it in two instances where her resistance to academic convention, in my judgment, is not sufficiently forceful. Early in her exploration of the comparison of philosophy and medicine, Nussbaum writes about *logos* as the art of speech and writing:

> From Homer on we encounter, frequently and prominently, the idea that *logos* is to illnesses of the soul as medical treatment is to illnesses of the body. We also find the claim that *logos* is a powerful and perhaps even a sufficient remedy for these illnesses; frequently it is portrayed as the only available remedy. The diseases in question are frequently diseases of inappropriate or misinformed emotion. (p. 49)

Nussbaum shows her sympathies for this point of view when she praises Hellenistic authors for their effective philosophical speech and writing. She especially appreciates their incorporation of poetic, rhetorical, and narrative elements into their arguments. "Rigor and precision, they feel, are, while necessary, not sufficient, if philosophy is to communicate to more than a narrow elite." The warning against elitism here is apt, yet it does not recognize that the ancient Greek estimate of the curative power of philosophical and literary language is itself parochial and privileged. Contemporary psychotherapists who exclusively recommend "talking cures" perpetuate this bias in a new setting. It is disappointing that Nussbaum does not even acknowledge the phenomenon of "logocentrism" that Jacques Derrida has detected in the Western tradition beginning with classical tragedy and philosophy. Equally disappointing is her failure to admit that diseases of "inappropriate and misinformed emotion" may take on an altered and intensified virulence in a culture shaped by technologically sophisticated means of mass communication in service to a consumerist ethos, and that this new cultural situation may require more varied and radical therapies.

A second weakness in Nussbaum's book is her superficial and dismissive treatment of Hellenistic religions, including Christianity. (It is not unrelated to the first because religious conceptions and feelings are characteristically conveyed by more varied means than speech and writing, e.g., ritual gesture, visual imagery, musical forms, and so forth.) For instance, she excludes Platonism and Augustinianism from

her consideration on the basis of their commitment to the "idea of the radical independence of true good from human need and desire." She continues: "For both Platonists and these Christians, digging more deeply into ourselves is not the right way to proceed in ethical inquiry. For the possibility must always be left open that everything we are and want and believe is totally in error." Regarding the Christians she mentions, Nussbaum seems to imply that the Augustinian doctrines of sin and election make self-knowledge irrelevant to the Christian pursuit of a good life. Nussbaum's talent for nuanced interpretation clearly fails her at this point if she concludes that projects of self-knowledge are foreign to the author of the *Confessions*.

Nussbaum detects in Epicureanism some vestiges of the religious quest for transcendence. She finds these elements inconsistent with the Democritean atomism and the Socratic individualism that Epicureans profess to perpetuate. Specifically, she criticizes Epicurus and Lucretius when they associate human well being with a godlike stature. Surely present in the relevant sayings are traces of arrogance and authoritarianism; however, Nussbaum's lack of sympathy for things religious inhibits her from offering any more generous and productive interpretation. Lucretius associates godlike existence with the ability to "look on all with a mind at peace."(p. 216) Apprehensions of cosmic wholeness and transformations toward individual tranquility, he says, are the Epicurean's consummate experiences. Rather than see this transcendent impulse as rankly inconsistent with Epicurean denunciations of traditional, institutional religion, one might see it as the exhilarating fruition of a paradoxical apprehension of the world as a bounded whole. The paradox emerges because the apprehending agent is at once part of the bounded whole, yet transgresses its boundaries in the very experience of its apprehension. Lucretius finds antidotes to the fear of death both in the thought that human beings are part of a whole which endures through the passing away of its living parts and, at the same time, in the Platonist idea that immunity to changing desires is equitable with divine immortality. This suggests inconsistency and incomplete liberation from Platonic sensibilities.

This infelicitous duality is, however, also interpretable as an elaboration on the central paradox of apprehending the world as a bounded whole containing oneself. In this context its recrudescent Platonism is available for appreciative correction rather than the uncharitable dismissal that Nussbaum gives it. At one point, while discussing Lucretius' condemnation of erotic love, Nussbaum remarks

that this part of the Epicurean program offends contemporary sensibilities that have almost accorded such love the status of a "secular religion." In fact, I think that Epicureanism's transcendent impulse, as combined with its materialist cosmology and its irreligious polemics, originates a secular spiritual tradition in the West that defies the categories of both liberal secularists and traditional religionists. It is a tradition that receives multiform expression in contemporary America where increasing numbers of persons pursue spiritual lives outside the orbit of religious institutions. In my view, Nussbaum's predilection for linguistic therapy and her allergy to religious vocations prevent her from identifying one of the most provocative ways in which Hellenistic thinkers have anticipated current developments. Even so, her thoughtful book explores the analogy of philosophy and medicine in a way that cogently shows how Hellenistic philosophy merits contemporary attention.

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# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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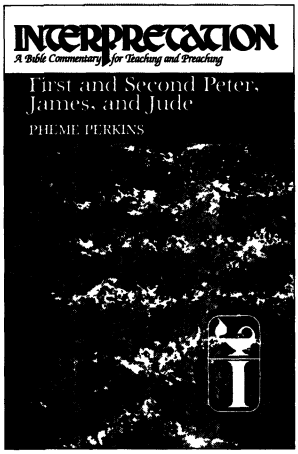


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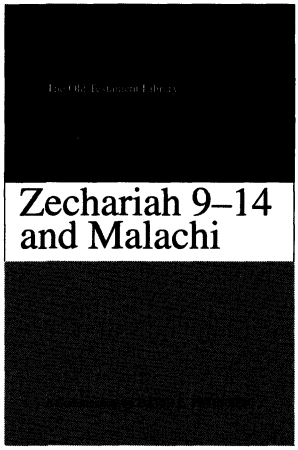


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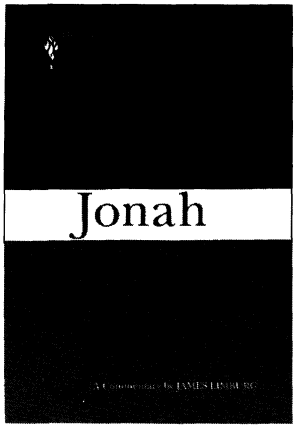


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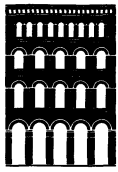

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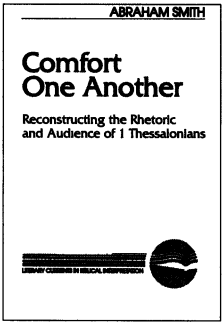


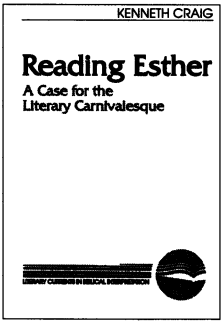


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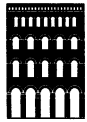

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