THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER

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Editorial Comment

Having done a Ph.D. dissertation on “The Origin And Significance Of The Interdenominational Theological Center” at Northwestern University in 1965, Dr. Bronson shares some of his insights with us in his discussion of The Significance Of The Interdenominational Theological Center in terms of its educational philosophy, ecumenicity, involvement in the black church, black culture, black revolution and the wider culture.

From his discussion, we can clearly see that The Interdenominational Theological Center is the fundamental focus of black theological education in America. The Center is concerned with the liberation of oppressed people, on the one hand, and with the reconciliation of all mankind, on the other hand. Therefore, we are very appreciative of Dr. Bronson’s concentrated effort to show “The Significance Of The Interdenominational Theological Center” in light of its impact on black theological education and on theological education in general.

Dr. Gayraud Wilmore in “The Black Messiah: Revising The Color Symbolism Of Western Christology” makes a significant contribution in appropriating the Christ paradigm to the existential meaning of blackness and black liberation. He constructs a christology, using the ontological significance of blackness as its point of departure, in an attempt to give both the black community and the white community an understanding of the relevance of the person and work of Christ in light of the condition of oppression, on the one hand and the need for both communities to involve themselves in the liberation of the oppressed, on the other hand.

Bishop Johnson in “The Need For A Black Christian Theology” shows that black theology is grounded in the christian witnessing community because it utilizes God’s revelation in Jesus Christ as its norm and point of departure. Bishop Johnson makes a much needed contribution to black theology in his attempt to demonstrate that its total methodological structural analysis is informed by the black experience. He challenges both black and white communities to be contemporaneous with Jesus in the quest for the actualization of liberation and reconciliation.

Dr. Robert C. Briggs in “Reflections On Ministry In The New Testament” discusses one of the most perennial and pressing problems facing biblical scholarship namely, relating the contemporary practices of ministry to the historical New Testament.

He makes it clear that the Holy Scriptures have persistently served as the point of departure for ministry. However, the question is posed “Why appeal to the New Testament as the basis for understanding and practicing ministry in the current situation?” This and other questions are sufficiently dealt with as Dr. Briggs examines such categories as hermeneutics, biblical authority, motifs of ministry in the New Testament, etc.

Dr. Warren Thomas Smith brings into focus the historical significance
of “Thomas Coke’s War on American Slavery.” His historical investigation shows the strong antagonism that Thomas Coke had against slavery and also his desire to seek spiritual and physical liberation for the slaves. Along with an analysis of Thomas Coke’s war against slavery, Dr. Smith also reveals the various anti-slavery stands various conferences of the United Methodist Church took.

On “The History Of The A.M.E. Church in Zambia,” Dr. Walton R. Johnson makes a great contribution to the historical and missionary value of the black church. Most major black denominations have missionary programs in Africa but, unfortunately, there hasn’t been an extensive amount of publication in this area. Dr. Walton R. Johnson’s article is a pioneering contribution in attempting to uncover the beginning, development and present status of the A.M.E. Church in Zambia.

Henry J. Young

Henry J. Young
The Significance of The
Interdenominational Theological Center

The emergence of the Interdenominational Theological Center has considerable significance for theological education in general as well as the educational needs of the black ministry. The significance of its impact is implied in the elements used to construct an educational philosophy. Its significance is seen in its contribution to ecumenicity and to the wider American culture.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Interdenominational Theological Center is in the unique position which affords it the opportunity to develop a functional philosophy of theological education for American Protestantism. The functional philosophy as suggested in this paper departs from the classical approach with its emphasis upon the transmissive impartation of information. While not denying the heritage, however, its focus is upon the tasks to be performed in the parish ministry. The tasks are not disconnected from the past and the “Given” inherent in the Christian faith, but placed into a living continuity with the heritage, the Gospel, contemporary culture and the Black experience. The I.T.C. takes into its curriculum the streams of real life flowing through the participating denominations and deals with the situational needs in terms of the impact of theology, ecumenism, scientific insights into human behavior and the culture upon pastoral function. To use the functional philosophy suggested in this paper means that the central concern is the practical performance in a real situation using bibliographic resources to interpret the meaning and the relevance of the Gospel to the situation in which the student in training finds himself. It means that the curriculum grows out of the dialogic continuity between the Christian faith and the problems the minister faces in the exercise of his ministry.

The significance of this philosophy for theological education is not that the I.T.C. can claim to be the seedbed for functionalism in seminary training, but that it joins a trend in theological education which relates the message of the Gospel to the cultural situation influencing the “functioning” and the “problemsolving” apparatus of the parish ministry.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR ECUMENICITY

It is important to note that a major interest in ecumenicity was not the primary motivating force which gave rise to the Interdenominational Theological Center. The denominations accepted the plan because it
rescued their dying theological institutions from utter obliteration and protected denominational interests while, at the same time, it provided an accredited seminary education. However, the emergence of the I.T.C. does provide a unique organizational facility for conversation and experience in ecumenicity. The very organization, life and work of the I.T.C. challenge the student to see the wider context of theological education and the manner in which his respective denomination participates in the ecumenical dialogue. The student is not simply exposed to ecumenical pedagogy, but actually participates in an ecumenical dialogue both in word, study and relationships that is facilitated by the organizational plan of the I.T.C.

Along with the students, sponsoring denominations have a new channel of communication across denominational lines in the origin and continued existence of the I.T.C. Mutual concern for the academic pursuits of the I.T.C. brings the sponsoring denominations around the conference table where ecumenical insights are more likely to emerge than would be the case if they remained in isolation from one another. However, the significance is more than conference table experience; the denominations are engaged in an interdenominational project during which the "wholeness" of the church can be momentarily experienced in actuality.

THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE BLACK CHURCH

The Black Church has been accused of being other-worldly, existing outside the mainstream of Protestant thought and experience, and lacking a meaningful theology and a real sense of mission. However, the emergence of the Interdenominational Theological Center gives evidence of a creative vitality at work within the black church. The participating denominations are being exposed to the mainstream of Protestant thought and theology out of which should develop a real sense of mission and a better balance between its decreasing "other-worldly" character and the temporal situation. The Black Church sees itself as having a prophetic mission to the mainstream of Protestant thought.

In addition to its ministerial training program, the I.T.C. also has a theological educational plan for laymen. This "laytraining" program not only acquaints laymen with contemporary Christian education theories and methodologies, but also with the meaning and importance of an effective lay ministry as the church. Through discussions and interdenominational experiences in the I.T.C. such concepts as ecumenicity, Koinonia, covenant community, people of God, priesthood of believers, and lay evangelism, come alive. Laymen are challenged to see the church in its "wholeness" and the relationships of their respective denominations and local churches to the ecumenical Church. The opportunity to study church history enables laymen to see the historic roots of the black church. The ecumenical Church of which blacks are
a part dates beyond slavery. The historic stream out of which the black church emerged began in the faith of the New Testament community in the life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The most significant aspect of the existence of the I.T.C. for the black church is the educational facility it offers for the theological preparation of the Black ministry. It is difficult for any group to rise higher than the vision of its leadership. The Interdenominational Theological Center provides an accredited theological education for the Black ministry which many would not have been able to receive otherwise.¹

Of further significance is the fact that the I.T.C. rescued four tottering schools from total termination. The four schools are: Gammon Theological Seminary, United Methodist; Morehouse School of Religion, Baptist; Phillips School of Theology, Christian Methodist Episcopal; and Turner Theological Seminary, African Methodist Episcopal. Through the mutual efforts of these four schools, The Interdenominational Theological Center was chartered in 1958. The Center’s plan of agreement which provides both for the Center’s own common property and the continuation of the four school’s as distinct identifiable institutions is the genius of the plan. The Center not only affords the continued identity of the schools and an accredited theological education, but also provides guidelines for future endeavors in interdenominational educational efforts.

What the denominations were unable to do singly they now do jointly. They did not have sufficient resources to develop and maintain competent training schools as individual denominations. The formation of The Interdenominational Theological Center provided a means for effective cooperative action capable of successfully meeting the obstacles that ordinarily must be surmounted in the operation of an accredited institution.

The most recent additions to The Interdenominational Theological Center are: Absalom Jones Theological Institute, Episcopalian; Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary, Church of God In Christ; and Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Declaring the significance of the Interdenominational Theological Center to be rooted in the meaning and importance of the Church to the Black people in the past and present as well as its potential for the future, Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen said:

The significance of this school is very vivid... Let me try to express it by an illustration. If an atomic bomb were dropped on Manhattan and destroyed Union Theological Seminary, it would not destroy theological education. It would be very tragic. It would result in the death of approximately a thousand faculty, student, and staff members, but it would not destroy theological education. Those prospects for study at Union would go on to Yale, Boston or elsewhere and theological edu-

cation would continue. Neither would theological education be destroyed if some catastrophe were to destroy any one of the denominational schools. If a catastrophe were to destroy I.T.C., it would be absolutely irrevocable and irreparable. There would be no other school to pick up and carry on the education of Negro ministers. There is no other school in the front rank in the education of the ministry for the Negro race.

It is interesting to note a striking parallel between this statement of Dr. Van Dusen and the statement regarding the significance of Gammon by Reverend A. C. Haygood in 1886.

**THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE BLACK REVOLUTION**

Joseph A. Washington accused the non-violent movement of being theologically inept. He questioned Martin Luther King's assertion that love is the regulating ideal of the civil rights movement. The dynamic of the present black revolution is anger, a burning desire for dignity, justice and equality before the law. The principle of love, says Washington, was imported, decorated with Christian trappings and added to the movement to control physical conflict and bloodshed.

In attacking what he calls King's syncretic religion, Washington declares:

> The error in syncretism is that it is blind to the honest differences inherent in various faiths. In seeking the lower common denominator among religions there is the risk of rubbing out the authentic dimension in each. This is the grave error of all Negro religion, and it is due to the lack of theology... the syncretistical element in King is due to the dominance of philosophy over systematic theology... Thus King, in the midst of the crisis, was in no position to add to the theological dimension—he was in need of a guide for action. As we have seen he turned in his need to the inspired example of Gandhi and the method of non-violence.

In making these assertions, Washington fails to realize that the demand for freedom and justice was characteristic of the prophetic faith of the Old Testament. This desire did not alienate the Hebrew prophets from God, rather they linked social justice to true religion as one of the outcomes of a living faith in God. There is also serious doubt concerning his charge that the Black church as a disengaged institution from the mainstream of Protestant thought is an alien institution. Does a lack of knowledge of Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Tillich, mean spiritual ineptness? Is a highly technical theology a pre-condition for the presence of the Holy Spirit? Was King in error for teaching love even if other motives were present? Did not Jesus and the Apostles, New Testa-

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2 Henry P. Van Dusen, “The Significance of I.T.C. As I See It.” Remarks by Henry P. Van Dusen, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Interdenominational Theological Center, delivered to the faculty of the Interdenominational Theological Center, December 8, 1964.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid, pp. 9-10.
ment writers, teach love to a community of persons who were capable of both love and hate?

While Washington's statements regarding the Black church and the civil rights movement may be inconsistent, naive and sometimes irresponsible, one of the significant outcomes of his study is the need for an adequate theological rationale for the civil rights movement. The importance of theology for the black revolution is that it keeps before the participants the meaning and relevance of the Christian faith for the aggressive correction of evil. Otherwise the movement degenerates into a fragmented activism lacking the direction of an eternal dimension and spiritual depth so necessary if the experience is to be redemptive both for the oppressed and the oppressor.

The significance of the Interdenominational Theological Center for the black revolution is that through its graduates, its extension program for laymen and in-service ministers, and institutes held throughout the participating denominations, the I.T.C. has the rich opportunity of strengthening the theological framework for the movement. By continuously showing that the Christian ethic roots in the Gospel and is a response of faith and gratitude to God's disclosure of Himself in history and that the Christian ethic calls for responsible decision-making and action in which the Christian faith is the determining dynamic, the I.T.C. may channel into the black revolution not only a theology, but positive attitudes toward a theological norm. Many of its graduates will return to areas of service where the struggle for justice, equality and dignity is in progress.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CENTER FOR THE WIDER CULTURE

The emergence of the Center speaks to the distorted images of the black community held in the wider culture. Through these images, the culture tends to see the inferior schools, churches, and the general life of the black community as an innate characteristic of Black people. These images often prevent the wider culture from perceiving the environmental manipulations that give rise to negative conditions which elicit and reinforce negative responses. The genius of the Black community is reflected in its ability to transcend these imposed barriers and produce a quality institution. The I.T.C. presents a more accurate image of the Black church and ministry to the wider American community. This new image facilitates real dialogue across racial lines.

The creative vitality within the black community could not find fruitful expression without those persons within the wider community who see beyond the negative images of the Black. The Interdenominational Theological Center would not have been possible if it had not received the unselfish and perpetual assistance from persons and agencies within the larger society. The Center, therefore, represents a new level of interracial cooperation.
In view of the changing times, the I.T.C. would limit its usefulness if it focused its attention only upon the needs of the Black community. With its competent interracial faculty, interracial and international student body, and excellent facilities, the Center can join with other seminaries throughout the world in promoting the educational process, and in providing a stabilizing religious faith in times of national and international crisis. It can help to sharpen the nation’s conscience, develop responsible attitudes, and improve moral conduct in all areas of life by sending into the American society and the world trained, dedicated ministers capable of making the Christian religion a vital, creative and transforming experience. However, before it can accomplish this task, it must be able to sustain itself in spite of the challenges that confront it.

SUMMARY

Inherent in the structure and operation of the Interdenominational Theological Center are elements that give rise to a functional philosophy. The Center's emphasis upon professional orientation in preparing for those performances necessary for an effective parish ministry in a time of rapid cultural change supplies the major basis for this philosophy. In adopting this approach the Center joins with an increasing number of seminaries taking a realistic approach to the functional problems of the parish in the context of the Christian faith.

While ecumenicity was not the primary motive that brought the Center into being, however, the organizational plan provides experiences in ecumenicity. The significance is not limited to conference table sessions, but includes the actual participation of the member denominations in an interdenominational cooperative undertaking. In such an atmosphere, the likelihood of ecumenical insights increases.

The Center represents creative stirrings within the black church. Laymen are exposed to concepts and experiences in the New Testament doctrine of the church and their relevancy to present concerns. Black ministers receive a competent theological education that would have been impossible in the unaccredited denominational schools. The Center preserved those schools while at the same time it provided quality education in an interdenominational setting.

The Center has a responsibility to the Black sub-culture. Black students from southern communities make up the overwhelming majority of the student body. They bring their background experiences to the Center for interpretation and clarification in the context of the Christian faith. The Center further relates to the sub-culture through the participating denominations. This relevancy is expressed not only in polity classes sponsored by the participating denominations, but also in the very life and atmosphere of the school. It is for this reason that the Center is in the front rank for the education of the Black ministry. The current focus is upon Black students; however, the Center is eager to
have students from all races and nationalities. The Center not only has the task of strengthening the theological framework of the civil rights movement, but it also has the unique opportunity to present a better image of the Black ministry to the wider culture. Its emergence witnesses both the creative vitality at work within the Black community and to the fruits of interracial cooperation. The combination of the creative forces operating within the Black community in dialogue with persons of the wider community who have real vision and concern have produced a theological school capable of rich contributions both to the Black community and to the larger American community.
By Gayraud S. Wilmore

The Black Messiah: Revising the Color Symbolism of Western Christology

In An Introduction To African Civilizations, Willis N. Huggins writes that “one of the earliest flares of the race and color question” is recorded in hieroglyphics on a huge granite stele erected about 2,000 B.C. by the Egyptian Pharoah of the Twelfth Dynasty, Usertesan III. It stood like a modern highway sign on the boundary with Nubia and contained the following advertisement:

No Black man whatsoever shall be permitted to pass this place going down stream (the Nile) no matter whether he is travelling by desert or journeying in a boat — except such Blacks as come to do business in the country or travelling on an embassy. Such, however, shall be well treated in every way whatsoever. But no boats belonging to Blacks, shall in the future be permitted to pass down this river.¹

In India, race prejudice may be as much as 5000 years old. Here we see blackness, as a contemptible color, being rejected by Indra, the God of Aryas. The Rig-Veda describes an invasion by the Aryas, or Aryans, of the land of a dark-skinned people. Indra is described as “blowing away with supernatural might from the earth and from the heavens the black skin which Indra hates.” The account goes on to tell how Indra slew the flatnosed barbarians,” and after conquering the land for the Aryas, he ordered the Anasahs to be flayed of their black skin with whips.²

During the Middle Ages Talmudic and Midrashic sources sought to explain Blackness with such suggestions as “Ham was smitten in his skin” or that Noah told Ham “your seed will be ugly and dark-skinned,” or that Canaan was “the notorious world-darkener.”³

Frank M. Snowdel in Black in Antiquity writes concerning the ancient Greeks and Romans:

“There was a belief in certain circles that the color of the Ethiopian’s skin was ominous, related no doubt to the association of the color black with death, the underworld, and evil. It was noted, for example, among omens presaging disaster that ill-starred persons were known to have seen an Ethiopian before their misfortune. An Ethiopian who met the troops of Cassius and Brutus as they were proceeding to battle was considered an omen of disaster. Among the events listed as foreshadowing the death of Septimius Severus was his encounter with an Ethiopian.⁴

²Gossett, Thomas F., Race: The History Of An Idea In America (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963) p. 3.
These and other evidences of color prejudice from very ancient times seem to cast doubt upon the allegation of some Western historians that prejudice against black skin color and African ancestry is of recent origin.

It is true that it was not until justification was sought for the African slave trade that what scholars today call racism developed. But to regard racism as only the highly-reasoned, pseudo-scientific theories of the natural superiority of whites over blacks which arose in the 19th century, seems much too limiting. Some people evidently assigned a pejorative meaning to blackness long before the beginning of African slavery — for whatever reason — and if the Bible itself seems relatively free of this prejudice it is only because the Jews, after many years of residence and intermarriage in Africa, were themselves a dark-skinned people by the time the Old Testament had been written. Victims of prejudice themselves, the Medieval Jews simply consigned black people to a lower status than themselves. It was not the Jews of the Old Testament period, but Jews and Gentiles of medieval Europe — especially of Northern Europe and Great Britain — who were repelled by black skin color and African physiogamy and gave renewed vigor to the color prejudice that had been sporadic and peripheral in the ancient world.

We ought not to be surprised therefore, when we come to the 19th century and find such opinions of black people as is cited by William R. Jones of an American divine, the Reverend Buchner Payne.

Now as Adam was white, Abraham white and our Savior white, did he enter heaven when he arose from the dead as a whiteman or as a negro? If as a white man, then the negro is left out; if as a negro then the white man is left out. As Adam was the Son of God and as God is light (white) and in Him is no darkness (black) at all, how could God then be the father of the negro, as like begets like? And if God could not be the father of the blacks because He was white, how could our Saviour "being in the express image of God's person," as asserted by St. Paul, carry such a damned color into heaven, where all are white, much less to the throne?5

There is no point in wrangling over what is meant by racism, either ancient or modern. If one prefers one skin color over another, whether white over black, or black over white, with the implication of aesthetic, genetic or cultural superiority, the seeds of racial prejudice are already present. Racism waits in the doors. And when that preference is not simply a natural, almost subconscious ethnocentrism, but a self-justifying concomitant of economic, political and cultural domination and exploitation, color prejudice is raised to the level of an ideology that stretches from a rather benign "racial thinking" to full-blown racial hatred, brutality and potential genocide. That is an all too human phenomenon — a fact of human sin. It exists with or without sophisticated theories and systematic rationalizations. It can be conscious or

unconscious, continuous or sporadic. But it is racism and it goes far back into human history, although its classic expression and prototype is White European Christian racism which reached its most developed and pernicious form during the period of African slavery in the New World.

One suspects that the argument of the anthropologist Ruth Benedict that white racism is of recent origin and limited to pseudo-scientific theories of racial purity, is a well-intentioned liberal attempt to make the white rejection of blackness and African ancestry a secondary and peripheral characteristic of Western civilization. She seems to want to say that most white people are not as prejudiced as they seem and have only been so a short time. But the dychotomy of whiteness and blackness, and the imputation of positive value to the former and negative value to the latter, is deeply etched into the consciousness of the white people of Europe and America. Rather than something “unnatural” and peripheral to Western civilization it is of the essence of this civilization and, in modern times, has been elevated almost to the status of an ontological reality. God himself is white for Western man and the Christian faith, inextricably bound in its development to the history and culture of the great Western powers, is a white religion — a religion of, by and for white people. That is not a fantastic idea concocted by fanatical African priests and storefront preachers to persuade their people to resist white domination. It is not some wild allegation dreamed up by the Rastafarians or the Black Muslims. It just happens to be the simple, unadorned truth about what has been given to Black people as Christianity and something white people themselves believed.

Roger Bastide in a brilliant analysis of color symbolism in Western Christianity writes:

Although Christ transcends all questions of race or ethnology, it must not be forgotten that God incarnated himself in a man of the Jewish race. The Aryans and the Gentiles — even the most anti-Semitic — worship their God in a Jewish body. But this Jewish body was not white enough for them. The entire history of Western painting bears witness to the deliberate whitening or bleaching effort that changed Christ from a Semitic to an Aryan person. The dark hair that Christ was thought to have had come to be rendered a very light-colored, and his big, dark eyes as blue. It was necessary that this man, the incarnation of God, be as far removed as possible from everything that could suggest darkness or blackness, even indirectly.

His hair and his beard were given the color of sunshine, the brightness of the light above, while his eyes retained the color of the sky from which he descended and to which he returned. The progressive Aryanization of Christ is in strict accordance with the logic of the color symbolism. It did not start, however, until Christianity came into close contact with the other races — with the African race, in particular. Christian artists began to avoid the darker tints in depicting Christ in order to remove as much as possible of their evil suggestion.6

In the book *The Dark Center: A Process Theology of Blackness*, Eulalio R. Baltazar makes this further comment implicating Calvinism and later Protestantism in this conspiracy of color symbolism:

To see the transference of the black-white symbolism from the theological to the economic, the key concept is that of election. In the theological sense, white skin came to mean the possession of grace and spiritual poverty, the "voluntary and stubborn abandonment of race in sin."

Under the influence of Calvinism and later Puritanism, however, the notion of election became secularized to mean economic and material success. The whiteness or blackness of the skin accordingly came to have a secular meaning also. Thus whiteness of skin came to symbolize material, scientific and technological successes while blackness of skin came to be equated with a prescientific mentality, with economic poverty and with ignorance.  

II

In the face of this evidence of the religious and psychological depths of the consciousness of color in Western culture it is impossible to suppose that the calamities African peoples, and those who have descended from them, have suffered at the hands of white people is not related, in some significant measure, to the various combinations of superiority feelings, fear, sexual attraction and repulsion, guilt, contempt and hostility that many whites experience in the presence of blackness.

Black color and calamity cannot be separated in the history of the West. As the boys I grew up with on the street corners of North Philadelphia used to say:

- Dark man born of a dark woman sees dark days,
- Rises up in the morning like a hopper-grass,
- Cut down in the evening like asparagus.

This harsh truth is authenticated over and over everyday for the masses of black people. It forces us, in our search for a way out of the meaninglessness and absurdity of the inseparable connection between blackness and oppression, to discover at the most profound depths of our religious sensibility something that reinterprets that historic coherence. Instead of creating for ourselves the sentimental illusion that the coherence does not exist (for the sheer intensity of reality in a white world makes that assumption impossible) we can create a new meaning for the coherence of color and calamity. Instead of attempting to whitenize blackness and make it a symbol of something other than the unjust suffering and oppression it has always meant to blacks (as opposed to the evil and degradation it signifies to whites) we can perceive blackness as a symbol of the human struggle against the sterile, oppressive "whiteness" of the principalities and powers. Thus, blackness takes

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on positive theological meaning grounded in the experience of the human struggle for liberation and redemption.

This reinterpretation of the color symbolism of Christianity has been a consistent principle of radical Black religion. In a similar way blacks in Africa, the United States and the Caribbean made Christianity satisfy the most immediate and existential requirements of their sanity and survival. Black religionists refashioned the preaching, teaching and worship style of the missionaries to make it suit their needs and to cohere with whatever was left of their African belief systems and religious disposition. This was, however, never as radical a theological transformation as black theologians are inclined to make today. Only a few black leaders like Bishop Henry M. Turner of the AME Church and Bishop George Alexander McGuire of the African Orthodox Church had the intellectual courage and prophetic zeal to speak of a Black God, or to attempt a basic revision of the color symbolism of Christianity. Most had been so smitten by the white symbolism of the culture that dominated their conscious and subconscious life that they could not personally authorize a structure of religious belief that gave blackness a positive and constructive meaning without falsifying daily experience.

But today, as the masses of black people in Africa and the Caribbean area come into political independence and self-determination for the first time in almost 500 years and as black people in North America search for the roots of the culture of survival they created during slavery, a new possibility opens up. A new structure of meaning is now possible for blackness that not only transforms the external or physical features of economic, political and cultural life, but can also transform the inner life of the people through a reinterpretation of Christian symbolism. As Newbell N. Puckett noted:

The mere fact that a people profess to be Christians does not necessarily mean that their Christianity is of the same type as our own. The way in which a people interpret Christian doctrines depends largely upon their secular customs and their traditions of the past. . . . Most of the time the Negro outwardly accepts the doctrines of Christianity goes on living according to his own conflicting secular mores, but sometimes he enlarges upon the activities of God to explain certain phenomena not specifically dealt with in the Holy Scripture.⁸

If indeed the God of the oppressor and the God of the oppressed is the same God, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, he cannot truly reveal himself as the God of the oppressed until he identifies himself with the condition of their oppression and their yearning for liberation. When Moses and Aaron went to the people to tell them the message that Moses had received in the land of Midian the Scriptures tell us, "And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped." (Exodus 4:31)

III

God reveals himself in solidarity with the affliction of the oppressed by the revelation of his Son, Jesus Christ, as the Oppressed One of God. Although the slaves did not articulate this as a “Black Theology” in the terms we know it today, they recognized themselves in the description of the Lord’s Servant in Isaiah 53. Generations of the oppressed have pondered the meaning of the Suffering Servant of God in relation to their own condition, but none more consistently than the sons and daughters of Africa — the black people of the world. Black people have been struck, not only with the similarity of what seemed to be their inexorable fate as a race and the Messianic vocation of suffering, but also with the profound, if not exact correspondence between their experience of blackness in Western civilization and the description of the Messiah.

He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...

And we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53:1-3).

Not even the story of the Exodus from Egyptian captivity, the Scriptural prefigurement of Black emancipation in the 19th century, suggested the identity of Biblical prophecy and the historic experience of the black man in the West as clearly as these passages from Isaiah:

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut out of the land of the living. (Isaiah 53:7-8)

It is the symbolic meaning of blackness in relation to redemptive suffering, and not the claim that Albert B. Cleage makes for the actual skin color of Jesus, that gives warrant to our designation of Jesus as the Black Messiah. To call Christ the Black Messiah is not to infer that he looked like an African, although that may well have been the case considering the likelihood of the mixture of the Jewish genetic pool with that of people from the upper Nile, Nubia and Ethiopia. Nor are we implying, by calling him the Black Messiah, that other people may not find it meaningful to speak of Christ as the White Messiah, or the Yellow Messiah, or the Red Messiah! Indeed the American Indian lay theologian, Vine Deloria, has recently written a book entitled God Is Red.9

To speak of Christ as the Black Messiah is rather to invest blackness in Western civilization, and particularly in the United States and South

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Africa, with religious meaning expressing the preeminent reality of black suffering and the historical experience of black people in a racist society. But more than that, it is to find in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection a theological explanation of all suffering, oppression and an ultimate liberation. To speak of the Messiah figure in terms of the ontological significance of the color black is to provide both black people and white people, if the latter are open to the possibility, with a way of understanding the relevance of the Person and Work of Christ for existence under the condition of oppression, and to call both the Black and the White Church to the vocation of involvement in the liberation of the oppressed in history.

Certainly one would have to admit that the symbolic power of this Christological formulation has not yet been fully disentangled from the difficulties it poses, nor has its theological, ethical and liturgical possibilities been fully explored. That is the future work of black theologians and others who are drawn to what this radical thinking about what Christ can mean for the American churches, if not for Christians in situations of domination and exploitation everywhere in the world.

In the meantime, perhaps the most serious challenge to the implications of this concept is presented by the black humanist philosopher and theologian, William R. Jones of Yale Divinity School, whose book *Is God a White Racist? A Premble To Black Theology*, makes the contention that any theodicy which presumes that black suffering under oppression is redemptive either denies the existence of God or makes him a demon.10

I do not think that the Christian nonviolent philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr. or a specific interpretation of black suffering such as the *Politics of God*, by Joseph Washington, satisfies the demands of the Christology I am proposing. Jones' objections are cogent with respect to both of these theologians. This is not the place to review the argument he makes. Rather I will set forth my own approach to the problem that is raised by Jones and attempt to defend the concept of the Black Messiah as the most meaningful way to understand and proclaim the Cross as God's eternal presentation of the judging and gracious presence of the oppressed in the world.

IV

Jesus comes to us as the Oppressed One of God. He comes not only to atone for our sins, but to destroy the power by which Satan rules the world and to bring to an end the contradictions and conflicts that have been introduced into human life since the fall of man. That was the Messianic work and that was what the Apostle Paul referred to when he wrote in Colossians 1:19 — "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all

10Jones, op.cit., p. 9.
things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

One reconciles that which is estranged or in conflict and throughout the New Testament witnesses to the fact that the conflict is not merely personal and interpersonal, but is cosmic in scope.

How long, will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because men said, He will not see our latter end. (Jer. 12:4)

And II Peter 3:13 tells us that “according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

From whence comes this cosmic estrangement and conflict which is taken up, experienced and then cancelled out and destroyed in the Cross of Christ? It arises because of our disobedience, because we have dared to be like God rather than the men that we are. Even the law was not able to reconcile the Creation. It was rather God's gracious judgment upon our sinful, finite human existence that in both our highest moral attainment under the Law and in our deepest sinfulness, apart from it, we remain frustrated, incapacitated, broken by an intrinsic imperfection symbolized by the difference between heaven and earth, the creature and the Creator.

“So I find it to be a law,” writes Paul, “that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:21-24)

He is not speaking here merely of the physical form of flesh and blood. What is this “war,” this “body of death” but symbolic representations of experience itself, of existence in conflict with itself, of a universe in bondage to decay? It is in this world of conflict and contradiction that the good must perforce suffer, revealing the fatal deficiency in all human virtue, and evil must prosper only to destroy itself by the very consequence of its success.

This is what reveals the inescapable anguish and doom that is the inevitable harvest of both man’s powerlessness and power, misery and exaltation. The Bible tells us that this is what life is really like for all men, saints and sinners alike. “Everything before them is vanity,” Ecclesiastes has written, “since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean . . . This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:1-3) This is the inexplicable conflict which Paul saw in his own life and found written into the very structure of the creation which groans in travail waiting for its redemption.

There is, of course, a mystery about man’s responsibility or irresponsibility for this condition of life upon the earth. The problem between
guilt and finitude has been debated for centuries and there is still no easy solution. This is the paradox of the Book of Job and before it, the paradox of Adam and Eve who, as human creatures made in the image of the God who gave them life, yearn for the fullness of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil — a tree, let us remember, good for food and a delight to the eyes! (Gen. 3:6) And yet, tempted by Satan rather than by evil designs of their own, they taste its good fruit only to receive banishment and death. Paul wrestles with the paradox and mystery of this strange contradiction under the law of the Creator.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin . . . the very commandment which promised life proved to be death for me. (Rom. 7:7-10)

It is in this life of conflict, where both goodness and evil, sin and sinlessness, oppression and liberation seem to cancel each other out and, in this incapacity, unable to deliver human existence from the closed circle of futility, that God has made man a little lower than the angels. Into this life Christ comes in human flesh. The meaning of the Incarnation is that God himself chooses blackness in solidarity with his imperfect sinful creatures by entering into their historical existence at a given time and place — in the reign of Caesar Augustus, when Quirinius was governor of Syria and Herod the king of Judea. By becoming black, which is to say by suffering oppression and death, God reveals to mankind the nature of its life in a fallen world and his decision to be identified with both its willful self-assertion and its virtuous and frustrated hopes, forever. If blackness is made to stand for conflict, oppression, suffering and death, we may say that God became black! In the symbolism of the liberation Christology, God became black in order to show that blackness is the ultimate reality for all men and that the final reconciliation of blackness and whiteness, of the oppressed and the oppressor, of death and life, is not in man’s making of history, but in God himself.

What then is the meaning of the earthly struggle of the oppressed for liberation? Is it all a mirage, a divine hoax, a cruel joke? No, because in the anguish and suffering of the struggle itself the oppressed come to the revelation of the meaning of existence on earth and of their gracious union with the Oppressed One . . . “to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” (Ephesians 3:9). And in the anguish and suffering of that same struggle the oppressors come to know the judgment of God upon their sinful attempt to become gods over their fellowmen. In that judgment is the possibility of their salvation . . . “for this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.” (I Peter 4:6)
The most profound meaning of the liberation of the oppressed is the consciousness of the meaningfulness of the struggle for life and hope and the vindication of their determination to be human beings conformed to the command of God to be free for him. That is the significance of Christ’s words from the Cross: “Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.” In God’s hands is perfect freedom. Now the stage is set for the manifestation of the liberation of the Oppressed One in the resurrection and exaltation. That is the ultimate liberation, for without diminishing the significance of historical freedom, political, economic and cultural liberation can only refer penultimately to an incomplete and fragmentary experience which inevitably yields to the temptation to exercise mastery over others. Thus, historical freedom has its own rewards and temptations.

Nevertheless, we discover the real meaning of the Cross in the struggle of the oppressed for liberation. Even though Christ went ostensibly to the Cross without resistance — the lamb of God led unprotestingly to the slaughter — the Cross represents God’s struggle against the principalities and powers of this world. It represents, therefore, man’s oppression by the contradictory existence he is destined to live in his sinfulness and finitude.

In the suffering of the struggle for liberation both the oppressed and the oppressors are given knowledge of the judgment and the grace of God. But the Gospel must be preached! When the struggle is related to God’s liberating activity in Jesus Christ the oppressed receive the transforming revelation of the meaning of their humanity and the joy of their gracious incorporation into the Oppressed Man on the Cross. And the oppressors, for their part, are drawn into the ambience of God’s purpose to reveal his judgment and grace in the Cross. In the resistance of those who are oppressed and the futility of the struggle to keep them oppressed, the oppressor discerns, through the Gospel, the power of the humanity of the oppressed as the judgment of God upon his unauthorized mastery. Therefore, the oppressor who seeks to dehumanize others is himself humanized by the revelation of the limitation of his own power and the demystification of his false security in it. When the Gospel is proclaimed to the oppressor and God acts for the freedom of the oppressed, the grace of God frees the oppressor from his deluded self-aggrandisement and, through restitution and reparation, gives him also the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation as the consequence of repentance.

VI

In this construction of a theological framework for understanding the Cross in its relation to the struggle of the oppressed, I have attempted to show how the concept of the Black Messiah clarifies the meaning of the crucifixion in the context of Western civilization, where blackness
symbolizes oppression and whiteness must therefore symbolize the arrogance of dominating power.

The Cross is the eternal manifestation of God's identification with the conflict and oppression of man's sin and finitude, man's blackness. In the grace and judgment which flows from the Cross of Jesus, as the Oppressed Man of God, the Black Messiah, both the oppressed and the oppressor, both the angels and the principalities and powers, are judged and given the hope of liberation and reconciliation beyond lightness and darkness.

The chastising judgment and gracious hope which God sets before us in the death of his Son, is not something we experience beyond history, but is the actual experience of our historical existence. Just as the truth of Good Friday awaited the resurrection event of Easter morning, the transhistorical truth of the liberation of all mankind from the oppression of blackness and the delusion of whiteness awaits the ultimate consummation of the purposes of God for his whole creation. But in the meanwhile, black liberation is a real experience. That is where Jones' error lies. In the midst of suffering and conflict, the wretched of the earth, typified in Black Theology by the humiliated and exploited people of color, experience liberation by the power of God's saving word. This liberation ultimately transcends political, economic and cultural freedoms, but it nevertheless, includes them. The historical experience black people have had of Emancipation as both an event and a continuing process, confirms this contention.

But it is the struggle against oppression itself that I have emphasized. Understood in the light of the Person and Work of Christ as the Black Messiah, the struggle we have carried on for 400 years has freed black people to be human beings in solidarity with the oppressed and liberated Son of God. In that struggle we have received the assurance and joy of our incorporation into his vocation of redemptive suffering for the whole creation, and we come to the Cross bringing our oppressors with us, to find there our mutual reconciliation and redemption.

White racism has been one of the most endemic features of the white societies of the West. Black skin color and calamity have seemed to be inseparable in this civilization. It has been the prototype of all oppression based on ethnic, class, cultural and religious differences. But God has not foresaken black people nor rendered their struggle absurd. It may well be that he has given them the key to the real meaning of oppression and liberation through the Cross of Christ.
The Need for a Black Christian Theology

Black Theology is a systematic interpretation of the meaning and significance of the Christian Faith for the worshipping, witnessing, and proclaiming Black Christian community. It seeks to analyze the condition of the Black man in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Its purpose is one of creating a new understanding of the dignity of Black men and women as children of God. Black Theology is Christian Theology precisely because it utilizes God's revelation in Jesus Christ as its point of departure and also as a norm for the interpretation of the meaning and significance of human existence. Black Theology is a theology of, by, and for black people which has come out of their experience in America. It is a way of looking at God, the life and the teaching of Jesus Christ, self, and the world in the light of the Black Experience. Black theology emerged as a reaction against the so-called classical theologies which have been unable to realistically and authentically relate to the theological implications of the black experience; it is a reaction to the refusal of white theologians to come to grips with the theology of the disadvantaged, the disenfranchised and of the oppressed. Black theology, in essence, affirms the centrality of the Scriptures. In this affirmation it calls for reinterpretation of the Scriptures, whereby they can be seen not only as supporting the struggles for justice, freedom, and human dignity in times past, but also as a norm for the same endeavors in times present and for all times to come.

What do white American and European theologians of a white racist dominated religious establishment know about the soul of black folks? What do Barth, Brunner and Tillich know about the realities of the black ghettos or the fate of black sharecroppers' families whose souls are crushed by the powerful forces of a society that considers everything black as evil? Could these white theologians see the image of the crucified Lord in the mutilated face of a rat bitten child, or a drug addict, bleeding to death in a stinking alley?

We have learned that the interpretation of Christian theology and of Jesus Christ espoused by white American theologians is severely limited. These white scholars have never been lowered into the depth of the black experience of reality. They never conceived Jesus Christ walking the dark streets of the ghettos of the north and the sharecroppers' farms in the deep south without a job, busted, and emasculated. These white theologians could never hear the voice of Jesus Christ speaking in the dialect of blacks from the southern farms, or in the idiom of the blacks of the ghetto. This severe limitation of the white theologians' ability to articulate the full meaning of the Christian faith has given rise to the development of black theology.

White theologians did not appreciate nor understand the "soul" ex-
pressed in the religion of the black man — his religious style, warmth, compassion, practical wisdom, artistic and emotional freedom. What is the meaning of the word “soul” within the context of the black Christian experience? Soul is the strength to survive in a hostile environment; to break through the legal and social conventions which tend to dehumanize and degrade. Soul is the ability to use creatively the destructive powers of a racist American society for the development of a tough faith, an undying hope, and unconquerable love. Soul is power that has its source in one’s self and God; a power which gives one strength to survive a thousand calvaries and to rise out of the social and ideological graves into which one has been cast. Soul is life — an abundant life — a life that is able to weave into its fabric the diverse threads of human existence into some meaningful and harmonious pattern.

Soul is love, a strong rugged and victorious love; a love that can endure the thousand and one shocks that life is heir to; a love as strong as steel and yet as gentle as a mother’s touch. Soul is victory born in the bosom of defeat, yet triumphant in and through it; a victory which overcomes and outlasts the world; a victory that triumphs over death, hell, and the grave. Soul is freedom, freedom to express one’s self, restrained only by God’s purpose and Christ’s love. It is the freedom to be “me,” to accept one’s self as a distinctive and unique part of God’s creation. It is the freedom to live in union with the man Jesus, to grow in his likeness, to be rooted and grounded in his love and to mature in his fellowship. The white theologians’ style of life which is structured, ordered, unfeeling, scientific and objective did not equip him with the tools or the capacity to enter into the warm and vibrant world of the religious experience of the black man.

The Commission on Theology of the National Committee of Black Churchmen has issued a statement on Black Theology. In this document, black theology is defined:

“For us, Black Theology is the theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity. Black Theology is a theology of “blackness.” It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says “No” to the encroachment of white oppression.”

The black scholars are indebted in a measure to white theologians. They have learned much from them. However, the white theologians in their interpretation of the Christian faith have ignored the black Christian experience. Many have felt that this black Christian experience was devoid of meaning and therefore could be omitted in their exposition and interpretation of the Christian faith. To be sure, this was a grievous error. The omission of the black Christian experience by white interpreters of the Christian faith meant that the message of the Christian
faith thus interpreted was oriented toward the white community and therefore this message had nothing significant to say to the black man who is now struggling for identity and dignity.

Black theology is deeply rooted in the Holy Scriptures, and especially in that section, the New Testament, which contains God's supreme disclosure in Jesus of Nazareth. It is informed by the best in biblical and historical criticism, church history, history of Christian thought, and the great theological systems of the past and present. Black theology reflects an intimate knowledge of black history and culture, black literature and music, contemporary sociology, psychology, and history, black poetry, and the more significant writings of recent black protest thought. Black theology is corrective and seeks to fulfill that which has been lacking in the major theological systems of our day. It addresses itself to the situation of the black man today which is white racism. James Baldwin describes the situation of American life today as: "some great, great, great wound (which) is in the whole body, and no one dares to operate: to close it, to examine it, to stitch it." The black theologian dares to operate, seeks to examine, to close, to stitch it, and from his efforts, strives to bring healing and liberation to black Americans and the nation.

The methodology of black theology is determined by the specific and unique task of black theology, namely, to explicate the meaning and value of the Christian faith for black Americans who are the victims of oppression in this white American racist society. The black theologian must interpret the nature and the meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of the oppressed blacks so as to demonstrate that this gospel will minister to the community of the oppressed. Black theology begins with the existential situation in which oppressed blacks exist and seeks to determine the message of Christian gospel in this situation of oppression.

THE NEED FOR A NEW INTERPRETATION
OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

One white perceptive theologian, Kyle Haselden, has observed that "The white man cleaves Christian piety into two parts: the strong, virile virtues he applies exclusively to himself; the apparently weak, passive virtues he endorses especially for the Negro. 'Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely' belong to the white man; 'whatsoever things are of good report' belong to the Negro. The white man takes the active and positive Christian adjectives for himself: noble, manly, wise, strong, courageous; he recommends the passive and negative Christian adjectives to the Negro: patient, long-suffering, humble, self-effacing, considerate, submissive, childlike, meek."}

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White theology has not presented blacks with good theological reasons why they should not speak out against this gross perversion of the Christian faith. White theology has not been able to re-shape the life of the white church so as to cleanse it of its racism and to liberate it from the iron claws of the white racist establishment of this nation. White theology has presented the blacks a religion of contentment in the state of life in which they find themselves. Such an interpretation of the Christian faith avoided questions about personal dignity, collective power, freedom, equality and self-determination. The white church establishment presented to the black people a religion carefully tailored to fit the purposes of the white oppressors, corrupted in language, interpretation and application by the conscious and unconscious racism of white Christians from the first plantation missionary down to Billy Graham.

The great paradox in the black man's religious experience is that he embraced the Christian faith. In the providence of God the Christian gospel was held before the eyes of the black man. He saw himself not as a contented manageable thing designed to serve a superior white man. He saw in the mirror of the Christian gospel the true image of himself, the image of a man. He saw himself as a person the one for whom Christ had died and thereby possessing the dignity and rights of the liberated man. The black man ploughed into the Scriptures for himself and though limited in training and deficient in language he wrestled with the word of God with prayers, songs and total self. He attacked the source of knowledge believing that if he asked he would be given the answers about the deep things of God and of man; if he knocked the doors of wisdom and knowledge would be open to him; if he would seek he would discover that priceless truth on which his life depended.

The question must be asked, what were the causes which moved the black man beyond his primitive mystic to the creation of a new type and a new kind of religious expression. Why did he not continue the beating out of the complex rhythm on tom toms and drums while he uttered his cries of desperation and hopefulness. We believed that at the precise time, the psychological time there was fused into the vestiges of the African music the spirit of the Christian faith. The blacks had been introduced to a preverted and distorted interpretation of the Christian faith and this Christian faith though imperfectly presented was discovered to be by the blacks the precise religion for the conditions in which they found themselves. Far from their native land, customs and traditions; despised, brutalized, degraded and slaughtered by those among whom they lived, separated from their loved ones on the auction block, experiencing the cruelty and unmercifulness of a psychotic slave master, the black man embraced the Christian faith and interpreted it to be a religion of liberation and compensation. For the black man the Christian faith was a religion of reversal of conditions of the rich and the poor, the proud and the meek, of master and servant. It was this
interpretation of the Christian faith which produced a body of songs which gave voice to all of the basic virtues of the Christian faith—faith, hope, love, courage, freedom, emancipation, liberation and victory. The black spirituals are songs of liberation. They expressed faith in God the All Sufficient one who saved Daniel from the lion’s den, preserved the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and liberated the Jews out of bondage in Egypt. It was this faith that enabled the black man to survive physically and spiritually more than 300 years of slavery, and more than 100 years of second class citizenship since the Emancipation Proclamation.

One wonders why this new, original and novel interpretation of the Christian faith was not appreciated, recognized and embraced by the white church establishment and the theological schools of this nation. This new and fresh interpretation of the Christian faith which came out of the life and witness of the black community was more or less overlooked, ignored and judged illegitimate and subhuman by the white establishment of this nation. The reasons for this judgment of the white establishment is rather obvious. To elevate and articulate the Black Christian experience by white theological technicians would have inevitably resulted in the elevation and appreciation of the Black Americans who produced this new interpretation of the Christian faith. It would further have meant that the Black man in America would have to be glorified culturally and elevated socially and economically. The Black preacher and the Black community would have to be accepted on a new level. The white American cultural ego would not permit this. At the very bottom of this, one will discover the realities and depth of racism. It is a racism which expresses itself in opposition, exploitation, exclusion and segregation; all geared to support the false ideology of white supremacy.

The acceptance of the Christian Faith by Blacks required the surmounting of the offense of the corruption and distortion of the faith by the white theological establishment. The scandal and offense of the twentieth century for Black Americans is that the white church establishment would promote segregation and discrimination; and do this in the name of God; that the white theological establishment would develop a theology that ignored the black presence and the Black experience and at the same time claim to be universal and all inclusive; that the names of God and Jesus Christ would be used to bless the carnival of slaughter and enslavement of Black men; that God’s will was as thought to be synonymous with the will of the white racists; that God had created an inferior race to serve the master white race; that God had given the white man the authority to exploit the poor and the wretched of the earth; that God had condemned to eternal damnation peoples of color and that this God is the Christian God was both an offense and a scandal to blacks. The faith of the Black man had to overcome this offense and scandal of theological thinking about the
nature of God.

To overcome the offense of the 20th century black Americans were assisted by new interpreters of the Christian faith— the emergence of black theologians. Martin Luther King, Frantz Fannon, Malcolm X, Stokley Carmichael, James Cone, Joseph Washington, Deotis Roberts forced the black theologians to ask a whole new set of questions about the Christian faith and the interpretation of this faith by the white theological establishment of this nation. Is it possible to interpret the Christian faith adequately and ignore the fact of blackness; the black presence and the black experience? What is the relevance of the interpretation of God, Jesus Christ and man for black liberation and freedom in the theological systems of Barth, Brunner, Tillich? What are the priorities one will discover when he examines critically the mission and message of Jesus Christ? What were the causes which were championed by Jesus Christ with such a commitment that the misunderstanding of his disciples, the opposition of the political establishment, the sufferings and death of Calvary could not turn him around?

With his mind set, the black theologians have searched the Scriptures, examined the traditions, evaluated the theological systems and have presented to the world under the title “black theology” a new and revolutionary interpretation of the Christian faith.

One of the peculiar advantages available in Christianity was that it provided a ready-made culture and a ready-made tradition for a people who had been brutally separated from their own. The Christian God was active in history. He involved himself in human affairs. He delivered Israel from bondage. Were the black slaves themselves not in the hands of Pharaoh, and would not God deliver them? If God was just and if God was merciful, if God was on the side of the oppressed, then must not they be the chosen of God? Who else could better qualify! The germ of an idea was sown; an idea that was destined to reach theological refinement in the apologia of the black revolution in the sixties and the development of black theology in the seventies.

The black Christians identified themselves as the people of God, but they did not attempt to substitute the history and the traditions of the Jews for their own. Like the Jews, they chose God and conceived themselves as chosen by God because of their understanding of the nature of the love of God and the character of his righteous justice. While there have been some minor cults which found the appropriation of a synthetic Jewish culture less anxiety-producing than the search for, of the development of their own, mainline black Christianity pursued a singular development which eschewed the easy make-believe of the black cultists and confounded the expectations of white Protestantism as well. The theology they fashioned was not the theology they received, for the theology had been comprised in the sin of slavery. An attempt to make its tortuous morality prescriptive for the conduct of Christian slaves owned by Christian masters sacrificed whatever moral and spiri-
tual validity it might have possessed. By contrast, black theology was from its inception the theology of liberation, bringing good news to the poor in spirit and freedom to the oppressed — which, it seems to me, is what true Christianity was always intended to do.

THE NEED FOR A NEW CHRISTOLOGY

The need for the development of a theology which addresses itself to the peculiar situation of the black man’s existence in America is evident when one considers the interpretation and understanding of Jesus Christ which has been projected by the white theological establishment. Jesus Christ has become for the white church establishment the “white Christ,” blue eyes, sharp nose, straight hair, and in the image of the Black man’s oppressor. The tragedy of this presentation of Jesus Christ by the white church establishment is that he has been too often identified with the repressive and oppressive forces of the prevailing society. The teachings of the “white Christ” have been used to justify wars, discrimination, segregation, prejudice, and the exploitation of the poor and the oppressed people of the world. In the name of this “white Christ” the most vicious form of racism has been condoned and supported. The image of this “white Christ” has prevailed to the extent that the black, brown or red people of the world, who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, were denied full Christian fellowship in the white church establishment and were neither accepted nor recognized by it.

The black man’s introduction to this “white Christ” was a catastrophe. Vincent Harding reminded us that the black encountered the American “white Christ” first on the slave ships that brought them to these shores. The blacks on the slave ships heard the name of this “white Christ” sung in hymns of praise while they died, chained in stinking holes beneath the decks, and locked in terror and disease. Those blacks who leaped from the decks of the slave ships saw Christ’s name carved on the side of the ship. When black women were raped in the ships’ cabins by white men, they must have noticed the Holy Bibles on the shelves.

The “white Christ” of the white church establishment is the enemy of the black man and this accounts for the quest for the black Jesus which has engaged the attention of some black scholars recently. The black preachers and scholars were compelled to present a new interpretation of Jesus Christ and his teachings. They were forced to look at the teachings of Jesus Christ in the light of their own black Christian experience and discover what these said about the realities of their own lives. The task of the black scholar was clear. If Bultmann’s task was to demythologize the New Testament, then the black scholars had to dethelogize their minds of the racist ideas which had crept into their interpretations of Jesus Christ, and to see and understand him in the depth of his full humanity.
The central and creative force in the Christian life and witness is Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew. The early Christians believed that in Jesus' life and teachings, death and resurrection, God made his final and decisive revelation to man. Men of all races were able to discover God and felt his presence in the person, word, spirit, life and deed of Jesus Christ. The belief in Jesus Christ as God's revelation to the world and to men became the nucleus around which the Christian community developed and the source of its ideas about life and ultimate reality. The Christological titles in the New Testament are expressive of what men found in the life of this man Jesus. The members of the early Christian community believed that in the life of this man Jesus, man's deepest needs are met, man's ultimate concerns are satisfied, and man's disturbing questions are answered. Men of all races could turn to Jesus Christ and see in his life — reflections of themselves. Man's ultimate question, "Who and where is God and what is he doing," was answered in Jesus Christ.

The basic problem which confronts black Americans today in their redundant quest for liberation and human dignity is racism. In order to discover a solution to this problem, one must understand what Jesus Christ, God's ultimate revelation in human form, has to say about it, and how his message has been woven into the black Christian experience. The need for an interpretation of the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ for the black Christian community is urgent and necessary. It is necessary in the sense that the interpretations of Jesus Christ by white scholars are conditioned by their own commitments to the communities, secular and Christian, that have fashioned and shaped their lives. The interpretations of Jesus Christ and his meaning for religious living that were given by Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg reflect not only their individual analysis of the documents of the New Testament and their competence in the areas of the history of Christian thought and philosophy, but also their biases and the biases of the Christian communities out of which these scholars grew and emerged. Their interpretations of the meaning of Jesus Christ and his significance for religious living were addressed to these communities. There is a dire need for an interpretation of Jesus Christ which has emerged out of the black witnessing Christian community, and this is for many reasons. Many blacks, especially the young intellectuals, have rejected the stereotyped interpretations of Jesus Christ which have been tailored and fashioned by the theological technicians who did not appreciate the black Christian experience and did not share the hopes and aspirations of the young blacks today. Blacks who reject this "white Christ" are not only convinced of his irrelevancy and unauthenticity, but also that the Christian Faith no longer has its saving word for them.

It is the conviction of many black theologians, however, that the Jesus Christ presented in the Four Gospels of the New Testament is
relevant and does speak a saving, liberating word by deed and event to and for the aspirations of the black Christian community today. Today black men are not concerned basically about survival, but about liberation. It is believed by many black theologians that the interpretation of Jesus Christ which made possible black survival is not the interpretation needed by the black man today as he struggles for liberation and human dignity. Jesus Christ as the embodiment of patience, forebearance, long-suffering, forgiveness, non-violence, and submissiveness no longer appeals to the blacks today. Whereas these characteristics are certainly to be found in Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the Four Gospels, there are other attributes of this same Jesus Christ which must now come to the forefront if he is to have for this generation of blacks and whites the saving and liberating word.

It is believed by many black theologians that liberation and reconciliation were the aims and the goal of the life of Jesus in the world. Liberation and reconciliation express the essential thrust of his ministry. The stage of his ministry was the streets. His congregation consisted of those who were written off by the state. He ministered to those who needed him, "the nobodies of the world," the sick, the blind, the lame and the demon possessed. He invaded the chambers of sickness and death and hallowed these with the healing words of health and life. He invaded the minds of the demon possessed and in those dark chambers of the night he brought light, sanity and order. Jesus ministered to men in their sorrow, sin and degradation and offered them hope and light and courage and strength. He offered comfort to the poor who did not fit into the structure of the world. Jesus comforted the mourner and offered hope to the humble. He had a message for the men and women who had been pushed to the limits of human existence and on these he pronounced his blessedness.

The people who received help from Jesus are throughout the Gospels on the fringe of society — men who because of fate, guilt and prejudices were considered marked men; sick people, who must bear their disease as punishment for crime or for some sin committed; demoniacs, that is those possessed of demons; the lepers, the first born of death to whom fellowship was denied; Gentiles, women and children who did not count for anything in the community and the really bad people, the prostitutes, the theives, the murderers, the robbers. When Jesus was pressed for an explanation of the radicalness of the thrust of his ministry his answer was simple and direct. "Those who are well have no need for a physician but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

The greatness of Jesus is to be found precisely in the way in which he makes himself accessible to those who need him, ignoring conventional limitations and issuing that grand and glorious welcome— "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."
Through a critical examination of the black Christian experience Jesus Christ is understood to be the Son of man, Son of God, suffering servant, the Logos, the Christ, integrative personality, cosmic mind, unique idea, but more significantly Jesus is the Liberator. Jesus the Liberator is the ghetto bred lad of Nazareth who grew up in the rough and tumble of life. He was acquainted with suffering, pain and anxiety and felt the relentless pressures of oppression and repression. He grew up in the bosom of the world and was therefore acquainted first hand with the relentless conflicts which were the daily experiences of men.

This tough Jesus early in his ministry cast his lot with the weak, oppressed and exploited peoples of the world. The essential thrust of his ministry was one of liberation in which he believed that he had been anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to give sight to the blind and to give liberty to those who are in chains. He confronted men with God's eternal "Now." Liberation and reconciliation are the two foci of his ministry. He gave men liberty and showed them the path of reconciliation in the world.

Jesus the Liberator is not only the supreme reformer of human nature. He is not merely the physician who heals this and that infected patch of humanity. Jesus the Liberator is not only the rebuilders of waste places. Jesus the Liberator is all of this and more. He is the source and giver of life. In Jesus the Liberator blacks believe that the very creative life of God stepped forth on the human platform to create a new mankind — God's new creation.

Jesus encountered evil as a sinister force and in his every act he reached over and beyond it to deal with the tyrannical powers behind it. There was in Jesus that which constituted a ceaseless assertion of power against the entrenched powers of this world, not merely of truth against power. He attacked bastions of wrong, and his very being and essential selfhood was a decisive offensive against sin, evil and corruption. His mission in the world was militant and revolutionary and designed to change and transform the existing order of things. His own personality was the source of this revolutionary change by which the malignant powers were to be disposed.

In the long range he had come to bring peace, but not before the baptism of conflict and fire. Only after this conflict could he hold out in his bleeding triumphant hands his everlasting gift to the world — peace. Until evil had been conquered and driven from the field and the aggressive and oppressive powers made his footstool, he was and is the militant and revolutionary Jesus, the Liberator.

Jesus, the Liberator and Reconciler entered the world not to merely make a passing visit but to transform and grasp the historical movement and keep it in his hands. We should not lose heart or be discouraged if he is temporarily engulfed by the hatred of men and fastened to a cross. He did so only to conquer the world and return as the victorious and
triumphant one. If for a moment the grave is to claim him, and confine him within its narrow walls, he will free himself through the open door made by God, and come forth shouting: “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.” This is the black man’s Liberator, the tough, emancipating, liberating, disturbing, saving Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Saviour of men.

We are challenged to continue in our world Jesus’ ministry of love, liberation and reconciliation. We must recognize that to be a Christian is to be contemporaneous with Jesus the Liberator. To be sure, to be a Christian is not to hold views about Jesus but rather to become a contemporary with Jesus in his ministry of suffering and humiliation and love and liberation. To be a Christian is to be committed to the man Jesus in spite of the world’s rejection of him, in spite of Christendom’s betrayal of Him, and in spite of the social and intellectual stigma involved in accepting and following him. To be a Christian is to stand with Jesus and participate in his ministry of love and liberation at the crossways of the world where men are crucified on the crosses of poverty, racism, war and exploitation. To be a Christian is to try again to introduce Christianity into Christendom and to set free again the powers of the love and liberating ministry of Jesus the Liberator and Reconciler.
Reflections on Ministry in the New Testament

I. INTRODUCTION

The attempt to relate the contemporary practice of ministry to New Testament structures of thought represents a complicated undertaking which encompasses the broad scope of the fields generally identified as biblical and practical theology. This occasion provides an opportunity, therefore, to consider some aspects of the relationship between these theological disciplines.

The effort to correlate the work of biblical and practical theology must begin at the level of presuppositions. The problem focuses most sharply upon the definition of appropriate foundations for the task. This setting does not permit a review of the process through which biblical and practical theology have achieved their current understanding of their individual tasks. However, when the effort is made to correlate these two fields of endeavor, two issues come immediately to mind which call for some consideration, namely, the problem of biblical authority and the issue of hermeneutical procedures.

1. The Problem of Biblical Authority

In the Christian community the New Testament constitutes a — in the vast majority of cases the — basic point of orientation for understanding ministry. Obviously, this reliance upon the New Testament arises out of certain assumptions concerning biblical authority. Apart from these assumptions there would be little reason to interpret contemporary ministry in the light of New Testament perspectives. In some instances in the past history of the church it appears that inherited ideas regarding the function of the Bible in the life of the church have been adequate. However, the tumultuous events of the past two centuries have called for greater precision regarding the issue of biblical authority. Indeed, the fundamental question which confronts both biblical and practical theology at this juncture is this: Why appeal to the New Testament as the basis for understanding and practicing ministry in the current situation? Although we often assume that responsible answers to this question are available, these answers are frequently less satisfactory than we suppose.

Paradoxical as it may appear, the concept of biblical authority is nebulous in many segments of the Christian community. This fact is often
attributed to the development of historical-critical modes of research during the past two centuries. However, the issue lies more deeply imbedded in the life of the church than such an explanation allows. In fact, we must candidly admit that the church has never produced a compelling statement regarding biblical authority which has been adequate for the total Christian community for an extended period of time. This fact can be explained in part by the apologetic nature of such statements, i.e., these statements are inevitably formulated against certain points of view concerning the scriptures. When the crises pass the statements regarding biblical authority sooner or later lose a measure of their original force. Also, it may be that the perennial recurrence of the issue of biblical authority may be traced in part to an unfortunate choice of the term to describe the role of the scriptures in the life of the church, namely, the choice of the term “authority” itself. The frequency with which major publications dealing with the question of biblical authority have appeared in recent years documents contemporary concern with the problem. As the titles of these works show, “scripture” and “canon” have unfortunately been widely used as synonymous terms.

While the Christian community has not succeeded in creating a final statement concerning the precise role of the Bible for its life and ministry, it has, nevertheless, persistently ordered its life according to these writings. As Professor Ernst Käsemann once remarked, “It is simply a fact of history that wherever and whenever the Christian community has gathered together, it has done so around the scriptures.” Hence, a paradox has marked the life of the church throughout much of its history: The attempt to define the nature of biblical authority has often resulted in a deficient description of what the church has actually felt compelled to do by its own theological intuition.

In the face of this disheartening ambiguity regarding the role of the scriptures in the life of the church, what reasonable counsel can be advanced, since the church shows no inclination to abandon its historical stance? Certainly, it is not the purpose of this discussion to propose yet another alternative answer to the question of biblical authority. It may be that the reference to the complexity of the question can serve the purpose of this discussion. At the same time, two suggestions may be appropriate here. First, the attempt to relate contemporary ministry to New Testament models and perspectives must sooner or later deal with underlying assumptions concerning the nature of biblical authority.

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Second, practical theology fulfills its theological responsibility to the extent that its proposed patterns and structures of ministry remain consistent with its deliberate and implied assumptions regarding the nature and function of the scriptures.

2. The Problem of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics — the science that deals with the total phenomenon of the transmission of meaning — confronts a problem inherent in human communication. The phenomenon is complicated at the simplest level, as the effort to make oneself "understood" to a friend demonstrates. It is further complicated when the content of the communication is expressed in written form. The phenomenon is further complicated when the author and recipient of the communication are separated by barriers of language, culture, time, and world view. An ultimate dimension of complexity occurs when the document just described is said to represent religious authority. This extended description refers, of course, to the basic contours of the hermeneutical task of contemporary biblical interpretation.

Like the problem of biblical authority, the hermeneutical issue is as old as the scriptures themselves. However, the rise of historical consciousness in modern times has immeasurably enhanced the awareness of the scope of the problem. Since the time of Karl Barth — many would say Friedrich Schleiermacher — the hermeneutical question has not even been temporarily laid to rest.

When practical theology enquires concerning the meaning of the New Testament for contemporary ministry, it raises a primary hermeneutical question. In some respects, practical theology proposes to provide the appropriate laboratory in which hermeneutical assumptions are tested and clarified by reference to the life and work of the church. The consequences of this procedure can be illustrated by reference to a particular example in the traditional stance of the church concerning the life and work of Jesus.

Throughout most of a Christian history the church has derived its model for ministry from the biblical narratives of Jesus' life and work. His words, deeds, perspectives, and attitudes have constituted the basic points of reference for defining ministry. Prior to the rise of critical methodology little objection to this procedure was possible. However, as is well known in this circle, modern biblical scholarship has largely discredited this approach. The discovery of the theological character of the Gospels — documented most forcefully in the work of redaction criticism — clearly precludes the use of the Gospel accounts in this manner. It is clear that we do not have biographical accounts of Jesus' life and work and cannot, therefore, use the biblical writings as authentic representations of Jesus' attitudes, perspectives, and motivation. With the recognition of this fact an entire epoch in biblical and practical theology came to its conclusion, particularly with respect to the use of
the New Testament as a source for defining the mode of contemporary ministry.

Any attempt to provide specific solutions for the problems related to biblical authority and hermeneutics would transcend the structure and purpose of these discussions. At the same time, every interpretation of Christian ministry in our time rests inevitably upon basic assumptions concerning biblical authority and hermeneutical procedures. Perhaps the awareness of this fact provides an appropriate background for subsequent reflection.

II. THE STRUCTURE OR LOCALE OF MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Modern biblical scholarship has often assumed that the way to understanding lies along the path marked by exhaustive analysis of words. Consequently, attempts have been made to analyze the root meaning of stems apart from the context in which they function. The study of the New Testament concept of ministry has largely followed this pattern. To be sure, the detailed exegetical commentaries have appeared in German, French, and British circles still provide a wealth of necessary information. The almost completed German series, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (10 volumes)—now available in English under the title, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament—incorporated the theological dimension of the study. The fruits of this work have been widely disseminated and repetition of this material here would represent an exercise in recapitulation.

The New Testament concept of ministry can also be understood by reference to the offices or ecclesiastical structures which are indicated in the New Testament writings. However, this field, too, has been well plowed in modern times. It is difficult to do more at this point than catalogue the results of this work.

In this discussion we shall approach the New Testament concept of ministry from a point of view which differs in some respects from those described above. It may be helpful to indicate the essential outlines of this approach. In the first place, we are concerned with the idea of "ministry" rather than "the" ministry, i.e., we are concerned with the ministry as the expression of Christian selfunderstanding rather than ministry identified with ecclesiastical structure. Second, we assume that New Testament writings reflect thought and practice at various stages of Christian history and in a variety of geographical locations, i.e., New Testament writings reflect the diversity that marked the history of the early Christian community. Third, the intention here focuses upon the effort to hear what the New Testament actually says. For, as Professor Kümmel has aptly indicated, "The scientific concern with the understanding of the New Testament must, precisely when it is pursued in the context of the church and from the presupposition of faith, take account of the fact that we can come to a believing hearing of the message of the New Testament in only one way: namely, by seeking to make the utter-
ances of the New Testament understandable, just as their contemporary readers or hearers could or had to understand them. Hence, there is no other access to understanding of the New Testament writings than the method of historical research which is valid for all writings of antiquity."

Although such a limitation precludes any serious effort in the area of hermeneutics, it represents the indispensible point of departure for correlating contemporary ministry with the New Testament. Finally, the hope here is that we may be able to grasp a bit more than the material explicitly expresses, i.e., at the edges and beyond the concrete expressions of New Testament writings we may become sensitive to implications and assumptions that do not come to full expression in the New Testament material. For, as Professor Bultmann has pointed out, "The science called New Testament theology has the task of setting forth the theological thoughts of the New Testament, both those that are explicitly developed (such as Paul’s teaching on the Law, for example) and those that are implicitly at work in narration or exhortation, in polemic or consolation." For example, numerous words express some dimension of the idea of ministry in the Old Testament, such as *sharah,* kalah, shamas, avad, etc. Likewise, diakoneō, therapeuo and leitougeo, represent only a few words related to the idea of ministry in the New Testament. However, the New Testament concept of ministry cannot be understood by compiling the meanings of these individual words. Rather, we must enquire concerning the implications and listen for the overtones of that which is never brought to full expression in these explicit statements.

I. The Place (*topos*) of Ministry in the New Testament

Some basic ingredients of the New Testament concept of ministry are to be found in the qualifying contexts in which they occur. One such important qualification is expressed by the word *topos,* place. Since *topos* appears in various strata of early Christian tradition concerning ministry, it is helpful to consider its basic connotation.

The characteristic force of *topos* appears in a well-known passage in Acts: In Acts 1:24-25 we read, "You, O Lord, know the hearts of all men. Show us, therefore, which of these you have selected to receive the *topos* of the ministry (*diakonias*) and apostleship from which Judas went down to his own *topos.*" In this prayer the apostles are concerned with the *topos* of ministry which Judas has forsaken to descend to his own *topos.* Primary emphasis is customarily directed to *diakonias* and *apostoles* in this verse. However, both words appear in the genitive case and serve as qualifying adjectival descriptions of *topos* The author is primarily concerned with the *topos* of ministry.


†Because of limitations of printing facilities it has been necessary to transliterate Hebrew and Greek characters. Apology is hereby made to the reader for this inconvenience. (The editors)
The underlying force of *topos* can be seen in Greek secular usage. Aristotle said that *topos* indicates a “fitness” or “appropriateness” for something. For example, *topos, oikias*, a place of dwelling, refers to a place that is appropriate for habitation rather than merely to a building in which a person resides. *Topos* frequently translates the Old Testament term *makos*. According to the Old Testament idea, God takes the initiative in designating the place of worship. For example, God chose Palestine (Jerusalem) as an appropriate place of cultic worship. The New Testament reflects this perspective in many strata of its concept.

Luke's emphasis upon the role of the apostles and the centrality of Jerusalem is well known. However, both language and subject matter in Acts 1:24-25 indicate that Luke is using material that assumed its form in the primitive Christian community (Jewish Christian church). Thus, the idea that God designates both the *topos* of service and the *topos* of punishment corresponds to important strata of Old Testament thought, particularly with the redactor of Deuteronomy.

Paul's writings also reflect a similar understanding of *topos*. In Romans 15:25 he writes that he no longer has a *topos* in these parts. Although *topos* is often understood here as a reference to a geographical region, i.e., he had run out of space, it is more likely that he is indicating that he has exhausted his “opportunity.” Accordingly, he is expecting God to designate another *topos* (opportunity) for service. In this sense, Acts 23:11 — the Apostle's vision regarding Rome — also indicates that God assumes the initiative in determining the structure (*topos*) where the Apostle is to render service. Similarly, in Romans 12:19 Paul counsels the Roman Christians to refrain from attempts at self-vindication but rather to give *topos* for wrath because God himself has designated his own *topos* for vindication of his cause.

Finally, the book of Hebrews contains interesting parallels with the thought of Luke and Paul. Since the tradition in Hebrews seems to represent an independent tradition in New Testament thought, it too, may reflect elements of earliest Christian thought. In describing the function of the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:7), the author claims, “If the first (covenant) had been without flaw (defect), a *topos* for the second (covenant) would not have been necessary (required or sought).” Apparently, the problem had reference to an appropriate opportunity for achieving God’s religious purpose. Also, Hebrews 12:17 asserts that Esau was rejected when he desired to receive his father’s benediction because Esau could not find a *topos metanoias*. In other words, Esau’s rejection arose out of the fact that the place of repentance is determined by God's initiative rather than by men's changing attitudes.

Revelation 2:5 further confirms the force of *topos*. Speaking in the name of God, the author warns the church at Ephesus to repent or, “I will come and remove your lampstand out of its *topos,*” i.e., you will forfeit your divinely appointed opportunity for ministry because of it (*topos*) will no longer be accessible.
The references indicated above are taken from widely separated strata of early Christian thought. They reflect two basic emphases that appear to be common to the early Christian perspective. First, *topos* refers to a designated opportunity for divine service. Second, and more important, it is assumed that God assumes the initiative in designating the opportunity. However problematic or foreign the latter emphasis may be for the modern mentality, it appears, nevertheless, to reflect the early Christian point of view. Furthermore, investigation shows that this assumption is present in other contexts which do not explicitly express the idea.


A. "Higher Authorities" (Romans 13:1-6)

Romans 13:1-6 has challenged interpreters as persistently as any passage in the New Testament. Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to subject themselves to the authorities of "higher" rank or status (*huperechousiai*). For, as Paul explains, the existing authorities (*ousai ekousiai*) have been structured (arranged in their place of function) by God himself. Furthermore, this order of existence is itself God's minister (*theou gar diakonos*). Without identifying the intricate problems contained in this passage, it is nevertheless interesting that one element of thought already encountered with reference to *topos* also occurs in this passage, namely, God assumes the initiative in determining the structure in which ministry is rendered. In this instance, the structure itself — the Roman government! — represents the point of reference for achieving God's purpose, i.e., God ministers to his people through the structure of the political organization.

B. The Church. Ephesians 4:11-12

It may be helpful to consider a fourth strata of early Christian tradition that deals explicitly with the concept of ministry. The deutro-Pauline book of Ephesians contains a specific reference that is instructive for the concept under consideration.

According to the author of Ephesians, both the church and the structures within it represent creations of the Lord of the church (Ephesians 4:11). Indeed, as Lord of the church his lordship is evident precisely in his activity within the church (Ephesians 1:22), since the structures of the church are designed to prepare the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:12). It should be noted that ministry in this context refers to the entire Christian community,\(^6\) rather than to the official ecclesiastical orders of the church.\(^7\)

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It may be fitting at this point to return to the point of departure by way of review of the results of our discussion. First, four basic strata of early Christian tradition — the primitive Christian community, Paul, Luke, and one segment of deuto-Pauline thought — witness to a common perspective regarding the *topos* of ministry, namely, the *topos* is created by God himself who assumes the initiative in creating it. Such a perspective does not imply that God thereby became the source of authentication for sociological structures — either ecclesiastical or political — which, in fact, exist within the empirical church. Rather, these structures (orders) seem to provide the occasion or points of reference for discerning the divine intention. Consequently, various *topoi diakonias* appear in New Testament writings. This point of view may reflect a kindred perspective in the Old Testament which understands unbelieving nations as *topoi diakonias*, i.e., as instruments of God’s ministry for his people. Therefore, a specific *topos* is qualified by the character of ministry for which it becomes the occasion. It is therefore possible to distinguish between this perspective and that which developed later where ecclesiastical concerns focused attention upon the authority of the office rather than upon the nature of ministry. Finally, ministry in these strata of Christian tradition is consistently understood in terms of God’s active involvement. This involvement does not represent a kind of “leasing” activity by which God allocates responsibility for work in whose ultimate outcome he maintains continuing interest. Rather, in some sense of the word, God is understood to be identified with the ministry in such a manner that he actually carries out the ministry, i.e., it is really God’s own ministry.

This summary overview can only call attention to one assumption that seems to be characteristic of widely divergent strata of New Testament thought. Further investigation provides confirmation of the results of this limited work. The difference between this set of assumptions and the prevailing patterns of modern thought merely point to hermeneutical questions which call for serious thought. If it is appropriate to conclude this segment of our discussion with a question that is neither purely critical nor strictly hermeneutical, it might be phrased in this manner: Is there significance in the discovery that biblical writings seem to focus attention upon the *nature* and character of ministry while current concern appears to emphasize the work and problems of *the ministry?*

### III. PATTERNS OR MOTIFS OF MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Each generation faces a variety of issues regarding the style or pattern of ministry. Some of the basic problems arise out of the twofold necessity of adherence to scripture and at the same time responding to current mentality. In our time, “doing ministry” seems to express the general consensus. Obviously, this slogan embodies the response to an earlier era in which theologians and preachers were largely content to
"talk" about ministry. In both instances the pattern of ministry expresses a comprehensive theological orientation.

One important result of modern biblical research can be seen in the changed perspective of the Christian community regarding the meaning and role of the scriptures in the life of the church. The New Testament has been used traditionally as a kind of ready-made manual for ministry. Blueprints were thought to be readily available in the alleged biographical and historical material of New Testament — Old Testament as well — writings. As is everywhere evident, modern biblical study has effectively closed the door to this procedure.

Although biblical research has precluded the continued use of biblical material as mere biographical and historical information, it has nevertheless opened the door to exciting new ventures for the appropriation of the scriptural message. One primary element of this expanded awareness concerns the discovery of the theological character of the scriptures. Indeed, it has become clear that theological motifs provide the substantial foundation for the historical and biographical forms which appear in the Bible. These theological motifs represent a rich and meaningful source for interpreting ministry in our situation. From the numerous motifs which appear in the New Testament, two may serve to illustrate the procedure, namely, cross and descent (frequently expressed in terms of humiliation).

I. The Cross as Motif or Pattern of Ministry in the New Testament

There is scarcely a stratum of thought among the writings of the New Testament in which the concept of cross is not dominant. It is generally conceded that among the New Testament writers only Paul explicitly develops a doctrine of the cross as an element of his deliberate intention. However, this fact should not lead us to conclude that the Pauline tradition alone embodies a theology of the cross. To the contrary, Paul's explicit concern with this aspect of the Christian confession was stimulated by its presence in the tradition which he received from the earliest Christian community. Likewise, post-Pauline material — notably the Synoptic Gospels and John — reflects an implicit theology of the cross even though its vocabulary does not explicitly call attention to the idea. Indeed, the theology of the cross is reflected in the structure of the Gospels — especially Mark and John — as well as the portraits of Jesus which they present. In this setting, we are concerned with the theological motif of the cross as it appears in two major segments of New Testament literature, namely, Paul and the Synoptic Gospels.

A. The Letters of Paul.

As has been indicated, Paul's letters contain the most explicit development of the concept of the cross. Since these works appeared more than a decade before the earliest Gospel (Mark), they afford a glimpse into Christian thought near the point where Christianity moved into the gentile environment.
The Corinthian letters contain Paul’s response to an eclectic point of view that stands in sharpest contrast to the Christian confession of Jesus Christ as the crucified and exalted One. To be precise, major segments of the Corinthian church seem to have emphasized the authority of the exalted Lord at the expense or denial of the significance of the crucified One. This gnostic perspective emerges most clearly in those dimensions of Christian proclamation which relate to Jesus’ humanity, particularly to his crucifixion. Paul appears to quote a gnostic slogan when he exclaims, “No one who speaks in the Spirit of God can say, anathema Iēsous” (Jesus is accursed). This gnostic rejection of all implications of Jesus’ humanity constituted a decisive challenge to Paul’s understanding of the Gospel, as well as the pattern of discipleship which it implies. Thus, Paul’s apology for the Christian faith serves as an instructive example for modern interpreters who seek to interpret theological motifs in defining the pattern of Christian ministry.

1 Corinthians 1:18, 23; 2:2.

The present structure of the Corinthian letters represents the work of redactors near the close of the first century. I Corinthians 7:1ff suggest that major elements of the remainder of the letter contain Paul’s reply to specific questions posed by the Corinthian church. However, in I Corinthians 1:1-4:21 the Apostle appends an introductory section in which he deals with the essential elements of the assumptions out of which specific questions had arisen. The central role of the concept of the cross in this segment is evident when it is noted that of the seven occurrences of stauros (cross) in I Corinthians, six appear in the first two chapters.

Paul’s focal challenge to his opponents appears in I Corinthians 1:17, “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, not according to the pattern of wisdom (sophia), lest the cross of Christ become an empty thing.” The sophia by which Paul seems to identify the opponents’ teaching seems to assume a measure of independence and self-sufficiency for those who have been transformed by the reception of its secrets. This denial of continuing dependence upon the gifts and sustenance of God’s grace constituted a fundamental contradiction of Paul’s understanding of the Christian message. The Apostle finds support for his stance in the character of the church. While the cross does not determine beforehand the historical status of the Christian community per se, the insignificant position of the church in the city of Corinth serves as an illustration of the implications of the cross for the life of the community of disciples who identify with the crucified One.

I Corinthians 2:1-5 speaks directly to our concern here. Referring to the pattern and authenticity of his practice and ministry, Paul attributes the pattern and style of his ministry in Corinth to his deliberate conformation to the meaning of the cross. In other words, the theological content of the message is said to contain decisive implications for the mode and practice of ministry. Even the Apostle’s appearance and behavior arise out of his conformity to the meaning of the cross. Paul’s
theology of the cross guides him in his response to questions concerning practical issues in the life of the church. The remainder of the letter, including his response to the "super-apostles" in II Corinthians, is filled with illustrations of the meaning of the cross for ministry. There is no clearer example in the New Testament where theological criteria are applied to practical issues in the life of the Christian community.  

Paul's second letter to Corinth — a collection of occasional brief notes — is notable for its explicit concern with ministry, containing eleven references scattered throughout six different chapters. It is striking that the Apostle chooses the symbol of the cross as a defense for both the pattern and the substance of his ministry (2:14-6:13). Lest Paul's description of his work — earthly vessel (4:7), affliction (4:7-8), exposure to the danger of death (4:11-12) — should be understood as the expression of despair or as the product of a morose mentality, it should be noted that this segment of his letter is concluded with confidence and exuberant joy (4:16-5:10). To the contrary, Paul's description of his position represents a deliberate expression of the theology of the cross. In II Corinthians 10-13, the Apostle reiterates his claim: Accreditation of ministry is solely by reference to the norm of the cross. For, Paul exclaims, "If I am compelled to affirm a basis of selfconfidence and adequacy (kauchasthai), I will do so on the basis of my weakness" (II Corinthians 11:30), i.e., I will do so in conformity to the cross.

Full reference to Paul's use of the motif of the cross requires detailed exegesis of extensive segments of his letters. It is sufficient here to point to cryptic expressions that are selfexplanatory. For example, "But for me it is unthinkable that I should boast except in the cross of Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14); "For many are living in such a manner — about whom I have spoken many times and now I do so weeping — that I must say are enemies of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18); “Are you unaware that however many of us were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3). Clearly, for the Apostle Paul, the primary theological motif is the cross of Christ by which proclamation is to be measured. Since ministry is a reflection of the kerygma — in content and style — it, too, is grounded in the selfsame theology.

B. The Synoptic Gospels

Mark 8:27 seems to represent the watershed in the structure of the second Gospel. At this point in the work the writer depicts Jesus as having deliberately set his face toward Jerusalem. This journey to Jerusalem represents a symbolic manner of speaking about crucifixion, since Jerusalem as the place of crucifixion is symbolic of the meaning of the cross. It may be that the cross-symbol appears as early as 3:6 in

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Mark, since the author alludes to a plot to destroy Jesus. Matthew follows Mark’s general pattern with regard to the journey to Jerusalem. Luke even places his “great insertion” (9:51-18:14) under the motif of a journey to the place of the cross (Jerusalem). Thus, it is evident that the concept of the cross played a primary role in the structure of the Synoptic Gospels, even though the material itself does not represent an explicit development of the motif.

(1) Mark 10:35-45

This passage describes Jesus’ confrontation by two disciples, James and John, who harbored an illegitimate ambition for prestige. Although Matthew and Luke alter minor details of the pericope, Mark clearly intends to refer to the church of his day. It stands under judgment because it fails to understand discipleship as a mode of life under the sign of the cross (10:38-40). For, the Son of Man did not come to be the recipient of ministry, but to do ministry (10:45). This saying doubtless arose in the early Christian community, since it is highly probable that the full-orbed doctrine of the cross did not emerge during Jesus’ lifetime. Therefore, the theology of the cross provides a motif that is applied to Jesus’ entire life. In turn, this same motif becomes the model that defines the character of ministry in Jesus’ name.

(2) Mark 8:34-35

Mark 8:34-35, too, appears in the context of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. Although the precise term for ministry does not appear in this pericope, akoloutheitó (to live or follow) corresponds to the idea. Hence, the distinction between discipleship and ministry practically disappears: To take up the cross and deny oneself is the mode of discipleship. Consequently, the theological motif of cross is applied alternatively to discipleship and ministry.

If the occasion allowed, abundant evidence could be adduced concerning the importance of the cross for the thought of the Fourth Gospel. It is sufficient to remember that chapters 1-12 revolve around the idea of the hōra toward which Jesus moves with deliberate intention. This hōra refers to the cross in whose shadow Jesus is depicted when he turns aside to instruct the disciples regarding their function in the world. The washing of the disciples’ feet (John 13:15) provides the model (hupodeigma) for the future course of the mission in the world. Thus, John, too, is dominated by the theology of the cross.

2. Descent (humiliation) as a Motif for Ministry.

In addition to the cross, other motifs express the Christian confession. The “descent” motif functions to express the characteristic Christian trait of humility. While the cross is derived from the idea of sacrifice in cultic worship, “descent” is rooted in the Hellenistic religious mentality. It may be that this motif emerged first in Hellenistic circles of thought. Bultmann contended that this idea originated in gnostic thought.
The christological hymn in Philippians 2:5-9 is a well known example of this pattern of thought. The hymn itself appears to have originated in the worship of the early Christian community. Paul adopted and adapted the fragment to his purpose in this segment of the Philippian correspondence. Two words express the focal christological affirmation, namely, ekenōse and etapeinōsen, he emptied himself, and humbled himself. Obviously, only etapeinōsen can be applied to the mode of discipleship and ministry. Accordingly, the Apostle exhorts the Philippians to, “do nothing which arises out of selfcentered ambition or conceit, but with tapeinophrosune, each is to consider the other superior to himself” (Philippians 2:3). Here, again, christology provides the motif for interpreting discipleship/ministry. Paul has already appealed to tapeinos as the mark of genuineness in his own ministry. It is important to remember that this Christian virtue does not stand on its own merits but, like the cross, derives its authenticity from christological roots. Hence, basic christological motifs become the symbols for authentic ministry.

IV. CONCLUSION

On the basis of this restricted purview of certain strata of New Testament material, what can be indicated regarding its concept of ministry? The following tentative conclusions may provide the basis for further investigation. In the first place, it appears that the basic motifs which interpret ministry are derived from christological confessions. Furthermore, these motifs play an important role in the development of the so-called “lives of Jesus” in the Gospels. The cross — the basic motif for discipleship/ministry — are central in the entire confession. Second, ministry has to do, therefore, with the proper presentation of Christ as the crucified and resurrected One. Third, in the earliest Christian community ministry focused upon the nature of Christian existence rather than upon the ecclesiastical structure in which ministry was expressed. First in the Pastoral epistles of the mid-second century an interest in official duties becomes clearly evident. (This fact does not mean that the concern developed first at this point, but only that New Testament material as a whole does not contain such focus). Furthermore, where structure or office emerges as a point of primary concern, the problem of authority prevails over the concern with ministry. Fourth, ministry and discipleship often coalesce in New Testament thought. Fifth, it may be that the New Testament provides its most comprehen-
sive answers regarding the pattern and style of modern ministry in those segments of writings which are not directly concerned with so-called "problems" of ministry. It seems to me that the New Testament does not function primarily as a "manual" for ministry. Rather, it provides most certain and direct guidance in the theological character and contours of its concepts and motifs.
Thomas Coke’s War on American Slavery

Dr. Thomas Coke’s [1747-1814] many-faceted career is, at long last, becoming increasingly known and appreciated. A high spirited little Welshman, educated at Oxford’s Jesus College and ordained in the Church of England, Coke became John Wesley’s assistant. In September of 1784 Wesley set Coke apart as a General Superintendent (the term was later changed to Bishop) and dispatched him to America to ordain Francis Asbury. At the Christmas Conference, convened in Baltimore, December 24, 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church was born.

During the six months immediately following the Christmas Conference Coke engaged in a heroic war against slavery. This little known campaign was held in early 1785. While it may appear to have been of little immediate success, by it seeds were planted which would bear much fruit in later years. Coke was the gadfly which stung many—either to action or withdrawal—from Methodism.

Coke had good precedence for his anti-slavery views. In 1774 John Wesley published his “Thoughts Upon Slavery,” a forthright document which gave a brief, factual history of slavery and closed with a vivid portrayal of the plight of Negroes brought from Africa to the Americas: “If, therefore, you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor the revealed law of God), render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion!” Richard M. Cameron rightly points out that “Thoughts Upon Slavery” had far reaching repercussions. Freeborn Garrettson, in writing of his 1775 conversion affirmed: “...—til then I had never suspected that the practice of slave keeping was wrong; ... I told them they did not belong to me, ...”

While American Methodism was still but a group of loosely organized Societies, the 1780 Conference took a bold anti-slavery stand when it asked: “Ought not this Conference to require those travelling preachers who hold slaves to give promises to set them free?” The following question was yet stronger:

Does this Conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom?

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1The Works of John Wesley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1959), XI, p. 79.
4Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the years 1773-1828 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), I, p. 12.
The Conference of 1783 asked, “What shall be done with our local preachers who hold slaves . . .?” and answered, “We will try them another year . . . let every assistant deal faithfully and plainly with every one . . .” Spring of 1784 witnessed a Conference which inquired: “What shall we do with our friends that buy and sell slaves?” The answer: “If they . . . have been previously warned, they shall be expelled, . . .” Local preachers not complying in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey would be suspended.

The Conference voted to expel members who “buy and sell” slaves.

Every member in our society who has slaves, in those states where the laws will admit of freeing them, shall, after notice given him by the preacher, within twelve month, (except in Virginia, and there within two years) legally execute and record an instrument, whereby he sets free every slave in his possession, those who are from forty to forty-five, immediately, or at farthest at the age of forty-five. Those who are between the ages of twenty-five and forty, immediately, or within the course of five years. Those who are between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, immediately, or at farthest at the age of thirty. Those who are under the age of twenty, as soon as they are twenty-five at farthest.

—and every infant, immediately on its birth.

Thus the stage was set for Coke’s arrival in America, November, 1784. In Coke’s Journal we find a revealing and dramatic capsule of 18th century Americana, as he spent from January to June, 1785, touring the Atlantic seaboard. Coke’s Journal — actually a series of Extracts — went through many printings in England and America. Frequently there were brief but very significant changes in the several editions. These alterations reflect the manner in which Coke reported either to his American or British readers.

One of the first slavery entries comes as an uncomplimentary rebuke to the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, the Anglican clergyman usually regarded as very sympathetic to Methodism:

Roanoke Chapel, Wednesday [March] 30, [1785] I found in this Chapel a serious, attentive people. Here I met with Mr. Jarret [sic]. After duty he went with me to one Brother Seaward’s (in the state of Virginia) about eight miles off. We now talked largely on the Minutes concerning Slavery; but he would not be persuaded. The secret is, he has twenty-four Slaves of his own; but I am afraid, he will do infinite hurt by his opposition to our Rules. While Jarratt vociferously denied owning slaves, in reality he “vigorously assailed the unpopular [anti-slavery] rules” of the Methodists.

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8Ibid., p. 18.
9Ibid., p. 20.
7Jesse Lee, A Short History of the Methodists . . . (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), pp. 96-97. Note the phrase “[...] legally execute and record an instrument, . . .”
8Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke’s Five Visits to America (London: G. Paramore, 1793), pp. 32-33. This edition was for the British public. Also see The Arminian Magazine (Philadelphia, 1789) for the American account of his tour.
In a letter to Edward Dromgoole on March 22, 1788, Jarratt “expressly contended that the Bible authorized slavery.”

From the outset, Jarratt and Coke did not see eye to eye on many issues, slavery being but one major point. Of the two clergymen it can only be said that it was a clear — and unhappy — case of incompatibility. Jarratt poured out his resentment of Coke in a letter of August 31, 1790, taking the Doctor to task for using the published Journal as public information, “Dr. Coke’s journal [sic], I hope to treat with becoming contempt. . . . I am no advocate for slavery. Slavery, as it is practiced in general is most abhorrent to my mind. I wish its abolition.”

In Virginia, Coke actually launched his anti-slavery campaign: “Friday, April 1. [1785, Virginia] I preached in a Chapel belonging to Isaac Johnson. I now begin to venture to exhort our Societies to emancipate their Slaves.” This was followed shortly by the first public statement: “Tuesday [April] 5. [1785] I rode to Sister Bedford’s. Here I dared for the first time to bear a public testimony against slavery, and I do not find that more than one was offended.” Coke gives an illuminating account of a funeral: “On Wednesday 6, I preached the late Colonel Bedford’s funeral sermon. But I said nothing good of him, for he was a violent friend of slavery,” Coke continued, “. . . his interest being great among the Methodists in these parts, he would have been a dreadful thorn in our sides, if the Lord had not in his mercy taken him away.”

Deep, personal relationships are expressed by Coke: “Thursday [April] 7. [1785, Virginia] I went some miles to a dying friend, and spent about half the day with him drawing up his Will, in which he emancipates at the times there specified his eight Slaves. This is a good beginning. . . .” Coke’s reference to drawing up a Will calls to our attention the realism of emancipation. Did the white slaveholders actually liberate the slaves, or was it just pious talk? There is no question that pious talk was part of the problem, but records indicate that there were legal documents whereby slaves were set free. As to the manner in which these newly emancipated slaves became economically, socially and psychologically free, remains quite another matter. At this period in America there were approximately three-quarters of a million Negroes with “almost 89 per cent” living in the South Atlantic area. The
1790 slave population, in the South Atlantic states was 641,691. There were 32,048 free Negroes in this same territory.\textsuperscript{17}

Opposition, however, was not long in rearing its ugly head:

Saturday [April] 9, [1785, Virginia] I set off with the friends to Brother Martin’s, in whose barn I preached that day. \ldots The testimony I bore in this place against slaveholding, provoked many of the unawakened to retire out of the barn, and to combine together to flog me \ldots as soon as I came out, A high-headed Lady also went out, and told the rioters \ldots that she would give fifty pounds, if they would give that little Doctor one hundred lashes. When I came out, they surrounded me, but had only the power to talk \ldots But God restrained the rage of the multitude. Our Brother Martin has done gloriously, for he has fully and immediately emancipated fifteen slaves. And that sermon \ldots has so affected one of our brethren (Brother Norton) that he came to Brother Martin, and desired him to draw up a proper instrument for the emancipation of his eight slaves. A brother (whose name is Ragland) has also emancipated one.\textsuperscript{18}

It is obvious, that for all his prophetic zeal, Coke exercised a rather cautious approach in dealing with many of his belligerent hearers:

Monday [April] 11. [1785, Virginia] I preached at Brother Baker’s Here a mob came to meet me with staves and clubs. Their plan, I believe, was to fall upon me as soon as I touched on the subject of slavery. I knew nothing of it till I had done preaching; but not seeing it was my duty to touch on the subject here, their scheme was defeated, and they suffered me to pass through them without molestation.\textsuperscript{19}

Slavery was a dreadful thing and the tragedy of it became increasingly real:

Tuesday [April] 12. [1785, Virginia] I rode to Brother Kennon’s, preaching a funeral sermon in the way at a Planter’s house for a little child, and reading our burial service in the wood over the grave. They have a funeral sermon preached in these parts for every human creature that dies, except the Blacks\ldots

Coke seems to pause in reflection, emancipation comes to mind, for Kennon “\ldots has emancipated twenty-two Slaves. These are great sacrifices: for the Slaves are worth, I suppose, upon an average, thirty or forty pounds sterling each, and perhaps more.”\textsuperscript{20}

Once Coke left Virginia, he brought his campaign to a temporary halt due to North Carolina laws: “Thursday [April] 14. [1785] \ldots I have now done with my Testimony against Slavery, for a time, being got into North Carolina again, the Laws of this State forbidding any to emancipate their Negroes.”\textsuperscript{21}

While Coke was guarded in public statements, he was not inactive: “Tuesday [April] 19. [1785, North Carolina] We came to Brother Greenhill’s where we held our Conference \ldots We have also drawn up

\textsuperscript{18}Coke, *Journal*, op. cit., p. 35.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., pp. 35-36.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 36. By present day currency standards and values, the twenty-two slaves would represent an investment of approximately $22,000.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.
a petition to the General Assembly of North Carolina signed by the Conference, intreating them to pass an Act to authorize those who are disposed, to emancipate their Slaves. Mr. Asbury has visited the Governor, and has gained him over. 22

This Conference witnessed the first of several disputations between Coke and Jesse Lee regarding the slavery rules. The Welshman was making a valiant attempt to carry the preachers with him in this, the *summum bonum* of all causes. There is marked irony that the host for the Conference, Major Green Hill, was a wealthy slave owner. 23

Once back in Virginia, Coke reestablished his crusade, but with a new approach: "Mecklenburg County, Virginia, Saturday [April] 23. [1785] ... Here I bore a public testimony against Slavery, and I have found out a method of delivering it without much offence, or at least without causing a tumult: and that is, by first addressing the Negroes in a very pathetic manner on the Duty of Servants to Masters; and then the Whites will receive quietly what I have to say to them. ..."24

Opposition in local congregations was soon experienced. Coke's mettle was being tested, both as to his convictions on the slavery issue, and his ability as an administrator:

Sunday, May 1-4, [1785, Virginia] About twenty Preachers met Mr. Asbury and me at Brother Mason's.... A great many principal friends met us here to insist on a Repeal of the Slave-Rules; but when they found that we had thoughts of withdrawing ourselves entirely from the Circuit ... they drew in their horns, and sent us a very humble letter, intreating that Preachers might be appointed for their Circuit ... we formed a petition, a copy of which was given to every Preacher, intreating the General Assembly of Virginia, to pass a Law for the immediate or gradual emancipation of all the Slaves. It is to be signed by all the Freeholders we can procure, and those I believe will not be few. There have been many debates already on the subject in the Assembly. ...25

"I found the minds of the people greatly agitated with our rules against slavery," noted Asbury. He went on to describe the confrontation: "... Colonel Bedford and Doctor Coke disputed on the subject, and the Colonel used some threats: next day, brother O'Kelly let fly at them, and they were made angry enough; we, however, came off with whole bones, ..."26

In spite of the disagreement, Coke felt that much had been accomplished at the Conference. "... Many of our friends and some of the great men of the States, have been inciting us to apply for Acts of Incorporation, but I have discouraged it, and have prevailed. We have

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22Ibid., pp. 36-37.
24Coke, *Journal, op. cit.* , p. 37. This passage is pointedly deleted from *The Arminian Magazine*, I, see p. 346.
a better staff to lean upon than any this world can afford. We can truly say, "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few." 27

Coke's second withering comment on Devereux Jarratt is worth mentioning: "... on the 7th [May, 1785] passed by the house of Mr. Jarratt [sic], that violent assertor of the propriety and justice of Negro-Slavery. I lodged that night at the house of Brother Rees. He lives just by Mr. Jarratt, and is the great bar in the hands of God to that fallen man's ruining our whole work in that neighborhood. ..." 28

Jarratt's reaction was candid: "Did you ever discover me to be such a violent man, as to authorize any one to make violence a distinguishing characteristic of me? The truth is, the little man [Coke] read the minutes to me, and asked my opinion of them. I told him I was no friend to slavery; but however I did not think the minutes proper, ... I care not one straw for what he has journalized about me. ..." 29

Coke later regretted the harshness of his charge against Jarratt, writing a "penetential letter" 30 which prompted an acceptance "... you had a full and free pardon, ... I shall say no more on this hand, but wish it to be forever buried in oblivion." 31 Mutual apology seems to have cleared the air between the two.

Coke's observation on people is noteworthy: how can a Christian rationalize slavery?

Friday [May] 13. [1785, Virginia] ... At night I lodged at the house of Captain Dillard, ... as kind to his Negroes as if they were White servants. It was quite pleasing to see them so decently and comfortably clothed. And yet I could not beat into the head of that poor man the evil of keeping them in Slavery, although he has read Mr. Wesley's Thoughts on Slavery, (I think he said) three times over: but his good wife is strongly on our side. 32

Coke tenaciously stood by his convictions, regardless of mounting opposition:

Saturday and Sunday [May] 14 and 15. [1785, Virginia] ... But when I enlarged to the Society on Negro-Slavery, the principal leader raged like a lion, and desired to withdraw from the Society. I took him at his word, and appointed that excellent man (Brother Skelton) Leader in his stead. When the Society came out of the Church, they surrounded Brother Skelton, "And will you," said they, "Set your Slaves at liberty?" (He has many Slaves) "Yes," says he, "I believe I shall." 33

Insights are given regarding the private, and public, lives of individual Methodists: "Monday [May] 16. [1785, Virginia] I preached ... at New-Glasgow, and lodged at Colonel M______'s. ... Colonel M______

28Ibid.
29Life of Devereux Jarratt, op. cit., pp. 83-84, letter dated April 15, 1790, in "Thoughts On ... Divinity; ..."
31Ibid., p. 114. Also see note 16, p. 115.
33Ibid., p. 41. The concluding paragraph on slavery is not included in the Arminian Magazine, op. cit., I, p. 393.
is a very sensible, and polite man. He acknowledged the force of my arguments concerning the Negroes, but (I evidently saw) did not chuse [sic] to take any active part for fear of losing his popularity. His son is a Member of the house of Delegates, and he wants himself to get into the Senate...."³⁴

Coke's experience with Mr. Tandy Key illustrates the problems faced frequently within a family:

Thursday [May] 19. [1785, Virginia] I preached... at Brother Tandy Key's.... He told me, as we rode together, that he was determined to emancipate his Slaves (about twenty) although his miserable father, I suppose, will never give him any further assistance, if he does. I pushed on in the evening, with an intention of reaching his father's, Mr. Martin Key's:... when I called there the next morning, I found he had shut his door against the Preachers, because he has eighty Slaves.... before I went away, [I] cleared myself of the blood of the old man....³⁵

Coke consistently sought to know the leaders of the state: "Sunday [May] 22, [1785, Virginia] I read prayers, preached, and administered the sacrament in Mr. Fry's great Room.... He is a precious man, and, I trust, will be eloquent in the House of Delegates for the emancipation of the Slaves. He is to present our petition."³⁶

The grand moment in Coke's anti-slavery crusade came with the visit to Mt. Vernon, a time of obvious enjoyment — and triumph — for Coke:

Thursday [May] 26. [1785] Mr. Asbury and I set off for General Washington's. We were engaged to dine there the day before.... He received us very politely, and was very open to access.... After dinner we desired a private interview, and opened to him the grand business on which we came, presenting to him our petition for the emancipation of the Negroes, and intreating his signature,... He informed us that he was of our sentiments, and had signified his thoughts... to most of the great men of the State: that he did not see it proper to sign the petition, but if the Assembly took it into consideration, would signify his sentiments to the Assembly by a letter.³⁷

The visit had been arranged through General Roberdeau, "an intimate acquaintance of General Washington's,..." Coke always had a mania for associations with notables. In writing his American version of the visit Coke glowingly described Washington as "... a friend of mankind." At his loquacious best, Coke added a final commendation (for the benefit of his American readers):

...I was loth to leave him, for I greatly love and esteem him, and if there was no pride in it, would say that we are surely kindred spirits, formed in the same mould. O that my GOD would give him the witness of his Spirit!...³⁸

It is worth noting that in Washington's nine hundred volume library there were some three hundred fifty volumes on divinity. Among these

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³⁴Ibid.
³⁵Ibid., pp. 42-43.
³⁶Ibid., p. 43.
³⁷Ibid., p. 45.
are several of Wesley's Sermons, including "Thoughts Upon Slavery," gifts from Coke and Asbury.39

Asbury's only comment on the visit was a simple: "We waited on General Washington, who received us very politely, and gave us his opinion against slavery."40

In his reforming zeal, Coke may have gone too far and too fast, at least as far as a young American church was concerned. Capitulation at the Conference at Baltimore is clearly seen: "Wednesday, June 1. [1785] We opened our Conference. . . . We thought it prudent to suspend the minute concerning Slavery, . . . we were agreeably informed that several of our friends in Maryland had already emancipated their Slaves."41 Concrete action was taken, so Coke reported to the Americans, regarding Maryland:

... But we agreed to present to the assembly of Maryland, through our friends, a petition for a general emancipation, signed by as many electors as we can procure, similar to that which we agreed to present to the Virginia assembly.42

"The Dr. was much respected in the United States," observed Jesse Lee, "but he met with some opposition in the south parts of Virginia, owing to his imprudent manner of preaching against slavery. No doubt but the Dr. thought at the time he was doing right: . . ."43

Lee reflected the attitude of many American churchmen, certainly Jarratt, who wrote Dromgoole that the Methodist rule regarding slavery had "already done more harm than the united effort of all the Preachers . . . would ever do good."44

At the direction of the Christmas Conference, Bishops Coke and Asbury drew up the Discipline, and made the entry: "What methods can we take to extirpate Slavery?"

... We view it as contrary to the Golden Law of God on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, and the Unalienable Rights of Mankind, . . . to hold in the deepest Debasement, in a more abject Slavery than is perhaps to be found in any Part of the World except America, so many Souls that are all capable of the Image of God. . . . every Person concerned, who will not comply . . . shall have Liberty quietly to withdraw himself from our Society within the twelve months succeeding the notice given. . . .45

No legislation regarding slavery was passed by the Conference of 1785, however, a single N. B. was made: "We do hold in deepest abhorrence

38See Zion's Herald, September 1, 1920, p. 1144.
40Coke, Journal, op. cit., p. 46.
the practice of slavery; and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means.”46

Coke sailed for England on June 3, 1785 and spent two busy years in close association with Wesley. There were many assignments and a multiplicity of responsibilities.

In 1787 Coke returned to the United States for his second visit. Two Journal entries regarding slavery are expressions of the backlash of his previous tour. He had sown the wind, and now reaped the whirlwind: “[March, 1787, Virginia]... I visited the county of Halifax, where I met with a little persecution... on account of the public testimony I bore against Negro-Slavery... soon after I left the country..., a bill was presented against me as a seditious person before the Grand Jury, and ninety persons had engaged to pursue me,... Another bill was also presented in one of the neighbouring counties, but was thrown out... .”47

Coke noted the “perfect peace and quietness” with which he was received. He then added a startling admission: “Indeed I now acknowledge that however just my sentiments may be concerning Slavery, it was ill judged of me to deliver them from the pulpit.” Nevertheless, a harvest was seen — small though it may appear. “...A man who pursued me with a gun in order to shoot me when I was in this neighborhood before... is now converted to God, and become a member of our Society.”48

On his fourth visit to America, Coke made this telling observation: “[February, 1791, South Carolina] During my stay at Charleston, a striking proof was given of the regard which is paid in this country to religious liberty. We employ a poor negro [sic], a member of the society, to snuff the candles in our Chapel: and a stranger from North Carolina beat him unmercifully with a stick, because the poor black only desired him not to talk whilst the Minister was preaching. The next day we applied for justice to the chief Magistrate, and got the rioter safely locked up in prison... .”49

During the General Conference in Baltimore, October, 1796, with Coke present, “The subject of Negro Slavery was brought forward, and more said in favour of it than I liked to hear,” noted William Colbert. “The debate on the subject of Slavery resumed and when put to a vote, it went in favour of its standing as it had. — They who hold Slaves are to be continued in Society.”50

It was an obvious victory for the conservative wing of Methodism. Had Coke become weary? Possibly so. Another important element: the

46Minutes, op. cit., p. 24. The phrase “...wise and prudent...” may have the ring of “... all deliberate speed...”
48Ibid.
49Ibid., p. 146.
peripatetical nature of his ministry in the United States. He was in America for only a few months at a time [in all, he made nine separate visits]. It is unlikely that one can champion a cause in absentia.

Unhappily, a postscript needs to be added regarding Coke and slavery in the West Indies. In contrast to the United States, no such crusade was conducted there, in fact in 1792 William Hammett charged Coke with purchasing slaves out of mission funds. Alas! As Coke admitted, there was a basis for the accusation, "...My friends on all sides of me urged that the present [a cotton and coffee plantation presented to the mission by the Colonial Legislature on St. Vincent] might be an exempt case, that the gift of the land was undoubtedly providential, and that the slaves purchased for the cultivation of it would certainly be treated by us in the tenderest manner...." He frankly said the "...wound continued to deepen in my mind... till at last I wrote... (Mr. Baxter) that I could not admit of any slaves upon the estate...." He concludes, "At the time I acted for the best, and 'humanum est errare.'"51

Coke's involvement in the St. Vincent episode is indeed regrettable, a major — and tragic — blunder. It ought not, however, prevent our seeing Coke as a man endowed with a love for people, especially the down-trodden of the earth. Nor should it diminish our awareness of his contribution to the anti-slavery cause in the United States. His attack on slavery, brief though it may have been, helped awaken the American conscience and — to a degree — bestir it to action.

In many respects, the attack on slavery represents Coke's finest hour. Not always wise as to his methods and timing, he nonetheless acted the part of a prophet, and possibly more, he became a wellspring of encouragement for those who held similar views.

Thomas Coke, like kindred historical figures, was a child of his time. He must be seen against the background of late 18th century sociocultural, socioeonomic concepts and values. His limitations are obvious; he is not a 20th century social scientist. Product of the evangelical revival, his overwhelming desire was the salvation of souls. There was an additional dimension — he had a social concern. He viewed slavery with horror: it was morally wrong! The slave was to be saved; the slave was likewise to be liberated. We see these two ideals in juxtaposition.

In 1786, as Coke wrote of his dreams for mission throughout the world, he made special mention of the West Indies as an area where God "... has laid open the whole country to our labours among the blacks." The British Empire had exploited these people shamelessly, "... enriched by the labours of the poor slaves... surely the least compensation we can make... is to endeavour to enrich them... with

the riches of grace...." He continued, "... the grand consideration...
... is the value of the souls of these negroes [sic],....

Almost twenty years later Coke was writing to an American preacher,
"... have great Compassion on the poor Negroes & do all you can to
Convert them. If they have Religious Liberty, their Temporal Slavery
will be comparatively but a small thing; but even in respect to this
latter point, I do long for the time when the Lord will turn their
Captivity like the Rivers of the South [Africa]...." For God, said
Coke, "... is sweeping off the Wicked... and will never withdraw his
Hand until Civil & Religious Liberty be Established all over the
Earth."53

52See Thomas Coke, An Address to the pious and benevolent, proposing an annual sub-
scription for the support of the missionaries in the Highlands and adjacent islands of
Scotland, the Isles of Jersey, Guernsey and Newfoundland, the West Indies, and the
53Letter to Ezekiel Cooper, April 23, 1795.
The History of the A.M.E. Church
In Zambia

By WALTON R. JOHNSON

In all the literature that has been compiled about the black church in America, very little has been written about its rather extensive missionary activity. This fact is surprising since the major black denominations have had branches in Africa for over one hundred years. Given the desire to understand the history of relationships between black America and Africa, as well as amass more data on the black church, more attention should have been paid to the missionary activities of black denominations.

The history of the A.M.E. Church in Zambia is but one example of how a major black denomination became established in a relatively remote part of Africa, how it thrived, how it had a great future, but how time passed it by. It is also an example of how the most significant black American institution — the black church — was transferred back to Africa, becoming a cultural contribution from black America to mother Africa.

The story could be told for other black denominations in other parts of Africa. The purpose of this article is to provide ethnography about one case — the A.M.E. church in Zambia¹ — and to demonstrate the need for more research on black missionary activities in Africa.

African Methodism in South Africa

African Methodism reached southern Africa in 1896, about ten years after arriving in West Africa. At this time, African congregations in South Africa were reacting to white domination in the churches and to increased segregation and discrimination in religious life. Just as in America one hundred years before, this African rejection of racist religious organization found expression in the establishment of independent churches. Many scholars have recorded this history of the early independent African church in South Africa.²

One of the most important of these churches was organized in 1892 by Rev. Mangena Mokone, who formed the Ethiopian Church in Pretoria.³ During the first two years of the Ethiopian Church, Mokone

¹The Zambian church presently has about eighty congregations and a membership in excess of 10,000. Exact membership figures, however, are difficult to obtain. Some estimates go as high as 25,000.
³The Transvaal government recognized the Ethiopian Church in 1893. It was this church which gave the name to the 'Ethiopian' movement and to the type of independent church characterized as 'Ethiopian.'
was introduced to the A.M.E. church through his contact with Miss Charlotte Manye, a South African woman, who went to the United States as part of a touring singing group and who was then studying at the A.M.E. university in Wilberforce, Ohio. She had apparently sent some of the A.M.E. publications to South Africa and Mokone initiated correspondence with Bishop H. M. Turner concerning the possibility of sending his son to the A.M.E. university. As a result of the expansion of this correspondence, the Ethiopian Church decided at its 1896 Conference to ‘consolidate the union of the Ethiopian Church and the A.M.E. Church’ and two delegates were chosen to go to the United States to consummate the union. The Ethiopian Church was admitted and two years later, in 1898, Bishop Turner visited South Africa and firmly established African Methodism in that country.

The appeal of the A.M.E. church was strong and it grew. In March of 1901, it had been officially recognized by the Cape government and for at least 25 years it was the only ‘native separatist church’ which the government regarded as ‘long established and enjoying universal public recognition.’ By 1948, it reported 100,000 members, 400 churches and over 300 ordained ministers. It operated 30 schools in South Africa and was the only non-white Christian church which had an institution of higher learning and a theological college.

Willie Mokalapa

It is significant when considering the appeal of the A.M.E. church to note that it reached into Northern and Southern Rhodesia about 1900, only four years after the Ethiopian Church was incorporated into the A.M.E. church and only two years after Bishop Turner came to South Africa representing the A.M.E. Bishop’s Council. It was the heavy traffic of persons and ideas to and from South Africa which accounts for the rapid expansion of the church.

The first appearance of the A.M.E. church in Northern Rhodesia was in Barotseland where the successes of Willie Mokalapa contributed significantly to the near panic fear which developed in southern Africa with regard to ‘Ethiopianism.’ Willie Mokalapa was a Suto Pastor who had originally gone to Barotseland as an evangelist with the Paris Missionary Society, under the leadership of the well known French missionary Francois Coillard. Several reports state that, after working ten years with Coillard, Mokalapa and some of his colleagues became agitated by the discriminatory policy in the Paris Missionary Society concerning pay and

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5The Ethiopian Church was almost entirely absorbed at the time of Turner’s visit, the Transvaal Annual Conference had a membership of 7,175 and the South African Conference had a membership of 10,800. Reported in Christian Recorder, June 30, 1898.
7See Mokintinu, 1947.
8Because of the historical connection with the Ethiopian Church the A.M.E. church was often referred to ‘as the ‘Ethiopian Church’. 
conditions and that Mokalapa withdrew his allegiance after quarrelling with Coillard over these matters.9

When he returned in 1903 from Capetown where he had been appointed A.M.E. Presiding Elder for Barotseland, Mokalapa was encouraged and actively assisted by the Lozi administration. "And with the help of ... three other educated colonial natives, also members of the Ethiopian Church, and indirect support from Lewanika and other chiefs, he has built a large station a few miles from Lealui and has now a very large following and a large and enthusiastic congregation. He has been joined by one of Lewanika's nephews ... and by many of the smaller chiefs, and counts many of the principal indunas' sons among his school children ..."10

Because Coillard's mission was reduced almost one-half, the French missionaries and the British South Africa Company did all in their power to prevent Mokalapa from continuing.11 The feeling during this period what that it was "... most desirable to rid this country of all 'deacons' and other dignitaries of the Ethiopian Church ... In view of the unrest the Ethiopians caused, this administration is determined to resist their return to this territory".12 However, in view of the appeal which Mokalapa had personally with the chiefs, the administration thought it expedient not to expel him.13 Rather it passed a law which prevented other A.M.E. missionaries and teachers from entering the country. As late as 1906, this legislation was used to prevent A.M.E. ministers from entering Barotseland.

At the same time, the administration actively tried to persuade the Lozi not to follow the A.M.E. The Administrator in a letter to Chief Lewanika, dated January 3, 1905, argued, "... I do not want Willie and the other Ethiopians to leave your country because I am friends with the French missionaries, but because I am sure that they will harm you ... I have told you plainly in Lealui that the Ethiopian is not a good church. You like them because their missionaries are black people and because they talk nicely to you and do not tell you when you do wrong as Mr. Coillard did ..."14

Fortunately, though, for Mokalapa, he did enjoy the protection of the Lozi aristocracy. They supported him primarily because of their dissatisfaction with the education in the Paris Missionary Society mission school.15 The A.M.E. school, by contrast, promised to teach English, mathematics, and other subjects which could 'assist in the modernization of Lozi society'. It was also apparent to the Lozi aristocracy that Mokalapa

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9See Lusaka archives file IN 1/7. and Favre, 1913:446. Ranger (1965:32); however, indicates that Mokalapa clashed with Coillard over the issue of the Lochner Treaty, which Coillard supported and which Mokalapa urged Paramount Chief Lewanika to reject.
10Lusaka archives file IN 1/2.
11Lusaka archives file IN 1/2.
12Lusaka archives file IN 1/7.
13Lusaka archives file IN 1/7.
14Lusaka archives file IN 1/7.
and his missionaries were genuinely interested in the progress of the Barotse nation. Coillard's mission was too closely associated with outside interests.16

Despite the factors in its favour, Mokalapa's work was not successful. In 1904, while progressing satisfactorily, he was sent by King Lewanika to Capetown to purchase several river boats and carts. He was accompanied by Lewanika's half brother and they carried £700 of state funds. In Capetown they were advised by Rev. Attaway of the A.M.E. church to patronize certain auctioneers to whom £636 was paid with the assurance that the goods would be sent along later. The river boats and carts never arrived at Lealui. Forced to return to Capetown to inquire into the matter, Mokalapa discovered that the auctioneers had gone bankrupt and that the money had been lost.17

It is not clear what happened to Mokalapa after this, but the A.M.E. church in Barotseland never recovered from his absence and after several years it withered. A.M.E. missionaries remained in Lealui until 1906 and Lewanika actively campaigned for more A.M.E. teachers, even suggesting the British South Africa Company administration should pay their salaries.18 It is likely that the church simply died a natural death as a result of the administration's law prohibiting more A.M.E. teachers and missionaries entering Barotseland.19

The Church Takes Root in Northern Rhodesia

The church eventually reappeared on the Copperbelt about 1930, at a time when there was a great deal of expansion in the mining industry. Whereas in 1924, there were only 1,300 Africans employed on the Copperbelt, by 1930 there were nearly 30,000.20 Yet the European missions were extraordinarily slow in establishing missions on Copperbelt. In 1932, there were only three European clergymen resident on the Copperbelt.21 This was apparently due to their belief that Africans were not to be permanent residents in the towns and that therefore evangelical efforts should be concentrated in the rural homelands.22

16Coillard supported the British South Africa Company's efforts to persuade Lewanka to sign the Lochner Treaty—the document which gave the company control of the sub-soil rights on Zambia's Copperbelt. See Stokes, 1966. Referring to the Administrative plan to gather taxes in Barotseland, Coillard told Lewanika "The Lord Jesus paid tribute, why should we?" He explained to Lewanika that "... the revenue was not private money which the King put in his pocket, but a treasure for public works, etc. etc...." See Public Records Office, London, C.O. 417—vol. 401.
17Lusaka archives file IN 1/7.
18Lusaka archives file KDE 1/5/2.
19Lusaka archives file IN 1/7. The administration considered banning Mokalapa since he was a 'foreign native'. However, it decided it was wiser not to antagonize the Lozi chiefs by attacking Mokalapa personally. They did not impede Mokalapa's movement but prohibited all other A.M.E. teachers and missionaries from entering or re-entering the country. The Proclamation approved by the British South Africa Company's board on March 9, 1904 requiring all alien natives entering Northern Rhodesia to have passes see Public Records Office, London, file C.O. 417—vol. 397.
21Davis, 1933: 296.
22Taylor and Lehman, 1961:36.
Consequently, there were no mission churches where Africans could worship in towns like Ndola. The result of this situation was the spontaneous formation of an African church in 1925 by a Nyasa, Zebediya Chiuma. This self-governing 'Union Church' was composed of many different denominations and nationalities and became the church for all Africans in Ndola. Similar congregations grew up at Bwana Mkubwa, Nchanga, Mufulira and Roan Antelope, apparently all being referred to as the Union Church. Some of the members of these congregations found out about the A.M.E. church and eventually started an A.M.E. congregation at Ndola.

There appear to have been several sources of contact between the Union Church members and the A.M.E. church. It is difficult to determine definitively the exact relationship of these contacts to the eventual establishment of the church in Northern Rhodesia because various groups within the church consider only one version to be factual. The versions are not at all incompatible and there is objective information which confirms much of each version. What is most significant, however, and what is certain, is that the A.M.E. church in Zambia was an outgrowth of the Union Church in Ndola.

One version of the history stresses that among the membership in the Union Church in Ndola, there were a number of Northern Rhodesians who had joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in Elizabethville while they were there working. When they returned to work in the Northern Rhodesia mines, they were obliged, like all other Africans, to join the Union Church. However, they 'decided to resign' from the Union Church and they wrote to Bishop Springer of the American Methodist Church in Elizabethville informing him of their situation and requesting that he send a preacher to minister to them. The bishop replied that his church did not have a permit from the Northern Rhodesia government, but that they might try to contact the African Methodist Episcopal Church. At a later date, when returning from a conference in Southern Rhodesia, the bishop stopped in Ndola and gave them more information about the A.M.E. church in Bulawayo.

Rev. J. L. C. Membe, who has been a presiding elder in the church longer than any other Zambian and who has written the only history of the church in Zambia, says that they first brought the A.M.E. Church to Northern Rhodesia. He recounts how he was employed in 1928 as a government clerk in Livingstone and how he joined the A.M.E. circuit at Victoria Falls. At this time, the church did not have a permit to operate in Northern Rhodesia. In November, 1928, Membe was transferred to Broken Hill as a clerk/typist in the District Commissioner's office. He started an A.M.E. congregation there and received a weekly permit to
preach from the Provincial Commissioner in March, 1930. Membe says he was in correspondence with the A.M.E. General Superintendent in Bulawayo about establishing the church in Northern Rhodesia, so he was able to provide his friends in the Union Church in Ndola with the information which finally resulted in the church being established.26

Another version of the history records that, at about the same time, the A.M.E. church was introduced to the Union Church members by Rev. Phiri, who visited Ndola several times en route from Southern Rhodesia to Nyasaland. It was on such a journey in 1929 that Phiri met a friend and former classmate from Nyasaland, Earnest Alexander Muwamba, and told him of the A.M.E. church. Muwamba and his friends were also worshipping at the Union Church and they were dissatisfied with the fact that there was no ordained person among them. For much of its existence, the Union Church had been forced to rely on the pastoral services of Rev. A. J. Cross of the South Africa Baptist Mission located 20 miles south of Ndola at Kafulafuta. Since the relationship was not entirely satisfactory, many of the members found the possibility of forming an A.M.E. church an exciting one.27

In January, 1931, some of the members of the Union Church had actually started a new congregation in Ndola, with Muwamba as the Chief Steward.28 Within several months Revs. Mtshwelo and Sangweni visited Ndola and officially received the group as a branch of the A.M.E. church. By 1932 it had churches in Ndola, Luanshya, Nkana and several villages with an estimated membership 500, making it one of the largest protestant churches on the Copperbelt.29

The church was started in Livingstone shortly after it began in Ndola. Primarily because it was the administrative capital of Northern Rhodesia and because it was the closest point in Northern Rhodesia to the A.M.E. church headquarters in Bulawayo, Rev. D. D. Khomela was moved to Livingstone as presiding elder in order to supervise the growth of the church throughout the country. Khomela established the church in Livingstone in 1931, just after government approval of the church had been granted. By the end of 1931, there were about 68 members temporarily worshipping in an old building in Maramba Compound. One year later, membership had increased to about 130, consisting primarily of civil servants.30

By 1930 the economic exploitation of Northern Rhodesia was assured, there was a colonial government staffed by professional civil

26Membe, 1969.
27This version of the history was given to me by several original members of the church and Hanock Msokera Phiri.
28Lusaka archives file ZA 1/9/1/1. The Union Church continued, incidentally, and in about 1934 the European missionaries decided to work together with it. The United Missions of the Copperbelt was a direct outgrowth of this merger.
29See Lusaka archives KSN 3/1/4. The other protestant denominations had the following membership: South African Baptist, 500; Dutch Reformed Church, 200; Anglican Church, 250. The Roman Catholic Church appears to have been larger than the protestant denominations.
30See Lusaka archives ZA 7/2/5/7 and ZA 7/2/6/5.
servants and the memories of Mokalapa and Chilembwe were not fresh in people's minds. The Northern Rhodesian government remained suspicious, but seemed less intent on crushing the church. It was considered a 'recognized religious denomination' and was entitled to certain privileges as a result.

There seems to have been more contempt than fear for the A.M.E. after the late 1930's. Government records indicate that several A.M.E. ministers had been convicted of embezzlement (which probably meant collecting money without giving an official receipt) or other petty offenses. Sedition of course was always a possibility from the government's point of view, so it did occasionally send plainclothes CID police officers to report on A.M.E. activities.31

A.M.E. preachers did sometimes encounter difficulty with the Native Schools Ordinance and the church certainly was not granted the freedom to which it was legally entitled as a recognized denomination. Rev. Membe records the following incident which occurred in the Mporokosko district in 1934.

Before Rev. C. went back to his headquarters at Chanda he appointed brothers A and B as local preachers to preach at Chibuta, Songa and Lupele. But some members of the London Missionary Society and Roman Catholic Church leaders, they went to Chief Mporokosko and reported to him that there are some men who are preaching in your area in the name of the church they never heard of Chief Mporokosko was worried and went to report to the District Commissioner of Mporokosko. These two young men were summoned to appear before the District Commissioner to answer charges. These young men A and B were imprisoned for one month for preaching in that area without permission from the Chief and the government.32

Government attention was not focused on the A.M.E. in particular, however. The 1930's was characterised by all African churches being classified together in European minds as 'Ethiopian' or 'Watchtower.' Little effort was made to distinguish between them. The government was thus sensitive to pressure brought upon it by the missionaries and other interests who wanted to limit the scope of the A.M.E.33 At the same time, however, it was willing in some instances to grant permission for the A.M.E. church to build schools and churches.

The Years of Expansion

The years 1932 to 1945 were years of expansion for the church in Northern Rhodesia.” The advance of this church has been considerable in the Native Compounds, and is the most active rival to the Watchtower church in Ndola. The funds which are almost entirely from native sources are very low, but as the Ndola native population is very poor at present,
this can be expected. The congregation has decreased by about a quarter, as many have left for their homes.\textsuperscript{84}

The world economic depression early during this period caused the mining industry on the Copperbelt to reduce its operations. Approximately, 16,500 African mineworkers lost their jobs between 1930 and 1932.\textsuperscript{85} The Annual Conference meeting in 1932 decided to give preaching appointments to anyone who would go where there was no A.M.E. church. Candidates were nominated by the presiding elders. Although some refused the appointments because it meant pioneering the church in the rural areas, most of them went to their appointments and opened new fields for the church.\textsuperscript{86} Others voluntarily organized on behalf of the church.

Rev. J. L. C. Membe was the major impetus behind the expansion of the church in the Northern and Luapula provinces. His account of a trip to Tanganyika provides an excellent example of how the church moved into the rural areas.

"On September 21, 1933, I left my place to go to Kasenga in Tanganyika accompanied by my wife, Simpanya and wife Alice, Mr. Ben Chipungu, and a band of choir. There was no other means of transport rather than to walk, so we walked for three days and reached Kasenga. When we were just about to enter the town a group of Christians from the London Missionary Society came to meet us and started to mock on us and speaking all bad words against us without anything wrong to them and started to throw dust on us making a lot of noise, but the Chief was aware of this, he sent his policemen to protect us until they got us through to the Chief's residence. The Chief regretted the action taken by the members of the LMS with their minister, and remarked that the wonders to see that Christians fight each other and make jealousy against one another without a reason which is a matter of discouraging who would be the Christians to come to church. The very day we arrived in the evening the Chief called for the local council to meet and discuss about the A.M.E. church in their area. After having explained about the A.M.E. church, history and its constitution and about the countries in which the A.M.E. church operates, the Chief asked his people's views on the matter and not to try and exercise denominational feelings. When this was put on vote 142 people voted in favour of having the A.M.E. church established in their area, 6 voted against and a few abstained from voting. On Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. an open air prayer meeting was held on the front of the Chief's palace. Over 300 people attended the service including the Chief himself. Brother Ben Chipungu and his Choir rendered some selections and made the people very interested in their singing. Most of the people wanted the A.M.E. church started right away there but I told them the permit is not as yet been granted. On Monday morning a piece of land about 45 acres was given to the A.M.E. church with 27 mango trees, 14 orange trees and 8 lemon trees inside the land for only £50. On Tuesday September 26, 1933, we left Kasanga by boat on Lake Tanganyika back to Northern Rhodesia via Chisanza."\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84}Lusaka archives file KEN 3/1/4.
\textsuperscript{85}Hall, 1965:261.
\textsuperscript{86}Membe, 1969. Applications for preacher licenses "... owing to the present depression in the Copperbelt..." were made by Muwamba. See Lusaka archives file ZA 1/9/1/1.
\textsuperscript{87}Membe, 1969:32.
Except for the large expansion from the Copperbelt towns into the Northern Luapula provinces, the remaining growth for the church continued to be along the line of rail and in the major towns. By 1933, there were A.M.E. congregations at Livingstone, Kalomo, Choma, Matabuka, Mapanza, Monze, Lusaka, Mumbwa, Namwala, Broken Hill, Ndola, Nkana, Kitwe, Mufulira, Luanshya, Fort Jackson and Kawambwa. Movement between the urban areas by the miners, clerks, and businessmen account for the growth of the church in the towns.

The tendency of the church was to remain in the towns and along the line of rail is also in part due to the fact that there were initially few Northern Rhodesians in the A.M.E. leadership. Most of the presiding elders were Rhodesians or South Africans and they usually preferred to live in the urban areas. In many instances, they had to rely on interpreters and the urban areas where interpreters were most easily found.

As the church moved along the line of rail and into some of the rural areas during the period 1932 to 1945, it was warmly received by the people. Recalling the mood of that period, one person explained, “There was great excitement about having a church which belonged to Africa. They brought cattle and other goods. The people gave gifts and made sacrifices... It was the people’s first time to see an African minister. He was like Jesus.”

Political and social circumstances favored the continued growth of the church in Northern Rhodesia. The white population and government were clearly and deliberately moving in the direction of amalgamation with Southern Rhodesia, which was designed to perpetuate white rule. At the same time, Africans were becoming more conscious of political developments and more opposed to the segregation and discrimination they experienced. Moreover, the white churches were not responsive to the African’s needs. The major denominations exercised strict colour bars; separate churches were built in the locations for Africans and they were not generally ordained or allowed to advance to senior posts in the church hierarchies. Politically, the white churches generally supported the official government policies which were often overtly racist.

As a Christian denomination, the A.M.E. church had certain natural advantages under these conditions. The history of the church’s birth and growth in the United States and in South Africa was widely known. The obvious similarity between the conditions in Northern Rhodesia and those facing the founding fathers of the church was very great. In a sense membership in the A.M.E. church represented an assertion of African pride in circumstances where it was otherwise suppressed. The A.M.E. church also profited from the fact that it was clearly and genuinely sympathetic to African interests. The result was that the church grew rapidly during its early days.

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38Lusaka archives files SEC/NAT 286 and KSN 3/1/4.
39Comments of an A.M.E. member who remembers the A.M.E. church entering her village.
The government records after 1940 contain very little information about the A.M.E. church. This fact indicates that the authorities were not anxious about its activities. It was not considered a mission church, so information about it was not kept in the records of missionary activities. Also, the concern about the political consequences of the Watchtower movement had lessened, so there was apparently little reason to give it attention as a ‘separatist’ church. The general attitude at that time seems to have been that the teachings of the A.M.E. were “...purely religious and not political or subversive...”40 “The churches are not very well organized and rather ineffective, but quite harmless except that ministers of the Church are sometimes liable to be light-fingered with the funds. On the whole, the church has a good reputation and as a body gives us no trouble at all.”41

Later, during the Central African Federation, and until self-government, the government showed little concern for the A.M.E. church. The rise of the political organizations and trade unions which threatened white rule absorbed its attention. Whereas the A.M.E. membership contained a very high percentage of the ‘militants’ during the 1930’s and 1940’s, the 1950’s saw many of these patriots defecting. The A.M.E. had already begun its decline in importance relative to other denominations. It was no longer an institution of consequence.

The Critical Years

After about 1950, it seems that the A.M.E., while continuing to increase its membership, did not grow as rapidly as some of the other denominations. This fact is the result of two major weaknesses in the church organization. One weakness was its inability to provide the social services which the people needed and which other denominations were providing. The second weakness was its inability to train its ministry and effectively organize its financial administration. These weaknesses were not unnoticed by the local leaders. Indeed, urgent pleas for assistance in these areas have gone forth to the mother church for several decades. The weaknesses in the church continued, though, mainly because the church in the United States was not forthcoming with the funds required to launch effective training and supervision programmes for the ministry and to establish a network of A.M.E. schools and clinics.

During the late 1940’s and all of the 1950’s, the demand for education among Africans in Northern Rhodesia was very great. However, the colonial administration gave little attention to meeting the African’s

40 Lusaka archives file SEC/NAT 286.
41 Lusaka archives file SEC/NAT 286. Indeed, it seems that to some extent the A.M.E. did not get the attention it deserved. No reports were made about its missions, the number of members, its schools, and so forth. It is noteworthy in this connection that the decline of government concern about the A.M.E. and other African controlled churches coincides with the rise in activity of the welfare associations, trade unions, and political parties. At the government’s intention was to prevent an African revolt, these new organizations became identified with seditious tendencies and concern with African churches waned.
eduidational needs. The missions were looked to by all to provide schools. “In one district it is said that natives select their church denomination according to the amount of secular education they are likely to obtain rather than from any deep religious conviction and that the greater the facilities for the learning of a trade, the greater the number of people who come to the mission meetings.”

Many Africans naturally assumed that the A.M.E., because it was an African-controlled church and because of its well known educational institutions in the United States and South Africa, would provide education which was more relevant. The church itself was aware of the need to teach English language and literature because they are the ‘keys to all knowledge’ and could teach the local people to “think for themselves rather than always depending on the energies of others.”

Leaders within the church were conscious of the need to build schools. They realized that much of their membership was being forced to leave in favour of joining other denominations so that their children could obtain education. On this issue, the wife of an A.M.E. bishop reported, “The subject of education is of greatest importance because of the extreme shortage of government schools. Each mission is expected to have its own schools, the lack of them hindering the progress of the church ... several hundred members left the church because of the lack of school facilities. Whenever children from our church go to any of the other mission schools, they are told that their parents must join that particular church before the children may be admitted.”

As early as 1925, Rev. H. M. Phiri applied to the government of Northern Rhodesia to build an A.M.E. school near Fort Jameson. In 1932, the A.M.E. church operated one of the two schools for Africans in Luanshya. It was primarily a night school where English was taught but it also gave some instruction in ordinary classroom subjects up to Standard I. About that same time, the A.M.E. was trying to establish a school near Mporokoso. It is likely that there were more schools sponsored by A.M.E. congregations during the church’s early days in the country, but government records are inadequate on this point as are the A.M.E. records.

It is significant that the largest growth points for the church during the period 1932 to 1945 were in those places where the schools were successful. In the Northern and Luapula provinces, for instance, there were three A.M.E. schools by 1942 — one at Chiyanga, one at Chilwa and one at Chipwa. They were founded by Rev. J. L. C. Membe and were primary schools. Chilwa school was the largest, having four teachers and approximately 400 students. Chiyanga had three teachers and

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42 Annual report on Native Affairs (Northern Rhodesia) 1931, p. 40.
43 Muwamba, 1931.
45 Kasaka archives file KSN 3/-/4. The Annual Report on Native Education 1932, Appendix VII-VIII reports that the A.M.E. church had one school with an enrollment of 20 boys and 10 girls. The government gave a grant of £8.00 for salaries.
46 Membe, 1969
about 316 students. The Chipwa school had two teachers and about 117 students.47

Another of the church's growth points was in the Kaloma/Choma area where Nachula school was located. The A.M.E. mission at Nachula was established in 1932 by Rev. J. Marumo. Nachula was a primary school which concentrated on the teaching of English and Arithmetic. As a result of Marumo's active missionary work, the church and school grew rapidly and the government received applications for more than a half a dozen smaller schools in the nearby villages prior to 1940.48 Many of the smaller schools failed after some time due to lack of funds.

In the mid-1940's there were 7 A.M.E. schools in Northern Rhodesia — one at Mwinilunga, with two teachers; one at Mulungushi, with one teacher; one at Nachula, with one teacher; one at Molebatsi with two teachers; one at Chisanga with two teachers.49 The schools, however, did not receive regular support from the Annual Conference or the Episcopal District. Normally they were financed by the local congregations, with the pastors contributing their meagre resources. Most of the schools eventually failed due to the lack of funds to pay the recurrent expenses of teacher's salaries or the inability to meet the government requirements. Mission schools of other denominations were able to survive primarily because of the grants-in-aid and other support they received from the government. The A.M.E. church schools did not receive grants-in-aid 'because they did not have certified teachers' and because the government's policy was 'to discourage schools belonging to this denomination'.50 Funds were not forthcoming from the church in the United States, so the schools eventually languished.

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's there have been attempts to revive some of the A.M.E. schools. But by 1955, the church had not succeeded in gaining recognition as a proprietor of schools and it had no schools in operation. Zambian clergy and lay leaders continued to press the mother church for funds for education facilities but finance proved to be an insurmountable problem.51

With regard to health facilities, records indicate that there has been only one A.M.E. sponsored clinic. Rev. J. M. Mubita, who was appointed to Namitome in Baortseland, noticed the Mongu General Hospital did not meet the needs of all of the A.M.E. members. He therefore started a clinic at his home in 1952 with drugs provided by the Provincial Medical Officer. In 1958, Rev. Mubita purchased another house to use as the clinic and made grants to it to help its operations. The clinic continued functioning until 1962, when the government insisted that the A.M.E. church pay some fees in return for the medications and

47This information obtained from Rev. Membe.
48See Lusaka archives files ACC 90/31, ACC 90/28.
49Wright, 1947:324.
50Lusaka archives file ZA 1/9/172/2.  
51To contrast Northern Rhodesia to the other countries in the 17th Episcopal District, it should be noted that, in 1961, there were six A.M.E. schools in Southern Rhodesia and three in Nyasaland.
salaries it supplied. Neither the Annual Conference or the Episcopal Dis-
trict provided these funds so Namitome Clinic was closed down.52

The list of social service facilities begun by A.M.E. ministers can
probably never be completed. As most of them were purely local efforts,
there was often no record of them. Indeed, the Annual Conference or
Episcopal District were never able to take the responsibility for establish¬
ing social service facilities. The best they could do was to occasionally
give funds to those projects which had begun locally. The consequences
of the failure of the mother church to encourage and financially support
the Northern Rhodesia church during this critical period cannot be over¬
emphasized. As late as 1961, the bishop assigned to central Africa cor¬
rectly admonished the mother church, “If we fail them, I can only say
our future here as a church will slowly pass into a non-existing organi¬
sation.”53 This process is at present well under way.

Also during the period of 1945 to 1960, the effects of the absence
of a trained ministry became increasingly apparent.54 Most circuits were
poorly administered due to the pastor’s lack of knowledge of funda¬
mental organizational procedures and basic financial and record-
keeping principles. As knowledge of English and the acquisition of
secondary education became symbols of accomplishments and status,
and as these skills became more indispensable to life in Zambia, the
A.M.E. ministry gradually slipped from being in the vanguard of emerg¬
ning African talent to a position where it attracted many men who did
not have the ability to succeed elsewhere. Increasingly, the church did
not attract the bright, young men because it did not provide opportuni¬
ties for them to receive higher education and, being unsalaried, because
it offered no financial security. The absence of skilled leadership has
clearly had disastrous long term consequences for the church, aiding its
slow decline in appeal.55

Relative Decline in Appeal

Thus during the critical years of 1945 to 1960, the church failed to
establish the strong foundations of social service facilities and a trained
ministry on which its future would depend. These years were still years
of growth in membership, however, because the racial and political cir¬
cumstances of Northern Rhodesia continued to give the A.M.E. church,
as an African-controlled church, some advantages vis-a-vis most other
denominations. Expansion of the membership during this period was also
a function of the increased number of Northern Rhodesian ministers who
were familiar with local customs and who could speak local languages.

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52 This information provided in verbal and written form by Rev. J. Mubita.
53 Voice of Missions, 1961:10
55 At the present time, the two most able ministers are 62 and 68 years of age respec¬
tively. There are no younger men who are seen to have their talents or who are thought
likely to be successful heirs.
But the growth was deceptive. As the Northern Rhodesian society changed and as the policies of the other churches changed, the A.M.E. church was thrust into a poor relative position. The church's main attracting attributes had been providing opportunities for leadership and authority, relating positively to African nationalism, providing the functions of an adaptive institution and helping to meet the need for new forms of social organization in the urbanized society. It performed these functions at a time when few other institutions did so — thus giving it relatively distinctive attributes and enhancing its appeal. However, during the late 1950's and early 1960's, these attributes became increasingly shared by other institutions within the society. No longer having distinctive attributes, the A.M.E.'s weaknesses with regard to trained ministry and social service facilities began to stand out and relegated it to a poor position in terms of mass appeal. The consequences of the church's failure to correct its weaknesses is that today it is declining.

It would take an analysis of the A.M.E. church in America to understand fully why it was unable to maximize the opportunities which existed for it in Zambia. More significant here, however, is that the A.M.E. church is not unlike other black American denominations with congregations in Africa. The attribute of being black churches, controlled by black people, made them distinctive in the African context and gave them an advantage vis-a-vis other foreign denominations.

Unfortunately, black denominations on the whole were not able to capitalize on their attributes. None have been fully able to exploit the opportunities for serving the African people and for expanding the institutions themselves. Africa is now independent. If the A.M.E. church in Zambia is representative, the process of evolving modern societies has changed the needs and circumstances and made the attributes of black denominations less relevant.

Yet, in some instances the black denominations have had a significant impact on the history of Africa. Often they have been important social institutions. Indeed, the prominent role of Africans in starting, building and administering the A.M.E. Church in Zambia testifies to the strong appeal and vitality of this great black institution.

But more research is required. Why was the mother church so uninvolved with Africa that the existence of congregations in places like Zambia is almost unknown? Was the failure of the church to adapt in Africa due to negligence in the United States or due to unavoidable circumstances? What happened with other denominations in Africa?

In short, there is an important dimension of the black church in America which remains to be unfolded. The story of the A.M.E. Church in Zambia is one small part of the total picture.
THE HISTORY OF THE A.M.E. CHURCH

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BOOK REVIEWS

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

by: Dr. MAJOR J. JONES

Abingdon Press, 1974

pp. 205, $4.50

I. Analysis

In this new work Dr. Jones provides the reader with a conceptual framework for understanding the meaning and function of Christian ethics for Black Theology. The structure and exposition, in terms of the author’s desire to achieve theological and socio-historical continuity, are reflective in part of his previous volume, Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope.

In the quest for a viable Black Theology on the contemporary American scene, Dr. Jones believes that there is a lack of awareness, seemingly on the part of those who do theology from a black frame of reference, to be seriously concerned about adequate ethical formulations in the black struggle. Even in the black community’s attempt to build a more constructive posture within the social system of the larger culture, it is the “ethical-burden” of Black Theology to demand that the “politics of God” and the “politics of liberation” be consistent and coherent in black theological discourse. So then, a central purpose behind writing such a book grows out of the author’s deep concern for relating ethics to the corpus of Black Theology.

Descriptively speaking Part I, being divided into five chapters, contains a masterful survey of selected ethical themes of the Christian faith on the one hand, and the Black religious experience, on the other. These themes or ethical formulation—particularly the force of the “Ethical Imperative”—are critically related to Black Theology and the perennial struggle on the part of black people for liberation, political consciousness, recognition and self-respect in American society.

This section of the volume poses such pertinent questions as: “What does the Christian faith with its seeming inability to deal adequately with the problem of racism in America have to say about the current politics of liberation?” “What is the moral requirement of the Gospel in the light of the black condition of oppression and injustice?” “What can Jesus say to the black man in his struggle for freedom and full recognition in a predominantly white society?” There are basic issues which the author seeks to illuminate.

Concretely, the basic problem raised by Dr. Jones in Part I, and I think rightly so, is the meaning and function of the “Ethical Imperative” in the life of the ex-slave, oppressed black man, and his attempt to define the boundaries of his own identity as well as to discover new objects of value—over against the reality of the ex-slave master, the white oppressor!

Part II of this volume expressed two broad categories of concern from the vantage point of Christian ethics: (1) Category-One identifies some theoretical conceptual dilemmas in the black man’s quest for a viable Christian social strategy for liberation and the search for an adequate ethical strategy for the politics of liberation.

(2) Category-Two poses the problem of revolution and the possibilities and expectations of hope in the modern world; and how we may ascertain an adequate Christian understanding of the concept. On the issue of violence or revolutionary confrontation with the enemy, the writer feels that an ethic of distress might be appropriate, which grows out of a situation of desperation and crisis, but such an ethic seeks no justification from the Christian faith.

II. Ethical Contribution

In terms of the importance of this work, Dr. Jones book, Christian Ethics for Black Theology, makes a contribution to the present discussion in two primary ways. First, by pointing to the neglected area of ethical formulation it becomes increasingly clear that a viable relationship between ethics and Black Theology should and ought to be an “established assumption”, a functional prerequisite for meaningful reflection. Second, the author makes a valid case for the recognition that ethics and eschatology are essential to black political theology; and to an adequate concept of liberation. They share an interdependent character.

Moreover, the future of Black religion and the value of the Black Church may well depend on how black theologians come to terms with a principle of correlation between ethics and eschatology in the black experience.

In these respects this work is a credible document of theological-moral reflection, although controversial and at times provocative. It is a beginning in the right direction, especially its emphasis on an “assumed posture of freedom” rooted in the ethics of hope. But laying these points aside it is questionable whether the book provides the reader with a constructive ethical system—having the capacity to move the black community from a kind of “cynical despair” to a dynamic synthesis based on trust, respect for diversity, and
BOOK REVIEWS

There are three principal problem-areas, as I see it, in this work. Perhaps its main problem is that it depends too heavily, at least initially, upon James Gustafson’s formulation of the ethical problem, namely, “What Ought I To Do?” I believe that while this ethical question is necessary for the black Christian to come to terms with—as an oppressed, de-humanized being—it is not, in and of itself, sufficient. It seems to me that the crucial question for the Black American is not simply “What ought I to do?” but rather “What Ought We To Do” in this situation of continuous oppression, alienation, and exploitation by the larger socio-cultural system?

Second, Jones’ Christian ethics for Black Theology tends to equate what is moral with what is obligatory in the black struggle for liberation and human dignity. Etymologically, the term “moral” comes from the Latin: mos or mores which means customs or manners; whereas the term “obligation” comes from the Latin: obli-gatus implying a binding claim upon the agent with reference to ethical discourse. Hence there is a latent tendency to exclude all virtues from what is moral because they are dispositions other than the one morally good dispositions, i.e., agapeic love, to fulfill obligations out of a sense of obligation! Put another way, ethical perception begs the recognition that what is “moral” may not necessarily be obligatory. While we are morally obligated to love the oppressor and the oppressed under the rubric of Christian ethics, it does not logically follow that love is an indissoluble principle of social conduct. Given the “dialectics of black oppression” in a pro-white society, real love must be both discerning and morally tenacious.

A third difficulty in Jones’ ethical thought is the lack of specificity and theoretical clarity relative to the tasks of Black Christian ethics. If we accept, as a working assumption, that one of the tasks of Black Christian ethics is to illuminate the human condition by clarifying the moral values, religious beliefs, and ideals by which black people live, then it follows that this present volume by Major J. Jones is not only axiologically problematic but metaethically problematic as well. In the former, it does not sufficiently delineate many of the pragmatic and instrumental values by which black people live; in the latter, there appears to be an absence of a theory of values or criteria for “hard-nose” decision-making in the Black community.

In the final analysis, ethical reflection in the black community must not become merely ideological but self-critical and self-corrective; if ethics is to do more than justify given positions, it must achieve a more reconciling spirit amidst the pluralism of the Black experience.

Enoch H. Oglesby

UNDERGROUND MANUAL FOR MINISTERS’ WIVES

by RUTH TRUMAN


It is possible to avoid the real or imaginary pressures to which a ministers’ wife is subject, and Ruth Truman describes how she has managed to do so. Viewing the ministry as more of an “ob-session” rather than a “pro-fession”, the author focuses on various unique aspects of living in this kind of environment. The subject is handled on the basis that there is no other occupation that allows for such complete sharing in the life and events of so many people as does the life of a minister’s wife and therefore she, too, is important.

The author speaks out on virtually everything from raising children to maintaining individuality in the shadow of the parsonage. Relating her own naive and near collapse, Mrs. Truman prepares new comers for a role which has its traditional stereotypes on one hand and extreme non-conformity on the other. For wives well seasoned in this role, the experiences will be reminiscent of personal errors and solutions.

The starting point is with yourself—the wife, very much in love with her husband and committed to the happiness and well being of both of you. The first problem emerges when demands are made which take away the privacy of this relationship. The wife is thrust into jobs to be done (or roles to be played) and frustration sets in; maintaining the home, doing emergency such frustrating as secretarial work, participating in so many church related activities, keeping a straight face—all within the same day.

Learning to cope begins with a search to determine who you are and what you want to be in this situation. The suggestions follow the usual recommendations for the mid twentieth century with an emphasis on a constant refurbishing of the spirit. “Peace Breaks” several times a day are required to help gain perspectives in the dailiness of life. Realizing, also that
you are supporting a man called of God, who struggles with his own capabilities, the role is quite an honorable one.

Ruth Truman is the wife of a Methodist minister and also works as a syndicated newspaper columnist. Her manual is written with warmth and humor and is quite readable as an autobiographical sketch of one facet of life. It would be of interest to a limited area of the population.

However, two factors make this book somewhat irrelevant as an "Underground manual" for ministers' wives: First, in an age when Women's Liberation is a much publicized fact of life, one wonders about the need for any "underground" discussion for any segment of the female population. Problems that exist and affect women can and should be verbalized openly. It is interesting that Mrs. Truman does not relate her role in connection with her own work, which would have been more practical for today's women. This is not to assume that all ministers' wives are now women's libbers, but it is an underestimation to assume that women of today are not affected by the climate and new direction of thought.

Secondly, a manual designed to deal with coping in the ministry could more appropriately be addressed to the "spouse" or "partner" since there is a growing increase of women in the ministry. There are at present a variety of sources for the wife which are still quite good when measured by the direction taken by Mrs. Truman in her Manual. If we are to remain relevant to our reading audiences, present trends must be considered.

Melva W. Costen

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COMPETENT MINISTRY
(THE END OF THE MEANS)
COMPETENT MINISTRY
by Mark Rouch. 172 pages
Abingdon Press, 1974
pp. 190, $3.75

This book can conceivably fall into the category of "How To" books. Its sub-title not only classifies the book, but states that it is a "guide to effective continuing education."

Of particular interest is that the author, Mark Rouch, appears to be convinced of an increasing need for competency also in ministries other than pastors, Christian educators, and various professional church leaders.

Following the claim that competence is the primary outcome of effective continuing education, Rouch proceeds to explain that continuing education is a long-term process with distinct events and episodes, linked together by strong continuing themes. Much of this process takes place in informal situations and groups, thus supplementing basic formal education.

He advances the concept that continuing education will not take place until and unless the individual can realize an intrinsic value in becoming competent in whatever he has chosen as his life career.

Suggesting that continuing education occurs in many and varied episodes, space is devoted to the explanation of how an individual can set up his own program for discovering where he is in his career, and how to plan for the continuing learning process throughout life.

Besides listing resources for learning, much of the book supports the notion of the professional's need of competency in order to become effective. Continuing education is skillfully linked to career development by determining the stages of a career and identifying the characteristics and crisis of each stage.

A most useful tool is the compilation of resources for continuing education found in Chapter 5. And, for anyone who will be fortunately pushed out of his lethargy after reading this book, Chapter 4 offers an excellent guide for taking some positive first steps.

This work of Rouch (as far as I can determine) can be a motivation in the attempt to release the "drive for competence" and can be effectively persuasive that continuing education is the means to an end.

Robert Earl Penn

TEXTURAL CRITICISM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:
FROM THE SEPTUAGINT TO QUMRAN
by Ralph W. Klein,
Philadelphia: Fortress Press,
1974, pp. xii plus 84, $2.75 (paperback).

Introductory works on textual criticism are notoriously difficult to write, especially in a time when one can no longer presuppose much if any knowledge of the ancient languages by the readers. Klein, a professor at Concordia Seminary in Exile, has attempted to produce such a work "for the college or seminary student."

This volume, in Fortress' Guides to Biblical Scholarship series, is not concerned directly with the whole area of OT textual criticism. His focus, as the subtitle ("The Septuagint after Qumran") on the title page suggests, is much narrower. His work is concerned with the use of the
Septuagint in textual criticism in light of the reassessment of the Septuagint following the Qumran discoveries.

The first chapter provides a history of the Septuagintal text to the time of Origen while at the same time surveying the important scholarly work on the matter prior to the discovery of the Qumran scrolls.

Chapter two provides a discussion of the impact of the Qumran scrolls on the history of the Septuagint. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, there are some Hebrew texts which have readings closer to the Septuagint than to the standard Massoretic text, other readings agree with the Massoretic text over against the Greek, and some readings are unique. Klein argues that, in light of this fact, none of the three text types (Massoretic, Septuagintal, and Qumran) are necessarily superior to the other. The variants in the Septuagint, in other words, may reflect the translators' use of a divergent pre-massoretic Hebrew text form rather than editorial and translation techniques. If this be the case, then the Greek texts offer invaluable aid in attempting to reconstruct the original form of the text as well as its recensional history.

Chapter three is an exploration of the importance of the Septuagint for textural reconstruction in the books of I Samuel, Jeremiah, the chronology in I and II Kings, and the Chronicler's redactional use of Kings. In each of these cases, Klein demonstrates that the Septuagint text must be taken seriously and that in many cases superior reading(s) are found in the Greek.

Chapter four discusses the manuscript evidence available for the Septuagint and some of the problems involved in trying to reconstruct its original form. Chapter five introduces the reader to the practice of textural criticism or how the Septuagint can be used to determine the correct or better reading.

Klein's work, which is based on the extensive manuscript studies undertaken by Frank Cross and his students at Harvard, can be profitably used by the beginning student, even one who doesn't know Hebrew or Greek. In fact, it is the finest work of its kind available. Its only weakness is its tendency to provide a history of the Septuagint and its recensions and the assumed Hebrew types on which these were based which probably goes beyond the evidence. Is it really possible to speak of an original Septuagint text of the OT?

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