THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER
An Ecumenical Professional Graduate School of Theology
Dr. Grant S. Shockley
President

The ITC Family of Schools

Gammon Theological Seminary
United Methodist
Dr. Major J. Jones, Dean

Absalom Jones Theological Institute
Episcopal
The Reverend Henry L. Parker, Director

Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary
Church of God in Christ
The Reverend Oliver J. Haney, Jr., Dean

Morehouse School of Religion
Baptist
Dr. Bobby Joe Saucer, Dean

Phillips School of Theology
Christian Methodist Episcopal
Dr. Alvin L. Dopson, Dean

Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary
United Presbyterian
Dr. James H. Costen, Dean

Turner Theological Seminary
African Methodist Episcopal
Dr. Clayton D. Wilkerson, Dean

In Affiliation With

THE ATLANTA THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

and

THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY CENTER

ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
CLARK COLLEGE
SPelman COLLEGE
MORRIS BROWN COLLEGE
MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

ITC
## Table of Contents

**Volume VI**  
**Spring 1979**  
**Number 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Liberation of Oppressors</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jürgen Moltmann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Black Church in The American Society: A New Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Eric Lincoln</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Configurational Patterns in The Function of The Church</strong></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Aging Persons: A Black Perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Streaty Wimberly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fishbowls, Foreign Devils and Authenticity: Religion and Ideology in The African Revolution</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter T. Davis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pastoral Counseling and The Spiritual Quest</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton T. Kelsey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Response to Morton T. Kelsey</strong></td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward P. Wimberley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Impact of The Black Church: Sole Surviving Institution</strong></td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Deotis Roberts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toward an Understanding of Religion and Slavery in J.W.C. Pennington</strong></td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman E. Thomas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Wesleys In Georgia: An Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Thomas Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book Reviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Baker, <em>From Wesley to Asbury: Studies in Early American Methodism.</em></td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Thomas Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert G. Tuttle, <em>John Wesley: His Life and Theology.</em></td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Thomas Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton T. Kelsey, <em>Dreams: A Way to Listen to God.</em></td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merle R. Jordan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel Leo Erskine, <em>Black People and The Reformed Church in America.</em></td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel K. Roberts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter J. Paris, <em>Black Leaders in Conflict.</em></td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Eric Lincoln</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books Received</strong></td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: All book reviews are signed by the respective author.*
The Liberation of Oppressors

I. THE TWO ASPECTS OF OPPRESSION

The oppression of human beings by human beings is sin. It is a crime against life, for life means: “Love your neighbor as yourself because he or she is like you.” It is a destruction of the love of God: “For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (I John 4:20). The oppression of other human beings is a perversion of love because it wounds, offends, and destroys the image of God on earth.

Oppression always has two aspects: on the one side stand the oppressors, on the other the oppressed. On the one side stands the master, on the other side the slave; on the one side the exploiter, on the other his victim; on the one side the victor, on the other those who are subjugated.

Oppression and the system of oppression destroy humanity on both these sides: oppressors become inhuman, while the oppressed are dehumanized. The inhumanity of the former brings about the dehumanization of the latter.

Oppression ruins the communion of human beings with one another. In place of communion in life appears a deadly hostility.

Oppression destroys humanity on both sides but in different ways: on the one side through evil, on the other through suffering. The evil of the one is the cause of the suffering of the other, and the latter is the consequence of the former.

If oppression has these two aspects, then the process of liberation from oppression must begin simultaneously on both these sides: the liberation of the oppressed from suffering under oppression occurs simultaneously with the liberation of oppressors from the sin of oppression, and vice versa. Otherwise there is no true liberation into freedom. The goal can be nothing other than the new and true communion of humankind, in which there are no longer either oppressed or oppressors. This is the meaning of “life against death.”

Liberation creates humanity on both sides but in different ways: the liberation of the oppressed—of those who are the victims of power, the innocent sufferers—is a moral duty and in many situations self-evident, in any case for the oppressed. However, in most cases the liberation of the oppressors is not self-evident, in any case not for the latter, who realize advantages from their sin. Oppressors are for the most part blind: they do not see the suffering of their victims, which they have brought about. They justify their evil on many grounds; they are blinded.

*Dr. Moltmann of Tübingen presented this paper as The University Lecture, Vanderbilt Divinity School, 26 January 1978. The translation of Dr. Moltmann’s manuscript is by Professor Peter G. Hodgson, Chairman, Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt.
The liberation of the oppressed corresponds to the interest and desire of the oppressed. But the liberation of oppressors contradicts the interest and desire of the masters.

Thus the liberation of oppressors is a religious task that transcends all moral power: the inhuman must die in order that humanity might be reborn.

For the liberation of the oppressed the biblical traditions contain the well-known and always inspiring symbol of the Exodus. Through hope and struggle the oppressed enter upon the way to freedom. By contrast, the liberation of oppressors comes about by means of the suffering and death of Christ on the Cross; it means the forgiveness of sins, repentance and rebirth to new life in discipleship to the Crucified.

The well-known “theologies of liberation” are without exception theologies of the “liberation of the oppressed,” whether they be black, feminist, or socialist theologies. At their best, they give expression to the faith of the victims and awaken their hopes. It is obvious, then, that they should be “onesided.” They must be onesided, for how else could the hope of the victims of racism, of masculinism, and of capitalism be expressed than by the victims themselves standing up and giving more to their faith?

It is obvious that the problem of evil, the power of sin, and liberation from the burden of guilt should take second place to the analysis of suffering and of the cry of those who suffer.

Nor should the fact be criticized that liberation theology is a theology of Exodus and Resurrection, not a theology of Cross and Judgment. For what else do Exodus and Resurrection mean than salvation for the oppressed? We would be chasing after the ideal of a “heavenly theology” if we were to seek in every respect of multifaceted and balanced theology. In the conflicts of this earth theology must be prophetic; i.e., it must be one-sided, critical, and liberating if it is to save all together.

But we may rightly criticize the fact that so far no theology of liberation has emerged on the other side of the oppressive situation. That we allow ourselves to be frightened or supported by the black, feminist, and socialist theologies of liberation, and have become tolerant and benevolent toward them, is a mark of callousness, not of intelligence. We need a “liberating theology for oppressors.”

Thus far we have arrived at no insights for a theology of oppressors from the theology of the oppressed. The reason for this is that we members of the white, masculine, rich world are indeed able to acknowledge the liberation of others, but are not willing to recognize ourselves as “oppressors.” Thus we display good intentions but no insight. We want to be liberal and neglect thereby our own liberation. Whoever wishes to help the oppressed to gain their freedom must begin with himself: he must cease being their oppressor. He must liberate himself. This is not a question of a bad conscience that allows itself to be blackmailed by demands for reparation. It is rather the question of one’s own future.

Corresponding to the freedom of the oppressed on the one side is a
liberating conversion in the case of the oppressor. Corresponding to the “daily bread” of the oppressed is the forgiveness of the sins of the oppressor. Corresponding to the Exodus is discipleship to the Cross, and corresponding to class conflict is a “betrayal” of one’s class. A “liberating theology of oppressors” is not simply a transposition of the liberating theology of the oppressed into another situation. Nor is it an ideological exploitation of the oppressed. Rather it is the counter-image to that theology. In order to understand that theology, we do not ask ourselves, “In what respects are we also oppressed?” Rather, in order to understand our own salvation, we ask, “How, why, and in what respects have we shared in their oppression?”

Because many persons are oppressed while at the same time they share in the oppression of others, and hence are “oppressed oppressors,” it is important to recognize liberation on both sides of the oppression-situation.

II. PHENOMENA OF OPPRESSION AND FORMS OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION

We begin with an analysis of the most difficult forms of oppression today, directing our attention not to the oppressed but to the oppressors. What do they do? How do they do it? Why do they do it? We shall treat in representative fashion the phenomena of racism, sexism, and capitalism in order to inquire after the cause for these phenomena of inhumanity.

A. Racism. We understand racism in the way defined by UNESCO and the World Council of Churches in 1968:

By racism we mean ethnocentric pride in one’s own racial group and preference for the distinctive characteristics of that group; belief that these characteristics are fundamentally biological in nature and are thus transmitted to succeeding generations; strong negative feelings towards other groups who do not share these characteristics coupled with the thrust to discriminate against and exclude the outgroup from full participation in the life of the community.1

In the enumeration of attitudes that are called “racist,” this definition is comprehensive, but it is certainly not complete. Regardless of that, it is clear in the case of each of the aspects of this definition that the characteristics of one’s own race are identified with human being itself: e.g., to be human means to be white. Persons of other races are therefore perceived as “subhuman,” as persons of lesser value and smaller capabilities: they “descend from apes,” it used to be said. They are “underdeveloped,” we say today. The characteristics of one’s own race are utilized for the purpose of self-justification. The feeling of self-value is based on one’s own skin-color. The right to domination is legitimated by one’s own race: the northern or white races are destined to rule over “mixed peoples” or “slavish peoples” or “underdeveloped” peoples. In racism one’s own identity is always defined by means of discriminating against other races. For the racist identity is a negative, cramped, and aggressive identity.

One can observe forms of this racism that have not yet become dangerous in all peoples and social strata [Bevölkerungsschichten]. Group egoism and fear of what is strange are found everywhere. However, this latent racism becomes dangerous when the potential for anxiety and aggression stored up in it is applied to the construction of systems of mastery and oppression, of enslavement and exploitation of persons of other races. Then racism is not simply a group phenomenon but a means of psychological warfare waged by the dominant against the dominated. Then persons of other races are banished to a lowly caste. As “second class citizens” they are deprived of fundamental human and civil rights. As slaves and workers they are condemned to a perpetual dependence. The superiority feelings of the dominant race engender inferiority feelings in the subjugated races.

In its concrete form racism always has two aspects, an inner and an outer: it is a psychic mechanism for self-justification and an ideological mechanism for the subjugation of other persons. Therefore it can be overcome only (1) when people surrender the racist identification of their human being and find a nonaggressive identity “as human,” and (2) when a “redistribution of power” from the powerful to the powerless and from the dominators to the oppressed gives everyone equal economic, legal, and political opportunities for the realization of their human being.

Racism as self-justification and self-assertion manifests a superhuman pride and in fact is nothing other than an inhuman anxiety. Whoever identifies being human with being white destroys himself. And because he always transposes his anxiety into aggression against others, he destroys community. He sees in the other person only the other race, not in the other race a person like himself. His despising, insulting, and subjugating of others is basically self-hatred. And his self-hatred is in truth hatred of God, a miscarried love of God.

B. Sexism. By masculine “sexism” we understand the mastery of men over women on the basis of privileges that they see in their manhood. By analogy to the definition of racism, masculine sexism is to be conceived as a masculine pride in one’s own sex, favoring the special characteristics of masculinity in culture, the conviction that these characteristics are fundamentally of a biological nature and therefore are determined, combined with the depreciation of women to the “weaker sex,” the devaluing of presumed “feminine” attributes, and the exclusion of women from full participation in the life of society.

Patriarchy has arisen from masculine sexism. And history clearly begins with patriarchy, in so far as we understand by “history” the struggle for power. Thus earlier matriarchal cultures have indeed been called “pre-historical.” The struggle for power was clearly foreign to them. From the beginning, patriarchy was aggressive. “Men make history,” it is said. The “graveyards of history” show this to be the case—unfortunately!

Judaeo-Christian culture has been strongly determined by sexism and patriarchy. According to the Tenth Commandment, the wife is included among the property of the (obviously masculine) neighbor, after which
THE LIBERATION OF OPPRESSORS

the other person—also a man—is not to lust any more than he is after the neighbor’s “house, slave, maidservant, ox or ass.” This is not exactly flattering for the woman as human and as God’s image. Indeed according to the Priestly source (Gen. 1), human beings are created in God’s image as “male and female.” But this memory of original equality is immediately obscured again by the Yahwist (Gen. 2:3): the woman is created second and is the first to fall into sin. As punishment therefore the woman is to suffer “pain in childbearing,” have “desire for her husband,” and “he is to rule over her” (Gen. 3:16). Thereby on mythical grounds it is established that man is destined to dominate over woman in the eyes of God and the world, and woman is condemned to subjugation and dependence in every respect.

The characteristics of masculine sexuality are turned into a form of self-justification: complete human being means masculine being. Woman is seen as a human being of lesser rank with lesser capabilities. In the language of the Yahwist she is the “wife of the man.” The so-called “feminine” attributes are under-valued in the aggressive culture of men.

The domination of man over woman is legitimated by his own sex: man is ordained to leadership, initiative, and mastery. Man’s place is in the public world; woman’s place is the home.

In masculine sexism male identity is always defined by discriminating against the other sex. Sexist identity is a negative, aggressive identity: man defines himself by saying that he is “not a woman,” as in the Jewish prayer of thanksgiving, and by not allowing himself to be “feminized,” as in the fraternal orders. Femininity is equated with weakness.

Sexism, like racism, is more than a group phenomenon: it is also a means of waging psychological warfare on the part of dominating males against dominated females. Masculine feelings of superiority thus produce permanent feminine inferiority complexes, based on the notion that their dependence is willed by God and determined by nature.

In its concrete form masculine sexism always has two sides, an inner and an outer: it is a psychic mechanism of self-justification and an ideological mechanism for the subjugation and utilization of the other sex. Therefore it can be overcome only (1) when men give up the sexist narrowmindedness of their manhood and find a nonaggressive identity “as human,” and (2) when a “redistribution of power” gives men and women equal economic, legal, social, and political opportunities for the realization of their human being and their human community with one another.

Masculine sexism, which we have here called masculinism, entails self-justification for the sake of self-assertion and self-assertion for the sake of world-mastery. But the superhuman pride of men is in truth nothing other than an expression of an inhuman anxiety. From a psychoanalytic point of view, the second creation story, which describes the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam, represents a remarkable reversal of the natural birth-process. The myth of the fall shows a similar projection of the very opposite of the actual state of affairs. Whoever identifies being human with being masculine destroys himself. Because
he compensates for his self-anxiety through aggression toward the woman, he destroys the human community between man and woman. Masculine sexism is basically self-hatred, and this self-hatred is also a form of the miscarried love of God.

C. Capitalism. What the emergence of capitalism has signified for the misery of the proletariat has often enough been discussed. We inquire here into the other side, the self-incurred misery of the middle class. For the ownership class and the class of the proletariat represent the same human self-estrangement. [But] the former class is content with this situation and recognizes the estrangement to be its own power. It has the appearance of a human existence. But the subjugated class experiences its negation in this estrangement and glimpses in it the actuality of an inhuman existence.²

Max Weber has exhaustively described this “spirit of capitalism” and its religious roots. The self-estrangement of the middle class resides in the religious deification of vocation, work, and success, and in self-sacrifice to them. It resides in the modern works-righteousness of these “inner-worldly” forms. Whoever falls under the compulsion of this works-righteousness becomes “inhuman without rest and repose.” As evidence of this, Max Weber cites a German immigrant who describes his Yankee stepfather in Ohio as follows:

Couldn’t the old man be satisfied with his $75,000 a year and rest? No! The frontage of the store must be widened to 400 feet. Why? That beats everything, he says. In the evening when his wife and daughter read together, he wants to go to bed. Sundays he looks at the clock every five minutes to see when the day will be over—What a futile life.³

This judgment is correct: activity obsessed by success denies its own life. Prior to Weber, Karl Marx had already commented on capitalism in this ironic though striking fashion:

“Self-denial, the self-denial of life . . . is its major dogma. The less that you eat and drink, the fewer books you buy, the less that you go to the theatre, the dance, the inn, the less that you think, love, theoretize, sing, paint, poetize, etc., the more you save, the greater will become your treasure, which neither moths nor dust can destroy your capital. The less that you exist, the less that you express your life, the more you have, the greater is your externalized life, the more that you hoard your estranged essence.”⁴

Capitalism is in this respect a self-estrangement, which cheats persons of a vital existence through the appearance of having—a misplaced existence in the literal sense of the word.

Long before Karl Marx and Max Weber, Martin Luther had criticized capitalism in his Large Catechism as an especially abhorrent form of idolatry. Luther proceeds from the basic anthropological structure of faith:

To have a God is simply to trust and believe in one with our whole heart. As I have often said, the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and confidence are right, then likewise your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your confidence is false, if it is wrong, then you have not the true God. For the

⁴Karl Marx, op. cit.
two, faith and God, have inevitable connection. Now, I say, whatever your heart clings
to and confides in, that is really your God . . . Many a one thinks he has God and entire
sufficiency if he has money and riches; in them he trusts and proudly and securely
boasts that he cares for no one. He surely has a god, called mammon . . . that is, money
and riches . . . upon which he fixes his whole heart. This is a universal idol upon earth.9

Whoever falls under the compulsion of capitalism will in many respects
be alienated from his or her true self:
1. One will be compelled always to justify oneself by means of work,
accomplishment, profit and progress: human beings are what they
accomplish. One will be judged and valued according to one’s
accomplishments and possessions. This compulsion always to justify
oneself by means of work distorts all trust in human being. Thus children
are already put down by saying to them: “You must work in order to be a
success. For you are nothing.”
2. One will be compelled to worship an idol, for one will find it
necessary to place one’s faith and one’s trust in the increase of capital.
Like all idols, mammon demands sacrifice and finally devours its
worshippers like a Moloch.
3. Accumulated riches represent a potential but unusable life. This
accumulation of possibilities represents the “appearance of human
existence” but not its actuality, because these possibilities can be hoarded
only at the cost of actuality. Thus riches that have been saved up cheat a
person of a loving and vital life. They are supposed to eliminate anxiety
for the future, but instead they increase precisely this anxiety because
they depend upon the future and are not able to overcome it.
4. Wealth isolates. In so far as the ownership classes are able to enrich
and maintain themselves only at the cost of the laboring, exploited, and
impoverished classes, capitalism destroys the human community. Society
will be divided into classes. The ruling classes live in a permanent civil war
with the subjugated classes, who are compelled to work for wages. Even
within the ruling classes, the principle of competition divides human
beings from each other and causes them to struggle against each other.
Wealth isolates groups and finally the individual, who finds him- or
herself in an essentially hostile world.
Capitalism has a structure similar to racism and sexism, yet has a
different appearance. While in racism it is one’s own race and in sexism
one’s own sex that are misused as the basis for self-valuing and
self-justification, in capitalism it is the capital accumulated from one’s
own labor but mostly from the labor of others. Unlike race and sex, labor
and capital are not delimited but rather have an essentially limitless,
imperialistic character. The power of labor can exploit every human
being. Everyone can be made a consumptive slave of Coca Cola. Through
the increase and investment of capital, further power can be
accumulated, which is not possible through mere racism or sexism. Thus
today racism and sexism become most dangerous through their
combination with capitalism, just as in earlier times they became

9Dr. Martin Luther’s Large Catechism (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1935),
pp. 44-45.
dangerous by being woven into the caste structure and feudalism. Capitalism represents the unlimited, permanent increase of power and therefore the unabated struggle for mastery. The aggressiveness which capitalism encourages in order to build its world must—if we are to pursue this aggression—anxiety thesis—have its source in a limitless anxiety, which it presupposes and extends. If this is so, then capitalism must be seen as a form—perhaps the ultimate form—of human self-hatred. For the first time in history, the potential for self-destruction and destruction of the earth lies in the hands of alienated human beings. This is what makes the situation so dangerous and apocalyptic.

III. THE CAUSE: UNHAPPY LOVE AND DISTORTED TRUST

We have described the phenomena of racism, sexism, and capitalism as phenomena of aggression. We have discovered anxiety at the heart of aggression, and the impulse to self-assertion at the heart of anxiety. We now inquire further into the cause for this cramped way of existing. Usually one is concerned with sociological and psychological analyses of suffering and condemns the racist, sexist, and capitalistic aggression against human beings in the name of the victims. However, moral condemnation is superficial because it does not recognize the compulsive forms of action which inescapably befall an unsuccessful and forsaken existence. A controversy has emerged among the liberation theologians over the "root of all evil," for only when one traces evil to the roots is one "radical" in the literal sense of the word. But whoever regards capitalism or sexism as the root of all evil does not find its root. One cannot explain why human beings fall into capitalistic aggression or why men oppress and subjugate women. The secularization of the doctrine of original sin has led us into error: such phenomena are interpreted ideologically, and their removal will bring about a utopia.

Since Paul and Augustine, Christian theology has traced the phenomena of sin back to the origin of sin. The multiple acts of sin (peccatum actuale) are rooted in the one sin of existence (peccatum originale). This original sin is of transmoral character, for it concerns the being of human beings, their vitality, their psychic energy, their elementary life; in brief, they themselves. And because being always proceeds action, this being of sin constitutes the origin (peccatum originans) for the many sins of commission and omission.

The doctrine of original sin contains three dimensions, which must not be overlooked: (1) Human beings do not merely have sins; they are sinners. (2) Sin is not a moral error but a compulsion; a servitude of the will. (3) This faulted mode of being and this compulsion are universal.

The doctrine of evil as sin is a doctrine of hope: sin does not constitute human nature but is a peculiarity of our history. For God, therefore, and through him, it can be overcome. Sin belongs neither to morals nor to tragedy. Where then does it belong? What is intended by this notion of original sin?

1. Original Sin Is Miscarried Love of God. This answer of Augustine is theologically and psychologically appropriate. Theologically it means
that human beings have been created for God. Their entire nature is one of passionate love. God is the fullness of their blessedness. The infinite God is the happiness of humankind; and the limitless love of the latter is the joy of God. If this love is withdrawn from God and directed to nondivine beings or things, then unhappiness arises: finite things cannot satisfy infinite love. An infinite love destroys the finite beauty of things. From a love that has lost God arises an unquenchable and therefore all-destructive passion—a passion for power and possession. The love that can find no fulfillment is perverted into anxiety. The love that is disappointed in its expectations is perverted into vandalism. Then the wrath, i.e., the scorned love, of God comes to expression, not in the form of moral punishment but as abandonment: for this reason “God has given them up” to their perverted senses (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). In history, guilt and judgment are combined: those who abandon God in their love are abandoned by God. This abandonment presses upon miscarried love and drives it into a corner. The abandoned God makes himself noticeable in his absence. Therefore the miscarried love of God is spread abroad in the world in the form of unfortunate greed and unhappiness.

Thus it follows psychologically that the essence of historical human being is a passion for love. “In the eyes of all people glistens an unquenchable longing” (E. Cardenal). The anxiety and aggression that dominate human history are forms of this love. “For the sake of this love, all crimes are committed and all wars waged; for its sake, people love and hate . . . The unquenchable hunger of dictators for power and wealth and possession is in truth the love of God” (E. Cardenal). Sin is a perversion of the love of God. Therefore the hunger after power is unquenchable. Therefore the will to subjugate another is limitless. Therefore abandoned love becomes deadly: “Whoever has lost what thou has lost stops at nothing” (Nietzsche). One must recognize this religious dimension in the phenomena of inhumanity; otherwise one cannot understand the violent passion implanted in such deeds. Racism, sexism, and capitalism are religious perversions and show themselves as perverted religions.

2. Original Sin Is Distorted Trust in God. This answer of Luther presupposes the answer of Augustine and takes it further: the reciprocal relationship of God and humankind is trust. In whatever one places one’s heart and wholly trusts—that is one’s “God.” If the trust is right, then one’s God is right. If the trust is false, then one does not have the right God. God and faith belong together and condition each other reciprocally. The lack of trust is also always a basic form of trust. Only when I am able to abandon myself wholly to something do I know that I am borne up by it and feel free. But to what can human beings wholly abandon themselves? Whom can they trust undividedly?

If one trusts in things that can offer no reliability, then one overtaxes these things. Because one knows basically that all things are mortal and therefore not secure, anxiety arises in one’s heart. If one represses this anxiety, as one must when one’s heart is placed in unsecure things, then an ostentatious security results. Those things that are divinized by the
trust of the heart throw their own insecurity back upon the superstitious believer and menace him or her. Thus one is compelled constantly to expropriate the security that these things cannot give. This is the form of self-justification. This is the deceptive world [Scheinwelt] of idolatry. It is the mode of life of superstition. Whoever withdraws her or his trust from the invisible God and places it in visible things falls victim to an unfulfillable compulsion for legitimation. Such a person must constantly reassure himself and be reassured by others that he is somebody, for in himself he is obviously nothing. In this fashion one becomes a slave to oneself. One’s repressed mistrust toward oneself also tyrannizes one’s environment. One can develop no other identity than that of aggression.

A perverted trust in God and a compulsive self-justification are both dangerous. Whoever loses his trust in God must place his fundamental trust in his race, his masculinity, or his capital. Because he knows that he is nothing, he directs his entire selftrust onto what he has. Consequently he experiences himself as a thing and develops an empty ego-identity in order to protect his boundless inner insecurity. The mistrust of things and human relations leads to a self-securing. This mistrust is the power of destruction itself. One must also recognize this religious dimension in the phenomena of inhumanity; otherwise one cannot discover the means by which they can be overcome. Ingrained in racism, sexism, and capitalism is a deeply distorted lack of trust and therefore a self-expanding mistrust. Implanted in a compulsive self-justification is the power of death.

IV. THE LIBERATION OF OPPRESSORS

If the oppressor acts under compulsion, if the sinner has lost his freedom, then moral indictments do not help him. His relationship to the God he has abandoned must be changed. But it can be changed only by God himself. According to the New Testament, in the messianic mission and in the surrender, suffering and death of Jesus there is revealed the humanity of God, who humbles himself, allows himself to be wounded, takes deadly aggression upon himself and becomes a victim, in order to liberate oppressors from the compulsion of degradation. According to the New Testament, in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus from the dead into the coming Kingdom of God there is revealed the divinity of humanity, which is liberated from sin and suffering and forms that new community in which there are no longer any masters and slaves (Galatians 3:28). In the community of Christ a new fundamental situation is created for human beings who have lost their humanity.

Luther formulated the liberation of oppressors this way:

"Through the glory of his humanity or his flesh, which works in faith, [God] conforms us to himself and crucifies us and makes true human beings out of unhappy and proud idols; i.e., he makes us poor and sinful. That is to say, because in Adam we ascend to the likeness of God, therefore he descends in our likeness in order to bring us to self-recognition. This is the realm of faith in which the cross rules: the divinity that we perversely strive after is rejected, and the humanity and the vulnerability of the flesh that we perversely abandon are given back to us."

THE LIBERATION OF OPPRESSORS

Accordingly, the humanization of oppressors is brought about by faith. By faith the oppressor discovers the incarnated, humanized God and discovers in him the humanity that he has persecuted, oppressed, and destroyed in himself and others. He discovers God and himself in the Crucified: Ecce Homo! He discovers the God whom he despairingly loves in the victims he has killed out of hatred. The Crucified is the true man and the truth of humanity in an inhuman world. The Crucified is the true God and the truth of God in a godless and idolized world. The humiliated, dishonored, oppressed, and sacrificed Christ is the man who corresponds to God in this world of contradictions. Thus the humanization of the inhuman comes about only through the cross of Christ. In this suffering of God the aggression of the sinner is put to an end. In this suffering of God is revealed the divine love for a creation that has miscarried. This sacrifice of God puts to an end the self-justification of the sinner, which cries for victims. In this sacrifice of God, justification is allotted to the unrighteous person gratuitously. This means the following:

1. The history of the struggle of humanity over power is at the same time the history of the passion of God. The despairing struggle over power ends to the extent that humanity recognizes the infinite suffering of God, which has its focus in the victims of power. By this recognition human beings are set free from the anxiety and compulsion of aggression. They are moved by the divine passion which bears this suffering. This passion is the divine love for communion with humankind. As true as it is from the side of humanity that history is the history of class, race, and power conflicts, it is equally true that it is the history of the divine passion: the history of the suffering and passion of the triune God for the freedom of humanity and its unhindered communion with the whole of creation. Without this interpretation of history as the history of the divine passion, all historical interpretations remain under the spell of power conflicts (Berdyaev).

2. The oppressor is loved by no one, and he loves himself in despairing fashion, for the most part in the form of self-hatred. Only God loves the oppressor, because only he can love him with a love that radically changes him and makes what is hateful worthy of love. Only God loves the oppressor with a consuming love, which burns away evil and anxiety in order to let humanity be born anew from the ashes. God loves the oppressor by means of the judgment that he lets fall upon him. This judgment is experienced through the inner sense of being abandoned by God. It is experienced in an absurd existence. Oppressors glimpse this judgment in the eyes of their victims. It is found already in the compulsive mode of existence of oppressors themselves. They are condemned to unfreedom. Only when oppressors accept this judgment, when their inner emptiness and compulsive actions and the suffering of victims are understood as revelations of judgment, will that love of God be experienced that judges in order to liberate. The experience of judgment is grace for the oppressors. In view of this, must one not interpret the history of human aggression against humanity as the history of divine judgment? Where this history is understood as the judgment of God,
there begins the liberation of oppressors from the compulsion of aggressive action and their opening to communion with the oppressed.

3. Because he senses that he is acknowledged and accepted by no one, the oppressor must affirm, justify, and praise himself. Thus his anxiety increases and the impulse to self-justification grows boundlessly. In this regard history is the history of human self-justification and its constant failures. The self-justifications by means of race, sex, or accomplishments result in death and are forms of the denial of life. As long as a person bases his identity on what he has, he lacks what he is. Christian faith is essentially justifying faith. It is the trust that humanity has already been accepted by God in the surrender of Christ and has had its sin forgiven by him. In this faith there dies the person who has himself, and there awakens the person who is himself. Consequently all strivings for self-justification by means of race, sex, or works are vain, useless, and superfluous. They damage the life already accepted, loved, and justified by God. Human and worldly reality can be loved in its relative and broken beauty if it is no longer misused as the means to self-justification. The vain and deadly history of the “glory and misery” of the human race is cancelled out by the history of the divine justification of human being, which without glory and without shame is good and is to be affirmed. The history of human vanity lives basically from the history of divine trust, even when it permanently destroys the latter. The history of human self-having lives from the history of human being, even when it ceaselessly denies the latter. Whoever grasps this is freed from the compulsion of self-affirmation. He no longer seeks himself in another. Rather he begins to be in the other. The deadly history of having is ended. The living history of being begins.

V. THE EXODUS OF OPPRESSORS

Whoever is liberated is drawn out of his imprisonment, otherwise the call to freedom remains without an answer. The person for whom God has suffered on the cross of Christ, whom he has graced by his judgment, and who has been justified in his existence, dies to his previous life-world. He “abandons everything” and “follows after him,” like the disciples. He can no longer “conform to the schema of this world” (Romans 12:1). He is “dead” to the demands and rewards of the world of oppressors. Therefore he no longer acknowledges the laws and the promises of oppression. This means, however, that he has taken up “his cross.”

In the cross of Christ, racism, masculinism, and capitalism all die away. The new, the true human being is born. A person is identified in open identity “as a human being,” abandoning the fixed, narrow identifications of his or her race, class, etc.

What the new person is or does, according to the standards of racism, entails “racial shame”; what this person is or desires, according to the standards of masculine sexism, is “feminine.” What is openly practiced, according to the laws of capitalism, is “betrayal” of one’s own class. Yet there is no solidarity with the victims of racism, sexism, and capitalism without the betrayal of their betayers and oppressors. Whoever desires
communion with the victims must become the enemy of their enemies. If he comes from the ranks of the enemy, he becomes a betrayer. He becomes a "stranger among his own people." Only by means of this estrangement can he show to the oppressors the homeland of love. Whoever in a racist society, whoever in a patriarchal culture, whoever in a capitalistic economy betrays "his own world" for the sake of the victims witnesses to the love of God, lives in discipleship to Christ, spreads abroad the hope of the Holy Spirit, works for life against death.

The way of discipleship leads to self-denial, suffering, and shame (Mark 8:34). For the sake of their Christian faith, many have taken up this "cross." Precisely here it is a question of faith itself and not of something external. It is a matter of the life-praxis of liberating faith. From the experiences of discipleship we draw two examples:

1. When the German Reich became dominated by racial insanity, the Jews were excluded from social life. In succession their jobs, their rights, their property, their freedom, and finally their lives were taken from them. Whoever lived with Jews and maintained contact was accused of "racial shame" and often enough suffered a similar fate. Many went voluntarily with the Jews on the path of suffering. They were accused and condemned of "betraying the people." Janusz Korscak went to death with the children of his Jewish orphanage in Warsaw.

2. The overcoming of capitalism begins in capitalism itself, and indeed in an alliance between the working class and the class-betrayers in the ruling classes. Marx and Engels were "class-betrayers." Lenin and Trotsky, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, to say nothing of the philosophers Lukacs, Bloch, Adorno, and Horkheimer, were "class-betrayers." Oppression must be abolished simultaneously on both sides. To this end, liberated oppressors and liberated oppressed work together. For the liberated oppressors, the class-betrayers, this is a path leading into isolation from their social stratum, a path threatened by "job-exclusion," and often enough a path into powerlessness and silence. Therefore, they must always ask themselves practical questions: how far can they go, what risks must they assume, in order to extend freedom from class laws and to actualize commonality with the oppressed, without sacrificing possibilities of influence and without manoeuvering themselves into a corner in society. An actual step forward on the path of a "classless society." Class-betrayal must be carried out and endured slowly, haltingly, and effectively. For it is a betrayal for the sake of freedom.

VI. WHICH FREEDOM DO WE SEEK?

In conclusion, we ought to become clear on which freedom it is that we seek and what true freedom actually is.

In previous history we have always understood freedom as mastery, and I am afraid that we are not yet liberated from this misunderstanding, whether we are oppressors or oppressed. Whoever understands freedom as mastery can be free only at the cost of another. His freedom consists in the oppression of others. When we say that we are free when we can do and accomplish what we want, we understand freedom as mastery and
orient it to the ideal of the master. When we say that we are free when we are no longer determined by others but rather determine ourselves, we understand freedom as mastery: each person ought to be his or her own master.

Liberalism grants to everyone who bears the human countenance equal rights to freedom: each person is his or her own king or entrepreneur. The freedom of one person has its limits only in the freedom of another. One must respect the freedom of another if one claims his own freedom. Thus even for liberalism freedom means mastery. Each person finds in another person a competitor for his freedom and therefore the limits of his freedom. Each is free for himself, but no one can share in the freedom of another. This is the society of free and isolated individuals. I believe that this represents the untruth of freedom.

The truth of freedom I find in unrestricted communion [Gemeinschaft], for the truth of human freedom is love. I am free when I am acknowledged, accepted, and beloved by others. Other persons are free when I acknowledge them and open their lives for them, sharing life with them. By means of a reciprocal participation in life and in communion, a person is set free from the limits of her or his individuality. If freedom is not mastery but rather communion, then unfreedom consists in a hindered, alienated, and distorted communion. Thus liberation leads to an unhindered, solidary, and open communion if it is to be liberation to freedom and not liberation to mastery.

If we understand freedom as mastery, then the oppressor is free and the oppressed remain unfree. If we understand freedom as communion, then the oppressor is unfree because he isolates himself from communion and destroys it. Those who are involuntarily oppressed show in their communion among one another more freedom than the masters. To reach freedom as communion, the way is longer from the oppressors than it is from the oppressed.

Oppressors will begin their “long march” into true freedom for the first time when they comprehend the extent to which their perversion of freedom into mastery has imprisoned and isolated them.

True freedom is unhindered, solidary, and open communion
— with other human beings
— with one’s own body
— with nature
— with God.
The Black Church in the American Society: A New Responsibility?

Since it is the American society which constitutes the principal setting for the Black Church, it is logical to begin a discussion of their interrelationships with some comment on the nature of that society. This raises an immediate problem, for the “American society” is not one, but many. It is not monolithic, but pluralistic. It is, in fact, a most remarkable example of a societal conglomerate—an extraordinary conglutinate of heterogenous subcultures. It is held together by a common commitment to what is believed to be a peculiarly insightful understanding of the meaning of life, and a concomitant formula for the effective realization of that meaning. Critical to this national understanding is a prevailing religious consciousness vitalized by an ethic which gives dignity and purpose to human existence, and which purposes to order human behavior in conformance with that principle. This Judeo-Christian convention (in which the Black Church finds a distinctive participation), is the organizing matrix of the American social cosmos. Indeed, it was the primary impetus which spurred the founding of this civilization in the first place, and it remains the principal structural factor defining and unitizing the contemporary American society.

There are, of course, other factors of definition and coherence which contribute to the integrality of the American cosmos: the democratic ideal and the theory of the equality of persons is one. The sacredness of human life, which has both religious and political derivations, is another. The notion of responsibility, both personal and social, is yet another. The roots of these conventions are not always clear, for our secular experiences and learnings often find their sanctions in the understanding of the sacred, and the requirements of religion may as often find secular adoption irrespective of commitment to the faith. Moreover, there are certain legal conventions which operate to assign religion and government mutually distinctive spheres of interest and operation in the effort to preclude the possibility that any particular sect or creed will have an undue or privileged impact in the ordering of society, but that every sect and every creed shall have equal access to the public. This in itself becomes a factor of vast significance in the structuring of the social order, and, as we shall discover presently, it has a peculiar significance for the future and the relevance of the Black Church in America.

While these several particulars called to your attention are not by any means exhaustive, a critical introduction to the structuring of America as

*Dr. Lincoln is Professor of Sociology of Religion, Department of Religion, Duke University.
a social cosmos must certainly deal with the factors I have mentioned as prominent in the definition of our society. To put it more explicitly: (1) racial, ethnic and cultural pluralism; (2) a common acceptance of the Judeo-Christian tradition as the normative religion for America; (3) a democratic polity presupposing the legal equality of persons and aimed at government by the people; (4) the paramount value of human life; and (5) the separation of church and state are all among the cardinal social facts or values which give structure to and which determine the dynamics of the society we live in. However, it should not be necessary to remind ourselves that even with so selective a characterization we are talking about America as an ideal type and not as a consistent reality. The characterization is "true," but only in the abstract. What our society is in fact at any given moment will probably be an imperfect approximation of some of all I have said it is, but a great deal more. And a great deal less.

America has yet to live up to its ideals, but the ideal existence which never was will continue to provide identity and characterization for the American people, because this is the way Americans insist on seeing themselves.

Despite the public self-assurance of the American character, one of the ironies of the American self-concept is the strong element of uncertainty that lies buried in our private reckoning. As a people, Americans are not given to the admission of failure, but the louder we proclaim our perfection, the more insistent seems our need for corroboration from significant others. Even in our developmental years when we were committed to the notion of a perfect society here in the West—a city set on a hill, as it were, we were so certain, but still we longed to be told how right we were. Yet, when Alexis de Tocqueville offered his commentary on American democracy after a half century of effort, America was titillated by his attention, but there is little evidence that his criticism of such gross divagations as human slavery was taken to heart. A hundred years later, still in search of some external confirmation of our national self-image, but unshaken in our belief in American manifest destiny, on the eve of World War II we imported Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish social scientist, to examine the American society and tell us what we were like. Myrdal was considerably more painful in his assessment than de Tocqueville. He shocked America with the startling news that we had a "dilemma." The dilemma, he said, derived from the conflict between the highsounding Christian precepts embodied in the American self-image as compared to the way Americans really behave.

That problem is still with us, and apparently, so is the national masochism which is excited by continual notice and evaluation. In recent times we have also had some startling evaluative commentary from our own Ambassador to the United Nations. But while Mr. Young’s remarks have usually stirred international comment, at home we have scarcely heard what he said above the din of denunciation for having said it. But then there is a well-known adage about where a prophet finds his honor (and his audience). Perhaps that is why we have preferred to listen to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who in strict keeping with the adage found no
A NEW RESPONSIBILITY

honor at home in Russia, but who seems to be saying some of the same things about us that some of us have discovered for ourselves.

In the now celebrated 1978 Commencement address he gave at Harvard, Solzhenitsyn, a Russian novelist who now lives at Cavendish, Vermont, decided to share his views on America. They were not complimentary. He chided America for glorified technological achievements which do not redeem our moral poverty. He accused us of a preoccupation with the worship of man and his material needs, while our sense of responsibility to God and society grows dimmer and dimmer. Here in America man has become the center of everything that exists, and against this terrible "abyss of human decadence" which he says is characterized by the "misuse of liberty," American society appears to have little defense. Mr. Solzhenitsyn charges that we have prostituted our vaunted freedom for the cheap satisfaction of whims and instincts. There is a serious decline in courage, particularly "among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite," he charges, and the stage is set for the triumph of mediocrity. America, he concluded, is spearheading the decline of the West.

George Bernard Shaw once said of the American people that "to rouse their eager interest, their distinguished consideration and their undying devotion, all that is necessary is to hold them up to the ridicule of the rest of the universe." Shaw's acerbities notwithstanding, Solzhenitsyn's analysis of contemporary American society is bound to arouse a certain queasiness among all those who have looked with dismay at the proliferated raveling of the social fabric and become a party to it by default. Solzhenitsyn's assessments of our value system and its expressions are those of a careful observer with an acute, well-trained mind. They do not want for credibility, and yet because Solzhenitsyn lacks the personal experience that comes from being a sustained part of this society—i.e., born and reared an "American," his critics would like to dismiss him for an alleged preoccupation with the obvious. They belittle his complaints about the pollution of entertainment and literature with pornography; or his impatience with "the revolting invasion" of privacy by the news media; or the trauma of our "T.V. stupor" and the "intolerable music" which saturates the air waves; or our "mass living habits," or the primary concern of the Western press with "gossip, nonsense and vain talk."

All these, Mr. Solzhenitsyn's critics would have us believe, are merely the bubbles of effervescence which mark the chemistry of a healthy, free, pluralistic society. To be an American, it is argued, is to understand all this and to accept it, not as an index of deterioration, but rather as an evidence that the dynamics of freedom have found the fullest possible expression, and that an admittedly imperfect society is operating at the maximum efficiency possible consistent with the personal and corporate freedom we demand and cherish. "If Solzhenitsyn had talked to us," said one distinguished critic, "he would not have spoken those sentences at Harvard," for "he reproves us for faults which would not be faults if he could talk to his neighbors . . . ." This, it seems to me, is precisely the
kind of cauistry which has brought us to the sad state of affairs Solzhenitsyn decries. Such agonized sophistry can only illustrate the degree to which the super-thinkers in whose favor we have too often abdicated our own initiative have themselves succumbed to the dubious exercise of thinking in a vacuum with no reference (and no light) beyond themselves. In consequence, we have no right to claim surprise that the leadership of our seminal institutions is polluted; and that it is enervated by an intellectual cultism which invents its own peculiar moral perspectives and then proceeds through the use of its vast influence in education, in government, in the communications media, and too often in organized religion to ordain for the less sophisticated masses some alluring and doubtful “alternatives” for the enduring values they used to know.

The irony is that what is being sold is not new, but is in fact the most primitive of philosophical gewgaws. We are invited to believe that the only real responsibility man has is to himself and his own gratification, and that all moral alternatives are equally valid since they have no reference beyond the individual. Cloaked in an astonishing array of deceptive arguments, this ancient hedonism is no less destructive for all its cleverness, and no less vulgar for all the notables who are associated with it. But it is confusing, for we live in a time when the issues of personal and social intercourse are exceedingly complex, and the parameters of personal and social responsibility seem to recede with each new problem we are called upon for resolution.

If the people are confused, their confusion is not incidental. The price of freedom is always the risk that it may be corrupted or taken away by perverse ideologies which take advantage of it. The declension of great civilizations is characteristically initiated by internal assault on their systems of value. If the eternal verities by which men live can be put at issue, if the conventions by which society is ordered can be forced into question, if the good, the true and the beautiful can be circumscribed with doubt, if that which is patently and inherently evil and degrading can be successfully masqueraded as a reasonable alternative to that which affirms human life, human dignity, and human responsibility, there is no need for armies of invasion. The civilization where this can happen will self-destruct.

We have never been close to realizing the notion of “righteous empire” which excited the Puritan founders of this civilization. The moral and spiritual impetus which gave leadership and direction to the birth of this nation was in substantial default from the beginning, but our initial deficit was not so much a lack of vision as it was a lack of courage. Now we appear to lack both. Our minds are keener, our perceptions are more acute, our information is more prodigious, but our retreat from responsibility is all the more pronounced. Those we have traditionally looked to as guardians of our more civilized efforts—those Solzhenitsyn calls “the ruling elite,” have too often chosen silence rather than truth lest they lose membership in the cult of paladins intent on the prostitution of “personal freedom” as a license for the destruction of settled social
values. We have still to learn, if we are lucky, that there is evil in the world, and that to compromise with evil in any of its guises is to be destroyed by it. When the beast walks among us, we will either restrain it, or it will hold us captive in our own houses. A system of values without consistency is a topsy turvy system of values, and patently incapable of ordering a society so complex as our own. Perhaps this is what Solzhenitsyn means when he says that it is our devotion to the letter of the law rather than its intention which paralyzes the country’s ability to defend itself against the corrosion of evil.

It is this corrosion that is the business of the Church. It is the business of the whole Church, but if the White Church will not address it, then the Black Church must address it, or we will all be partners in default.

The Black Church: Beyond the Parochial

There are those who insist that there is nothing wrong with America which will not be right tomorrow, or the day after. In such an assertion we might all find consolation except that it is not an expression of faith in either the benevolence of God nor the perfectibility of man, but is a consignment to the blind vagaries of chance and change. It means simply that change is the only reality, and that given enough time, blind chance and inevitable change will alter every human condition irrespective of human need or human desire. The capitulative hedonism generated by such a philosophy is an undisguised invitation for the abdication of responsibility, for it negates all moral and ethical restraint as an antiquarian exercise in futility.

It is not that we do not know better. The reality (and the significance) of change are undeniable, but in our saner moments we know that change is but one aspect of reality, not its sum total. We know too that while change as a process is an inevitable feature of the cosmic order, change in the human condition and in human relationships is a feature of the human initiative and the Divine Imperative. In consequence, man has a continuing responsibility to exercise his initiative in the interest of his moral and spiritual elevation, and that of his fellowman. If he abdicates this responsibility, it is not only at his peril but the whole society is endangered in consequence. Civilizations wax and wane, rise and fall in terms of man’s recognition of his responsibility to impress the ribbon of change with his own moral and spiritual imprimatur. This is what is meant by the humanizing of the social order: man struggling against the odds to be his better self in the interest of a more just, a more peaceful, a less brutal and a less vulgar condition of corporate human existence.

The Church is the primary institution through which man recognizes most clearly his moral and spiritual obligations, and by means of which he seeks to maximize his human initiative and outreach. If change is a critical factor of human existence, then the distinctive feature of such an institution is its ability to transcend change, providing continuity for certain cardinal values for succeeding generations. An institution is a very useful cultural invention for it has a transcendent quality which makes of the past, the present and the future one continuum of experience. It
persists through change as an island of stability denying the inexorable-ness of the social flux. The Black Church is such an institution. Born of the intransigent faith of an oppressed people and nurtured in their determination to make a distinctive witness for God in spite of their distress, the Black Church has thus far weathered the historic conventions which called it into being. Unlike its counterparts in the American mainstream, it seems relatively unconfused about its spiritual commit-ments and its moral responsibilities. The Black Church has its problems, but they do not appear to be problems of the faith, or the interpretation of the faith in the context of social change.

If the American social cosmos is in the state of deterioration it is alleged to be, and if, for whatever reason or reasons, the leadership traditionally provided by structures of power and prestige may no longer be depended upon. Ultimately, we must confront the question already implicit in the historic role of the Black Church in the black experience—that is, whether the Black Church can now free itself up for a less parochial leadership, and whether or not it will. A look at some of the factors by which the Black Church is commonly thought to be conditioned may be instructive.

First of all, despite its ethnic distinctiveness, its cultural heritage and its singular traditions, the Black Church is not an island unto itself. It is emphatically a part of the main. It is the spiritual embodiment of the black experience, but that experience is constituent to a larger social and cultural reality. Inevitably, this raises the question of whether the Black Church is not part and parcel of the prevailing social ethos, and if not, whether it must not be so receptive to, or vulnerable to those significant forces which operate to make the larger society what it is as to effectively nullify its claim for distinctiveness. This argument implies that whatever is characteristic of white America must be replicated in the black community, and more specifically that the lassitude which troubles the contemporary White Church will be found in counterpart in the contemporary Black Church.

The logic of this argument falls apart when recognition is given to the prevailing conventions which have always conditioned social intercourse between the black subculture and the white overculture in America. While it is true demographically that each group is a part of the common “main,” it is also true culturally and psychologically that there is a spectrum of individuation which ranges from what is the same or similar, to what is quite different and distinct. For example, there is no disputing that Blackamericans and white Americans share the same value structure in the abstract, for both groups are informed by the same Judeo/Christian ethic which sustains that value structure to a significant degree. Similarly, they share the same political ideals concerning the equality of persons and the sanctity of life and freedom. But it is the interpretation brought to the value structure in day-to-day human intercourse which contributes to the distinctiveness of one group from the other. Again, while it is true that all cultures borrow freely from each other, in America the process is seriously inhibited by the established conventions of racial separation.
This often results in a serious interregnum between what white people are thinking and doing and what their counterparts in the black community are thinking and doing. We may conclude then that despite a common ground of existence with certain overlappings of cultural experiences, neither the Black Church nor the black community is a replication of its white counterpart, but each exists, and each persists in its own distinctiveness. If this were not so, there would be no occasion to speak of a “Black Church” in the first place.

The fact that the Black Church is distinctive raises another issue: for many reasons, both historical and contemporary, the constituency of the Black Church is for all practical purposes exclusively black. This is a fact of extraordinary significance. In a society where black leadership has been traditionally restricted to a black following, is it realistic to suppose that in the face of this convention that in a time of social crisis the Black Church can develop a significant leadership for all Americans? The answer is “yes.” It is realistic, and it is not so far-fetched as it appears at first consideration. While it is true that the tradition of inevitable white leadership for white people, (and white-controlled leadership for black people), is deeply rooted in the conventions of white supremacy in America, those conventions have not enjoyed monolithic application, or success, especially in religion. Long before the Civil War, on at least some occasions North and South, Blacks pastored white congregations, mixed congregations, and in at least one or two instances were headmasters of schools catering exclusively to whites.

In more recent times, Father Divine had a substantial following of educated, wealthy white suburbanites; and Martin Luther King was the acknowledged leader of tens of thousands of whites of every religious conviction. Outside the religious sphere the willingness of contemporary whites to follow attractive and competent black leadership is even more remarkable—as is attested by the ever-increasing numbers of black mayors and other elected officials who participate in the responsibility of government. There is demonstrated respect for black leadership in sports, in the military, in politics, in academic administration, in news media and in church administration in some white denominations with black constituencies, and in many other areas of common interest. I see no reason to believe that this trend will not be escalated as the competency and the responsibly of black leadership continues to be demonstrated in practice, and established in social experience. There was never a time, either in the Church or out of it, when black leadership was not available across the arbitrary lines of race; only the opportunity to offer it was lacking.

The presumption of leadership capacity raises an old issue the Black Church will have to face whatever its plans may be for the future. It is an issue which grows more insistent as the years go by and new generations of young Blacks search for meaning and relevance in the churches their parents knew. It is the issue of professional preparation—not for leadership in the world, but for leadership in the Church—for the Black Church is itself inevitably in the world. We have a great and glorious
tradition of competent, even prominent church leaders, who having been called of God needed no more than to leave off the gathering sycamore fruit, or to have their lips touched by the divine coal to go forth and prophesy in God's name. Indeed, the Black Church had its genesis—not in the ivied halls or the cloistered forums of the universities, but in the faith of the unlettered black men who heard themselves called to stand before their neighbors gathered in the swamps and the bayous, there to preach God's promised liberation. Preach they did, though they had never seen a book, and though no man taught them the art of homiletics. Their theology was a living experience intuited during their prayerful walks with God among the endless cotton rows. It generated a faith on which the people built and created for themselves a great tradition and a great Church. It is that same Black Church of which we are so justly proud and in which our confidence is lodged for today and tomorrow.

However, success sometimes creates its own dilemmas. In the world that gave birth to the Black Church we were all one in the poverty of what we knew about the world beyond the confines of the plantation. Education was forbidden. The divine inspiration which informed the preacher and placed him far above the understanding of his flock ensured his leadership, his competence and his usefulness. When freedom came, the Black Church built schools to educate the people in general, and the ministers in particular. Thereafter, for many generations the minister not only had the preparation of Divine calling, he was also commonly the best educated man in the community, and often a teacher or headmaster as well as a preacher. The wide availability of public education coupled with certain conventions which have kept the ministry one of the most respectable, (but the lowest paid of the traditional professions), augmented by the time honored tradition of being called to preach from whatever previous condition or interest, have all contributed to the problem of a growing educational imbalance between the Black Church and its leadership. If this trend continues, the Church may first of all become alienated from its youth thereby jeopardizing its generational continuity and compromising its options for an expanded role in human affairs.

A church without youth is of course a church without a future. The Black Church is swiftly approaching a point of crisis in this regard. The present leadership, whatever its level of preparation, has the advantage of being "in," and being for the most part accepted, but its mobility will be increasingly proscribed. The number of black youth in our colleges and universities has more than doubled in the last ten years, and is growing. If these young people are to be churched, it is fair warning to say that it will be increasingly hard to provide for them from traditional sources. Unless they can be pastored by men to whom they feel a more comfortable affinity, they may well be lost to more compatible interests or institutions. Nor is it merely a matter of the incompatibilities of youth and age. The world has changed, and so have the priorites the Church needs to address beyond what is purely spiritual. Not least among the new critical concerns of the Black Church is the fact that its constituency is now essentially
urban rather than rural, with the extraordinary shift of emphasis this requires if the needs of the people are to be met. The effective black preacher today and tomorrow need not be “erudite,” but he does need to be “smart” beyond the level of simple mother wit and dedication. He must be trained to cope as well as to give leadership in a world where there are few simplicities remaining.

Let us look at another factor. From its inception the Black Church has nurtured a distinctive spiritual ambience which has been unique to its own traditions. Much has been written about an alleged “hortatory boisterousness” or “flamboyance” in the pulpit, or about “exhibitionism” in the pews. Observers have been much exercised in their efforts to find the proper antecedent patterns of behavior in the African bush or in the frontier churches of America. Generally they have missed the point, for what they have been searching for is style rather than quiddity, mode rather than mood. In consequence, the essence of black worship has slipped through their fingers, and the interiority of the Black Church is improperly appreciated beyond its communion because it is improperly understood.

Even those whose heritage is the Black Church have not always understood that heritage, and they have sometimes been confused by the apparent conflict between black styles of worship and other traditions they consider to be more sophisticated. However, as more and more racial shibboleths have lost their relevance and their potency, and as more and more Blacks have matured into the security of self-appreciation, the uniqueness and the particularity of the Black Church as a valued spiritual heritage has become a major factor in black identity. However, that is not the whole story. The issue is not so tidily resolved because not all black people see the celebration of ethnicity as “progressive.” For them, the heritage of the Black Church is essentially a “slave heritage,” and the celebration of that heritage is the perpetuation of stereotypes we should be anxious to be rid of. Whatever calls us back, holds us back, they say.

This is not the occasion to address that argument, but it is one which has nevertheless a certain relevance to our present concerns. It raises the question of whether the inherent nature of the Black Church is such that a substantial role in national leadership across racial lines is not quite impossible, or at the very least unlikely. If the intrinsicality of the Black Church does not project itself, its meaning and appreciation beyond a defined experience, how can it ever be more than parochial in its influence?

There are at least two answers to this. Every religion was at one time “parochial,” Christianity itself being no exception. It is only through the confidence derived from solid acceptance from the original in-group that the evangelistic enterprise takes fire and finds effectiveness. But the parochial fold need not extend to all who are the logical heirs of a particular heritage. Christianity originated in the Jewish community and its initial cult of true believers were all Jews. Yet, when the larger Jewish community rejected this new interpretation of the prevailing faith, the Christian evangels found receptivity for the “good news” in the world of
the gentiles. The enormous spread of Mormonism in our own time is a somewhat different variation on the same theme. The Church of the Latter Day Saints was once the most parochial religion in America. However, having grown strong and confident at home precisely on the basis of their decidedly unique heritage and calling, when the time came to bid for world-wide acceptance and influence, the Mormons sacrificed the more obnoxious of their parochial views by "revelation" thus preparing themselves for extended influence in the world.

These examples may well be beside the point, for the leadership needed to return this country to a more reasonable conformance to its founding principles and to the fuller possibilities of a truly great civilization does not hinge on either the ambience or style of particular communions. These are but the superficials of the sacred commitments which are nurtured and tended by the Church. What is required is not necessarily a community bound together in style and ambience, but a community which shares a body of commitments aimed at humanizing a social order which seems intent upon its own dereliction. The same thing may be said to those who fear that the "fragmentation of the Black Church" is a constant challenge to its effectiveness. I do not see the Black Church as being fragmented so much as I recognize particular segments of the Church Universal pursuing the opportunity to witness under adverse circumstances bequeathed by certain exigencies of history. The history of religion in America is the history of particularized ministries to particularized needs. The whole Black Church is such a ministry. Possibly the time will come when the reformation of society will engender a reduced need for particularity in the ministry to the human spirit. When that happens, sectarianism will have no appeal and no function. In the meantime, there is some consolation in the fact that about 95% of the Black Church is in two or three denominational groups as compared with the hundreds of sects which divide the rest of the Church in America. Even three may be too many, but the prognosis for the future togetherness of the Black Church cannot be as discouraging as it may appear. As the Black Church moves toward the elimination of its sectarianism, there are many things the several communions can do together which will decrease feelings of alienation and promote in us the recognition of community which is shared in all other areas of the black experience. There are some challenges to the Black Church which are bigger than its internal differences. It is not necessary to compromise identity to meet those challenges in concert.

Finally, it must be recognized that America is not noticeably clamoring to be saved by the Black Church. If in fact this society can afford a "saving remnant," America is likely to look for it somewhere else, anywhere else other than in the black community. Would the Black Church not be unduly presumptive, then, in presuming to look beyond its limited traditional interests in a society which has at times scorned it, and which has always undervalued it? Is it not more realistic for the Black church to think small and stand tall in what its doing than to develop a spiritual megalomania which may be inconsistent with the skills and the resources
A NEW RESPONSIBILITY

available, and which may in any case set the Black Church up for rejection and ridicule?

How the Black Church answers this question must depend ultimately on its sense of mission. But there is a respected tradition which says that “whom God calls to leadership, God gives a rod of authority.” What has the Black Church going for it? What is the rod the Black Church has in its hand? At a minimum there would seem to be these three: grace, power and responsibility. Grace, because God knew this Church and nurtured it before it came from the womb of a troubled America. Power, because it has not been overcome by the social challenges, the “principalities” of this age. Responsibility, because it is God’s witness in God’s world, and this world has need of it. Taken together these may or may not add up to “authority,” but they do imply some extrapolation of the present mission of the Black Church. There is a ministry to be met beyond the traditional mountains which have separated us from the rest of the world.

Perhaps it was not incidental that when God raised up a man to lead America through the racial crisis that had troubled us for more than a century, He did not turn to the wealth and power, the tradition and experience, the prestige and the glory of the establishment Churches in America. They had had their chance, and they had defaulted. But God raised up a leader from the Black Church, and now the problem is behind us. Perhaps God was trying to say something to America in general, and to the Black Church in particular.

Is anybody listening? Is the Black Church listening?
Functions of the black church for black aged may be considered an important issue in the study of black aging because of the manner in which these functions may impact transition and adjustment of blacks to old age. However, the importance of functions of the black church in the black aging process may be seen only insofar as it is possible to explore systematically the context in which these functions occur. One manner in which black church functions may be explicated is in terms of a socio-historical model adapted from Roth which focuses on configurational patterns whose bases are in historical experience and which have a bearing on church functions.

In the main, the configurational model is conceived as a socio-historical model which seeks to determine the extent of continuity and change in black aged role enactment and black group regard for black elderly over periods of time. These periods of time include the pre-contact cultural background period in Africa; the period of slavery (1619-1865); the post-slavery period (1865-1945); and the contemporary era (1945-present). The assumption on which the configurational model is based derives from a realization that current literature on black aging does more to compare black aged with whites than to look at the black aging process from within black culture. The present attempt is to establish a black cultural baseline on which successive behavior of blacks and current black church function may be assessed.

In the context of this study, role enactment is defined as those actions on the part of aged blacks which infer a process of experience and association with others and which revolve from an intricate network of socially defined expectations and judgments. By group regard is meant those attitudes that derive from group interaction through which black aged are identified and appraised.

---


*The author is Assistant Professor of Music, Humanities Division, Atlanta Junior College and a doctoral candidate at Georgia State University in curriculum and instruction. She is also a student in the Certificate Program in Social Gerontology.*
Configurational patterns in historical perspective

Because configurational patterns are concerned with cultural traditions as they inform the black aging process, it is important, initially, to focus on the pre-contact cultural background of American blacks. That is, the initial concern must be for those culturally conditioned beliefs, values and attitudes which derive from the African ancestry of American blacks. This provides a means of setting forth a baseline on which later change and continuity in role enactment and group regard may be assessed.

The studies of Herskovits,\(^5\) Mbiti,\(^6\) Massey and McKinney,\(^7\) and Wylie\(^8\) provide some evidence of the configurational patterns of blacks regarding religious concepts, roles of elderly and attitudes toward elderly blacks at the pre-contact level. In brief the African religious life incorporated a view of the universe as ruled by Great Gods who were associated with forces of nature. In this context, Africans held a world view which implied beings who had powers of assistance, decision-making and foresight. Ancestors were viewed as possessing power and, thus, were regarded as "alive" in surviving family memories.\(^5\) In this regard elderly persons were also perceived to be endowed with certain peculiar powers and were accorded care and respect because of the good or ill their powers could bring. Moreover, elderly were considered the stabilizing force in societal organization and were unfailingly consulted prior to reaching decisions.\(^10\)

The reign of law was assured by the "king" and the council of his elders.\(^11\) In Massey and McKinney’s terms, old people in African society were considered repositories of community wisdom—wisdom which grew out of experience.\(^12\) In addition, African elderhood carried with it a responsibility for conducting oneself in a manner which was conducive to earning respect as indicated by Akan proverbs such as "An elder does not roast a hot stone and place it in the hand of a child;" "A greedy elder washes his own dishes."\(^13\)

Both the McKinney and Massey Study\(^14\) and the Wylie Study\(^15\) contend that in African societies, elderhood through grandparenthood represented an estate which signaled not only a status which summed up the meaning of the life cycle but also was an estate which had the responsibility of instruction to the young. This honorable and obligatory

---

9Mbiti, African Religions, p. 139.
11Ibid. p. 83.
12Massey and McKinney, Church Administration, p. 45.
13Ibid. p. 45.
14Ibid.
15Wiley, "Attitudes Toward Aging."
state is summarized in the Akan proverbs: “When the buttocks of an elder grow thin, it goes into those of the younger generation.” and “He deserves pity who does not have an elder in his house.”

The religious concepts of the ‘invisible’ black church of the slaves and of organized institutional church were those that embodied a doctrine of relevance and dignity for all black persons. The black church was further conceived as a means through which black people have been enabled to see themselves in the image of God. Because the black church is considered to be the major social institution around which black life has historically been structured, the religious concepts of the church are seen as undergirding configurational patterns of black elderly role enactment and group regard in the four time periods of black experience already outlined.

The presence of aged persons during slavery is documented at least in part by diary entries of missionaries compiled by Crum, who confirmed visitations had been made to aged slaves in their cabins. In addition, data indicate that in at least one mission, three-hundred catechized black children were kept under the care of an elderly female. Nonetheless, extant data regarding the role enactment of black aged and black group regard toward them during slavery are sparse, perhaps owing to the fact that the black population was a young one at that time.

Much of Herskovits’ data regarding retention of Africanisms in the behavior of blacks in America spans both the slavery and post-slavery periods even though his data was compiled beginning in 1938. For this reason, it is difficult to assign specific time periods to his data on black aged. Nonetheless, his data is instructive of the non-institutionalized form of behavior which was exhibited by blacks after confronting the American scene. In short, Herskovits refers to the concern shown by blacks for the best treatment of elderly because of a belief that ancestors could help or harm their descendants. Moreover, blacks studied by Herskovits tended toward referring to old people as “Uncle” and “Aunty” whether they were relatives or not.

Reinforcement of the importance of elders though remembering minutest details of family history is also considered by Wylie to be a consequence of the African oral-historical tradition carried to America by slaves.

16Massey and McKinney, *Church Administration*, p. 45.
21Ibid., p. 36
23Ibid.
24Wylie, “Attitudes Toward Aging”
Several studies including one by Atlanta University, the Murray Report, and a study by Weiss provide illustrative material concerning role enactment of aged black persons and black group regard for elderly during the post-slavery period (1865-1945). In the Atlanta University Study, the “home for the aged” appeared as the most characteristic charity of black people and tended to be sponsored by church groups, other charitable organizations and individuals. Weiss also included old-age homes among the earliest efforts to aid city black persons in the period from 1910-1918. Moreover, these efforts, which were seen as offshoots of church, charity, benevolent and settlement movements, were staffed and supported by blacks.

The presence of the earliest homes for black aged were considered as a reaffirmation of respect and concern of blacks for elders in the light of previous neglect of old people within the slave system. Moreover, in at least one instance, the presence of a home for children and destitute men and women provided opportunity for caregiving on the part of elderly women. Thus, a report about the Tent Sister’s Old Folks Home, Raleigh, North Carolina, indicated that of 250 persons assisting in the work of the home, 100 were over sixty years of age.

Murray’s Report refers to care-receiving on the part of black aged by their respective families and benefits derived from government assistance programs, a fact that as reinforced by the small proportion of this group (5.5%) in homes for the aged, infirm or needy. In addition, the report which represented 1940 government statistics revealed a tendency of aged minority persons to remain active in the labor force.

As is the case with previous time periods, there is a dearth of information on current configurational patterns representing the period from 1945 to the present. However, extant data indicate the importance of religion in the lives of aged black people. To this degree, church activities tended during this period to be oriented around interests, support and participation of older people. Moreover, old people have exhibited significant control of religious instruments and ritual in the

28Dubois, Atlanta University.
30Ibid., p. 11.
31Dubois, Atlanta University, pp. 65-77.
32Ibid., pp. 71-72.
35Ibid.
black church. Data from three black churches in the Lewis Study\textsuperscript{37} reveals that four of six deacons in a Baptist church were over sixty-five and the average age of a trustee board of eight men in an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was over sixty-five. In a Methodist Episcopal Church, the pattern deviated because the older men died; however, all of the active older men were officers. Older blacks were also more likely to provide vocal support and encouragement for the pastor through responses such as "Amen," "Preach," "Ain't it so," or Yes Lord." In addition, older persons tended to be the experts on public prayer.

Mays' and Nicholson's Study\textsuperscript{38} further shows that in Sunday School and young people's work, a significant number of older persons have been teachers or managers. However, in all cases of church endeavors including overall participation, financial contributions and moral support black women rather than black men dominated.\textsuperscript{39} Nevertheless, the kinds of group regard generated by the black church have, according to Dancy,\textsuperscript{40} made it possible for black aged to feel like and be somebody.

Data from autobiographies of black applicants to seminary from 1958 to the present\textsuperscript{41} contain information about grandparent role enactment and applicant regard for this person. Although with less frequency now, approximately half of the applicants had previously listed the grandmother as having considerable influence in their lives an on their choice of career. In nearly every case the grandmother had major responsibility for child-rearing, was designated the primary source of emotional stability and was considered the wisest within the household with particular adeptness for giving sound advice.

\textit{Summary of continuity and change in black aged role enactment and group regard for black aged}

In tracing continuity and change in patterns of black elderly role enactment and group regard for black elderly, limited data preclude any comprehensive assessment during the representative time periods outlined at the outset. However, existing data do provide a fairly generalized picture of replication of patterns regarding black aged as well as distinctive features occurring from one period to another.

In African culture the roles enacted by aged persons were closely tied to religious beliefs and tribal structure. These roles largely included leader or stabilizer in societal organization; consultant or advisor in decision-making; oral historian or collector and disseminator of socio-cultural history; reposer of wisdom; and grandparent and caregiver in whom the life cycle culminated and from whom direction for life tasks came. Societal regard for the African elder included respect

\begin{itemize}
  \item Lewis, "Blackways."
  \item Mays and Nicholson, \textit{The Negro's Church}; Jackson, "Negro Aged;" and Lewis "Blackways."
  \item Personal Conversation With Thomas Pugh, Academic Dean, The Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia.
\end{itemize}
which bordered on worship and awe. Moreover, there was a general acceptance of the skills, rights and authorities of old people.

A number of black aged roles and types of group regard toward aged which appeared in the pre-contact cultural background were replicated in subsequent historical periods as indicated in Chart 1. Specifically, continuity of aged role enactment over the entire span of the time periods appeared in the roles of leader and caregiver, particularly as they related to the church. The role of oral historian, as well, was present throughout the time spans. While the grandparent role occurred throughout the historical periods, its function became modified during the slave era to include extended family; thus grandparents also became relative designates.

### CHART 1

**AGED BLACK ROLE ENACTMENT AND BLACK GROUP REGARD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-CONTACT (Africa)</th>
<th>SLAVERY 1619 to 1865</th>
<th>POST-SLAVERY 1865 to 1945</th>
<th>CONTEMPORARY 1945-Present</th>
<th>STUDY FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabilizer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant (Advisor)</td>
<td>Oral Historian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>Grandparent (Relative Designate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care-giver</td>
<td>Care-receiver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repository of Wisdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Honor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGED ROLE ENACTMENTS:**

- Leader
- Stabilizer
- Consultant (Advisor)
- Oral Historian
- Grandparent (Relative Designate)
- Care-giver
- Care-receiver
- Repository of Wisdom
- Worker

**GROUP REGARD**

- Awe
- Respect
- Worship
- Acceptance of skills
- Honor
Roles during the pre-contact period were ostensibly giving ones on the part of aged Africans; thus, there was a dominant concern for extending the self rather than receiving from others. Black elderly were increasingly seen throughout the subsequent periods as care-receivers, especially in the context of old folks homes and more recently in terms of church programs for aged blacks. This trend has represented a movement away from age-integrative functioning in the pre-contact period to age-segregation though the extent may be described as minimal. In the periods of slavery and post-slavery, the stabilizing influence of black aged was not evidenced, probably owing to a younging black population during these periods. The stabilizing influence reappeared within the black church and within the family context during the contemporary era with an element of control which constituted a variation of the consultant or advisor role. Wisdom as a category of group regard appeared first in literature on the pre-contact period but not again until the contemporary era.

In summarizing group regard for aged blacks, it may be said that respect for black aged and acceptance of their skills were dominant categories throughout the time periods. Awe as a kind of group regard was demonstrated during the period of slavery, while ancestor worship as it occurred during the pre-contact period did not appear thereafter in the literature. Concern and recognition appeared as distinct characteristics during slavery, post-slavery and during the contemporary era.

By way of conclusion, there has emerged from the historically-based configurational patterns certain kinds of functioning by aged blacks which has included active participation in life’s events. Within the context of community, black aged have tended toward age-integration rather than age-segregation. Finally, the overall manner of functioning by black aged throughout the historical periods has tended to be related to kinds of black group regard which may be described as being positive.

The study

The black church has been cited as probably the most important social institution affecting the cultural and social values of black people and it is reasonable to assume that it continues to exert this influence on persons through old age. Hence, an exploratory study was undertaken to gain insights into the extent to which the previously outlined configurational model applied to current black churches. The configurational model was conceived as a socio-historical model through which continuity and change in black aged role enactment and black group regard would be assessed. The assessment involved the use of periods of time including a pre-contact period in Africa; the period of slavery (1619-1865); the post-slavery period (1865-1945); and the contemporary era (1945-present). In this context, the purpose of the study was to explore the existence within black churches today of those enacted roles and group regard which appeared during the historical periods as a means of determining possible black church functions in the black aging process.

The assessment of enacted roles included the following: (1) leader; (2) stabilizer; (3) consultant or advisor; (4) controller; (5) oral-historian; (6) grandparent or relative designate; (7) care-giver; (8) care-receiver; (9)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHART 2: COMPILATION OF BLACK CHURCH DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROLE ENACTMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.M.C.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presb.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baptist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.M.E.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.M.E.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
repository of wisdom; and (10) worker. The assessment of group regard included the following: (1) awe; (2) respect; (3) worship; (4) acceptance of skills; and (5) concern.

A population of ten black churches in the metropolitan Atlanta area was chosen on the basis of denomination; membership size and pastor’s age since it was postulated that these variables might inform enacted roles by black aged and group regard for aged by church members. As indicated in Chart 2 data are based on three black United Methodist churches with memberships of 225, 1500 and 1800; one black Presbyterian church with a membership of 200; four black Baptist churches with memberships of 275, 300, 350 and 1800; one Christian Methodist Episcopal church with membership of 148; and one African Methodist Episcopal church with a membership of 100. The pastors ages ranged from 22 to 64.

Collection of data was accomplished through focused interviews with pastors of the ten churches. Thus, the survey was limited to the clergy’s knowledge and observations about the aged constituency and parishioner attitudes.

Results and analysis

Overall data obtained from the sample of ten black churches as contained in Chart 2 indicate that current enacted roles of black elderly 65 years of age or older include, in various forms and degrees, all enacted roles appearing in the historical periods. Thus, the overall results regardless of denomination include the following:

1. Leader. Specific leadership roles by aged blacks were to be found in all churches and included official capacities such as treasurer, class leaders, secretary, property manager, president of senior citizens group, Sunday school superintendent, and chairman of finance and stewardship; member of leadership committees such as administrative board, ecumenical affairs, health and welfare, mother’s board, deacon’s board and trustee board, family life, pastor/parish relations.
2. Stabilizer. In one church, aged persons serve as the essential life force undergirding the church in the view of the pastor.
3. Consultant or advisor. In three churches aged persons serve either as advisors to the pastor, to Sunday school classes or to young adult groups.
4. Controller. In five of the ten churches, there was recognition of black aged as controllers who dominated church responsibilities to varying degrees, sometimes at the expense of younger members.
5. Oral historian. In one church, an aged man serves as historian.
6. Grandparent or relative designate. In three churches, intergenerational family units comprise the church membership with grandparents either overseeing younger members or assuming a role of passive member.
7. Caregiver. In three churches, aged persons were identified as giving service to other aged or younger members through missionary societies, the mother board, senior programs or visitation programs.
8. Care-receiver. In all churches, a significant number of aged persons may be termed care-receivers either because they have assumed a more inactive receptive role; because a senior citizen’s program is offered which provides services to them; or because the church provides a visitation program to homebound persons.
9. Repository of wisdom. In two churches, aged members were singled out as those from whom general wisdom as well as spiritual wisdom is expected.
10. Worker. In all churches, the majority of aged blacks had been in the labor force with some currently working. Occupations represented a wide range from manual labor in industry, carpenter, domestic workers, cooks and bakers, postal workers, bank employees, insurance manager, school teachers and college faculty and a president emeritus of a college. In the majority of churches the wide range of occupational statuses were to be found in a single congregation.
The overall data suggests a strong trend in church functions toward age-integration rather than age-segregation, although in the largest United Methodist and Baptist churches and in the C.M.E. church there is programming for senior citizens or retired persons which is self-contained or which is coordinated with larger community programs. An acceptable balance between aged and young involvement has been achieved in half the church sample. Elderly involvement was problematic in the remaining half. Difficulties tended to be more pronounced in the three largest Baptist churches, in the largest United Methodist church and in the C.M.E. church where elderly were perceived as controllers in varying degrees. Aged involvement in the youth program at the C.M.E. church confirmed the findings of Mays and Nicholson. Moreover, their findings of church programming geared toward the needs of elderly was also confirmed in the case of the C.M.E. church.

In the largest Baptist church the problem of control by elderly and antagonism toward the elderly by the young has been ameliorated in part by the use of a dual system of control in which old people function as honorary leaders with younger members making the decisions. In this case, however, the primary financial support comes from the older members. The fact that age-segregated programs exist in this particular church as well as in the largest United Methodist church might tend to indicate the use of these programs as a means of solving the dilemma of control. Of the five churches with an acceptable balance of control, the A.M.E. church utilized an educational program aimed at sensitization and understanding of elderly persons and responsibility of the church to all persons as a means of developing shared responsibility between young and old. It is not clear to what extent pastors’ ages were factors in churches with problems of control and antagonism. However, in the case of the pastor-instituted educational program in the A.M.E. church, the pastor’s age was 58, whereas in four of the five churches with admitted problems, the pastors ages were among the youngest of the sample, ranging from 22 to 48 years.

The presence of antagonism or resentment by young persons in the category of group regard is distinctive to the current study sample and, thus, represents a discontinuity in the configurational pattern set forth earlier. Of the categories of group regard appearing throughout the historical periods, “awe,” “respect,” and “acceptance of skills” appeared with varying degrees of frequency in discussions of member and pastor attitudes toward aged blacks in the church. There was also the addition of the word “honor” to describe lay and clergy regard as well as aged expectations. However, of all the categories of group regard, “acceptance of skills” appeared consistently throughout the entire church sample.

Summary and discussion
Data from the study of ten black churches indicate that the black church may remain a dominant influence in the continuity of black aged

42Mays and Nicholson, The Negro’s Church.
roles which have had a foundation in history. Moreover, the kinds of black group regard exhibited over the historical time span are apparently still related to and necessary to this continuity. Because of the re-enactment of roles over periods of time, it is plausible that black aged persons are socialized to these roles in subsequent generations. In this regard, an important function of the black church may be one of facilitating the socialization process so that there is ease of transition and adjustment to old age. Three methods of facilitation emerge in the data:

1. Acceptance of skills came forth as an important aspect of group regard throughout the historical periods and in all of the ten churches in the study sample. This would tend to indicate that a dominant function of the black church in the black aging process is one of acceptance of old black people not only by young black persons but also by themselves.

2. The presence of various degrees of antagonism or resentment on the part of young persons in half of the black church sample constitutes a discontinuity in historically-based configurational patterns which, if exacerbated, would tend to militate against ease of transition and adjustment to old age. However, the use of an ameliorative program by one church suggests that a function of the black church may be one of confrontation. In Nouwen’s terms (1974), such a function is aimed at confronting all ages with their participation in the aging process and, further, confronts aged black with their own finitude. This would necessarily include the pastor’s coming to terms with his or her own aging process.

3. A dominant theme throughout the historical periods and in the study sample is that of active participation of black aged persons and age-integration rather than age segregation in the context of community. The recurrence of this aspect of functioning suggests that a function of the black church may be one of bringing generations of black people together in a creative and recreative way, to use Nouwen’s terms (Nouwen, 1974, p. 179). Only in so doing is it possible for the black church to, indeed, become the embodiment of a doctrine of relevancy and dignity for all black people.

Insights gleaned from the present study suggest further research. First, further research may be directed in the area of developmental issues that inform the configurational patterns explored herein. This would do much to answer the questions: What social variables inform the development of antagonism or resentment toward black elderly by the young? How did minority status and discrimination impact the development of black aged roles and group regard toward black aged? How did social action on behalf of blacks impact the development of black aged roles and group regard for black aged? How has socio-economic status within the black community impacted the development of black aged roles and group regard for blacks? How has the black church response to black aged been affected by these issues?

Second, research may be directed in the area of situational patterns which explicate fluctuation and change in social condition and interaction in larger society. This would do much to answer the questions: What social events or “accidents” brought about black aged role enactment and group regard from one time period to another or within periods of time? To what particular degree have particular black church activities affected adjustment of blacks to old age? What, if any, differences exist between black women and black men in adjustment to old age as a result of church involvement? What dynamics are set forth by pastors’ attitudes and ages which inform aged role enactment and group regard for aged persons?
How may black church functions be further operationalized to take into account particular church settings?

Third, there needs to be, as well, a replication of the present study to include a more comprehensive sample of black churches in the various geographical regions of the country. The purpose of the replication would be twofold: first, to reassess the function of the black church in the black aging process on the basis of the wider sample; and second, to explore regional difference occurring in enacted roles and group regard of black aged.

Finally, more forthright effort is needed in the area of comparative gerontological studies which involves African blacks and Afro-American blacks. This is particularly important in the light of almost total exclusion by social scientists of the African heritage of new world blacks.
Fishbowls, Foreign Devils and Authenticity:
Religion and Ideology in the African Revolution

Abstract
This paper examines the role of religion and ideology in social change in contemporary Africa. Part I offers a neutral definition of ideology as a cultural system (the road map image) and distinguishes this definition from two pejorative ones, viz., the interest theory (with its battlefield image) and the strain theory (with its medical analogy of sickness/health). Part II presents an ideological description of the social process, graphically represented as a series of super-imposed fishbowls. Part III suggests an ideological analysis of the cultural process (described as cultural domination by ‘foreign devils’) by means of reference group theory. Part IV examines Zaire’s ideology of authenticity for insights into escape routes from the social and cultural impasses described in parts II and III. Whereas parts II and III are predominantly descriptive, part IV is consciously prescriptive, and suggests certain contributions of Christian theology to the African Revolution.

I. A Road Map Into The Future:
Ideology As A Cultural System

The December 1976 issue of Africa Today was entitled “Civil Religion in Africa.” This title is a misnomer, the application of American categories to African realities. What is termed civil religion in the U.S.A. is unashamedly embraced as ideology in Africa, probably because in Africa the term ideology has a broader and more neutral meaning.

Historically, in sociological literature, the concept of ideology has carried pejorative connotations. From Marx to Mannheim through contemporary sociologists, ideology is almost a dirty word. No one appreciates being called an ideologue, for ideological thought is synonymous with bias, over-simplification, personal anxiety, emotional slogans, extremism, and if not willful mystification, then at least foolish...
self-deception. The pejorative theories of ideology are of two types: interest theories and strain theories. Both theories are based on psychological and sociological concepts of motivation and function. For interest theory society is a battle field and ideas are weapons in the universal struggle for advantage. For strain theory society is in a chronic state of malintegration. Conflicting social roles and norms produce pervasive and irremovable social frictions and psychological stress. An ideology is both an illness like nail-biting, alcoholism and psychosomatic disorders, as well as an attempted cure. It provides cathartic release, moral sustenance, and group solidarity plus a call for change.

These two theories are complementary and do elucidate some of the sources or determinants of ideology. However, both have defects. “The main defects of the interest theory are that its psychology is too anemic and its sociology too muscular.” Its concept of motivation is too Machiavellian and its understanding of social process too conflictual. The latent functions and dysfunctions described by strain theory may be real, but they are trivial, almost accidental bi-products unrelated to their causes. This is because interest and strain theories neglect the cultural functions.

The link between the causes of ideology and its effects seems adventitious because the connecting element—the autonomous process of symbolic formulation—is passed over in virtual silence. Both interest theory and strain theory go directly from source analysis to consequence analysis without ever seriously examining ideologies as systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meanings.

Because many sociologists neglect symbolic meaning, they oppose ideology to science and condemn it as irrational, biased, and simplistic. The resulting pejorative connotation serves to mask the ideological elements of all social thought, even that of science itself. That [ideology] might in fact draw its power from its capacity to grasp, formulate and communicate social realities that elude the tempered language of science . . . is not even considered.”

If, on the other hand, ideology is compared with metaphor; if it is understood as a system of cultural symbols which use analogy, ambiguity, hyperbole, paradox, pun, satire, and all the other qualities of poetic communication; and if it is understood as embodying cognitive perceptions as well as emotive attitudes toward social realities, then an avenue is opened up for a neutral definition of ideology. Moreover, not only the pervasiveness and power of ideology can be understood, but also its role in social change. From this perspective an ideology is a full-blown social ethic, an image of society, a model for ordering “relevant” data related not only to social and psychological interests and strains, but to cultural ones as well.

4For a short, typically pejorative treatment of ideology—one might say an ideological treatment of ideology—see the article “Ideology” by E. Shils in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.
5Geertz, p. 53.
6Ibid., p. 56.
7Ibid., p. 58.
Seen as a cultural system, an ideology is more like a blueprint or a road map for charting a path in unfamiliar territory. In stable societies ordered by time-honoured custom, ideological thought is diffuse and vague; but in situations of rapid change where new situations call for new norms, relationships, and patterns of behaviour, the stage is set for the rise of systematic ideologies. "Whatever else ideologies may be—projections of unacknowledged fears, disguises for ulterior motives, phatic expressions of group solidarity—they are, most distinctly, maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience." Like science, ideologies describe the social world; unlike science they embody a commitment to the world, either of preservation or transformation. Whereas theoretically the critical attitude may be separated from the apologetic, in practice they are rarely separated. "Though science and ideology are different enterprises, they are not unrelated ones. Ideologies do make empirical claims about the condition and direction of society, which it is the business of science [and where scientific knowledge is lacking, common sense] to assess." But unlike science, ideology sets out ideal social goals and relationships. Thus it has affinities with religion (although its social programme is generally more concrete) in that it offers meaning and purpose to life and implicitly posits a conception of human nature.

On the basis of this understanding of ideology, we shall examine three components of an ideology of change. The first two (FISHBOWLS and FOREIGN DEVILS) are analytic and descriptive, although an attitude of commitment to change is captured by these two images. The claim is made that much contemporary alienation and oppression can be conceptualized and existentially understood with the aid of these metaphors. The fishbowls describe the social structure; the term "foreign devils" which originated in Chinese ethnocentrism and revulsion to Western imperialism depicts the cultural frame of reference. The third component, authenticity, is the slogan used in Zaire's cultural revolution. It is descriptive in the sense that it portrays deeply-felt psychological needs and repressed sentiments; but its chief value lies in its yearning for a creative prescription for cultural and social change.

II. Fishbowls: Enrichment and Impoverishment

We are now quite accustomed to the truism, "the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer." We understand intuitively what Luis Echeverria,

---

8In Nigeria there has been a noticeable rise in the past two years in the clamor for ideological change. The issues have been clouded recently in the arguments over the new constitution. Those favouring a change to socialism call for a new ideology, whereas their opponents seem to ignore the presence of ideological elements in the current political economy. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), for a treatment of this ideology. Cited hereafter as Macpherson.

*Geertz, p. 64.

10Even science, however, in spite of its cultivation of a disinterested attitude, is based upon cognitive and emotive symbols involving order, trust and even hope.

11*Geertz, p. 72.
ex-president of Mexico, meant when he declared that Third World countries suffer not only from neo-colonialism but from internal colonialism as well. In fact, few informed sociologists would disagree with Olatunbosun’s conclusion which could be extended to cover many Third World countries: “There exists a striking similarity between the colonial policy that exploited the resources of the colonial territory to develop the metropolis and the Nigerian national policy that now exploits the resources of the countryside to develop the urban cities. Essentially, the development policy in Nigeria is still colonial in character.” Chinua Achebe dramatized this reality over a decade ago in his novel *A Man for the People*. What we frequently do not understand are the intricate mechanisms of enrichment and impoverishment.

Charles Elliott, an Anglican priest, professor of economics and former director of the joint World Council of Churches and Vatican Council Committee on Society, Development and Peace, has provided us with a series of images or models for perceiving how the big fish eat the little fish. His book, *Patterns of Poverty in the Third World*, is the result of a long-term study sponsored by the World Council of Churches on causes and patterns of poverty in ten African and three Asian countries. For the past three years my students and I have learned to examine poverty and wealth, oppression and liberation, from the perspective of Elliott’s fishbowls, a perspective which applies in so-called rich countries as well. Learning to see through the lenses of the fishbowls, we have discovered realities which were invisible to us before. The fishbowls provide *eyes to see*—to see not only the state of poverty, but more especially the processes of impoverishment and enrichment. The pay-off is considerable: the fishbowls provide a systems analysis which illuminates the structures, processes, roles and values of oppression. Futhermore, this perspective clarifies the mechanisms which elicit public confidence in oppressive systems, and in so doing delineates possible avenues for undermining this confidence.

The first set of superimposed fishbowls (Figure 1) illustrates the stratification of society and the routes for upward mobility. These “access cones” which link the various bowls have several features: 1) Some are perpendicular so that a fish swimming below can easily measure the length of the cone and the feasibility of an attempted ascent; others are set on the convex side of the bowl and may give the illusion of easy entry into the bowl above. 2) Because the smaller fish are numerous and the cones are few, there is intense competition concentrated at the mouth

---


14 One value of the fishbowl image is that it transcends the stalemated argument that class-analysis is inappropriate because there are no clearly-defined classes in Africa. This image describes stratified interest groups whose members nevertheless retain ties with those in other strata.
(i) The Access System

Figure 1
2. THE CIRCULATION OF NUTRIENTS

(iii) The Relations with the Outside World

Figure 3
and inside of the cones. Of the multitudes who attempt ascent, only a few are successful. 3) The cones can change over a period of time, and some (e.g. politics) may even be temporarily closed. 4) The conical shape of the cones is such that descent is rare, for once a small fish reaches the more nutritious environment of a higher bowl, he grows too large to retrace his path. A few examples of access cones are education, ownership of productive land and property, business acumen, politics, the military, relatives and friends, as well as crime.

The circulation of nutrients (Figure 2) is controlled by the fish in the top bowl and, to various degrees, by external economic, political, and cultural forces (see Figure 3). Nutrients are produced naturally in each bowl. The primary source of supply for the lower bowls is produced in those same bowls. The basic flow, however, is upward, whereby the big fish suck up far more nutrients from the lower bowls than they redistribute to them. Budgetary allocations, taxation, price controls, market board “surpluses”, services and infrastructural development, credit policies, import-export tariffs and policies, the type and placement of industries, as well as the priorities in national development plans and various special favours (e.g. civil servants’ access to credit, land or property) all contribute to this upward flow. Poverty, then, is the underside of wealth. The impoverishment of most people is due to the enrichment of a few people. “We take the view that poverty, impoverishment, is the result of a causal process of which enrichment is a major but not exclusive component.”

One of the most graphic illustrations is the disproportionate amount of resources and personnel devoted to elitist curative medicine at the expense of mass-oriented preventative medicine. (It is reported that 80% of Nigeria’s modern medical personnel is concentrated in Lagos and Ibadan where only 4-5% of the population lives.) Another illustration is the deliberate policy of the marketing boards to squeeze the farmer and transfer his surplus to the cities. Olatunbosun reports that “the marketing boards . . . became instruments for impoverishing the farmers . . .” “Generally, up to 40 per cent of the potential income of the farmer is taken away from him in the form of export duties, produce sales taxes and marketing board surplus.” Thus the privileged impose their needs and priorities on the community as a whole.

Figure 3 shows the linkage between the domestic fishbowls and the international system, for the domestic big fish maintain close ties with big fish in other countries. The domestic big fish have access to other sets of bowls (the brain-drain), and external big fish have access to the circulation of nutrients within the domestic fishbowls. The outflow of nutrients takes the form of biased terms of trade, repatriation of profits and so forth. The inflow of nutrients, usually in some form of “aid”, is scattered on the topmost bowl where the big fish devour it.

If the fundamental process is so clearly exploitative, one is compelled
to ask why the fish in the lower bowls accept the system. Of course some do not, but try instead to wreck it. These are quickly isolated, and if they cannot be “bought off”, they are eaten by the big fish. Occasionally small groups of the captive fish boycott the access cones or even attack individual fish in the higher bowls, but in general the largest fish, in cooperation with those in the middle bowl, will go to any length to legitimate the system by giving it an appearance of fairness. The access cones and the distribution of nutrients are manipulated in such a way that the vast majority of fish regard the system as competitive but acceptable. Thus the various access cones serve as “confidence-mechanisms” (con-mechs) which sustain confidence in intra-group competition and the legitimacy of the system, but which mask the selective biases of enrichment and impoverishment. (“If their son can make it, maybe ours can, too.”) The big fish may control other confidence-mechanisms in addition to the access cones, like the communications media, religion, and political diversions, all of which hide the exploitative nature of the system. Because the details of the system are extremely adaptable, the deprived retain an impression of fairness. However, in its exploitative nature, the system is wholly unadaptable. As the grossest colonial differentials disappear, the system becomes more rigid and it is progressively more difficult to reduce the differentials still further.

One could use numerous examples to illustrate this process of enrichment and impoverishment. But what needs to be emphasized is that the vast majority of public and private policies and institutional practices are biased in favour of the few and against the many. It is so much a part of daily life that we tend to take it for granted. Every week my wife buys imported chilled beef at a highly subsidized price. Since the majority of the population cannot afford to eat beef even at a subsidized price, imported meat represents public expenditures on goods destined for wealthy consumption. It is a subsidy of wealth. But the same applies to health services, urban amenities, and the provision of many other goods and services.

Social statuses and roles require corresponding attitudes, norms, and patterns of behavior. Thus, the structure of this social process explains in part the existence of ideologies to sustain it. Development theories originating in the West have provided a justification for perpetuating a system which serves the interests both of the domestic big fish as well as all but the bottommost fish in Western countries. This dualistic “bridgehead” strategy sees development “as a matter of creating, then gradually

17Basil Davidson, in his book, Can Africa Survive? (London: Heinemann, 1974, p. 146), expresses the same belief when he says that reformist nationalism is a palliative. “The modification or reform of what exists will not be enough. What exists, by and large, supposes an attempt at the impossible: at the building of indigenous capitalist systems in a world where no such new systems can any longer see the light of day.... The most [the African states] can hope to do, in that direction is build weak subbranches of great commanding systems, overseas, whose monopolies of power they could never challenge, and whose removal of their wealth they could never stop. In that direction they would be able to argue more effectively about the crumbs, but not about the cake.” Cited hereafter as Davidson.
expanding, a bridgehead of ‘modernity’ within a basically traditional society—as if one were reclaiming a swamp, creating a bridgehead of solid land and gradually enlarging it until the whole swamp is filled in.”

History has shown, however, that the swamp is not giving way to the bridgehead, for indeed the bridgehead ideology (masked in scientific terms and tones) is itself a confidence mechanism which strengthens the system. But we are getting ahead of ourselves for the bridgehead ideology is part of the cultural process to which we now turn.

III. Foreign Devils

“To be is to be like”. Thus, two questions arise: 1) What does one want to be like? What are the predominant images which shape the attitudes and aspirations, the norms and behavior of a people? 2) What are the psycho-sociological processes which form these images?

An answer to the second question is offered by the concept of reference groups. According to this theory, the individual has a mental image of numerous real or imaginary reference groups (and reference individuals) who serve as foils for self-appraisal and who provide cues for conformity. These are the comparative and normative reference groups. The social location of one’s reference groups is related to both the degree and the desired rate of social mobility. For an individual who is relatively stationary and satisfied, the normative and comparative groups may be those to which he belongs. For a person who is frustrated by his gradual rate of ascent (or more especially by his descent), the normative and comparative groups may both be located in the strata above him. One who is pleased about his recent arrival at a higher status is likely to compare himself with those below him and take his cues from the groups to which he now belongs. Thus, there are a variety of possible combinations.

Since individuals have multiple social roles, a given individual may have a high status in one role and a low one in another. This complicates the concept of reference groups because he may have different degrees of aspiration/satisfaction for the different statuses.

There is another complicating factor. The individual measures himself and takes his cues not only from other people and groups. If that were the case all social action would be “other-directed” in response to signals picked up on the individual’s radar screen. The individual is also guided by cultural traditions (ideals, beliefs, customs) which are not always

--


20David Reisman, et al. (The Lonely Crowd, New York: Doubleday, 1955) employed a somewhat similar concept. However, their understanding of “social character” as the result of tradition-directed, inner-directed and other-directed images concentrates too much on the end product and not enough on the process of character formation. Reference group theory is a complement to and improvement upon that used by Reisman. See H. H. Hyman, “Reference Groups,” in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences and Merton, Op. cit., for a treatment of reference group theory.
clearly personified either in real or imaginary reference individuals or groups. These traditions are combined with family idiosyncracies which are internalized by the individual through the socialization process, and which function as a psychological gyroscope for the individual.\footnote{For a discussion of character types which are tradition-directed, inner-directed (the gyroscope metaphor) and other-directed (the radar metaphor) see Reisman, Chapter 1.} These three influences are always present in combined form. We may conceive of the individual as being \textit{pulled} by reference groups (other-direction) and \textit{pushed} by internalized cultural traditions (inner-direction). In many cases the push and the pull coincide and move in the same direction, but in other situations they oppose one another. The more prestigious the group, the more pull power it exerts. In a situation of rapid social change the pull power of change-oriented reference groups is likely to exert much more influence than the push power of change-resistant reference groups. This phenomenon is illustrated by the familiar “revolution of rising expectations.”

Now, since the process of socialization is continuous, at least for most people until old age sets in, reference groups exert constant pressure for an alteration of the internalized gyroscope. Thus, there is a tendency toward harmonization or equilibrium between the external pull and the internal push. Moreover, in spite of his multiple statuses and social roles, a healthy individual usually develops a certain consistency in his normative images. This more or less consistent pattern we frequently refer to as a “life-style”.

Now that we have discussed the process of life-style formation, we are able to return to the first question: what are the predominant images which shape life-styles in Africa today? The answer is, those images provided by the “foreign devils.”\footnote{The metaphorical character of this term should not be overlooked. It refers not to any evil intentions or machinations of foreigners, but to the pernicious influence of foreign culture and models of normative reality.} Some months ago I came across a political cartoon which captures this theme. A child is gazing into the future, deciding what he should do. Imbedded in the back of his mind is an image of a fat, smirking, debauched European or American capitalist. This is the image Freire evokes when he says that for the oppressed “to be like is to be like the oppressor.”\footnote{Freire, p. 33.} If the fishbowls are a metaphorical description of the social process, the bewildered boy possessed by a “foreign devil” is a metaphorical description of the cultural process in many Third World countries. The Latin Americans are perhaps the most vociferous critics of this cultural imperialism, which they term \textit{malinche-ma}, after Cortez’s mistress Malinche who believed everything foreign to be superior. The big fish who form the most prestigious reference group take their cues from the “foreign devils” (the so-called “demonstration-effect”) and this influence reverberates down like a sound wave to the lower strata.

These forces of “modernization” and “westernization” are certainly not the only ones, but they are the predominant ones, the motor of the
cultural system. They include foreign values, ideas, technology, and institutions as well as foreign language itself which is the vehicle of culture. Their pernicious influence is not due entirely to their foreign character, for in certain circumstances foreign culture can stimulate indigenous creativity. Rather, their destructiveness lies in the inability of these forces to solve local problems, for they originated under different conditions and for different needs. They provide models for the solution of foreign not local problems, and their predominance stifles the creation of indigenous models. Rather than provide solutions, these pressures to imitate Europe and America only compound the problems. In fact, it is the disease of catch-up-itus that is the basic obstacle to genuine development and self-reliance. As the Brazilian economist Celso Furtado has noted, it is the formation of Third World elites with foreign consumption patterns which guarantees the continuation of under-development and dependency.  

Recurrent government programmes and policies and national development plans based on “catching up with the West” — that oft-repeated promise that appears almost weekly in the speeches of government officials — merely mask and perpetuate such dependency. Ms. M.A. Oduyoye, a Ghanaian theologian, underlines a fundamental theme of the political philosophy of President Nyerere of Tanzania when she writes:

To my mind the principal cause of poverty in Africa is the fallacy that development means becoming like western Europe. This is the myth that needs to be broken. Once this cultural dependency is accepted everything follows. This CON-MECH is central to the whole system. The enrichment of the rich becomes the major factor in the impoverishment of the poor. To keep the rich in the Third World on the standards and models of European culture and style of life is bound to keep the lower bowls expanding to accommodate more small fish. The sweat of the cocoa farmer buys the Mercedes Benz for the university lecturer . . .

It is at this point that we encounter the dilemma of social and cultural change: an exploitative social process can only be changed by a new cultural awareness, but a new cultural awareness requires a new social process. Social conditions shape human beings and their consciousness; but in order to change these conditions they must first change their consciousness. “How can the debasing society be changed by those who have themselves been debased by it?”

The exploitative fishbowls can be overturned only by a cultural revolution that exorcises the foreign devils; but how can the big fish be expected to perform this feat which flies in the face of their interests and their most powerful internalized normative images? History reveals that when the contradictions of a society become too great, when the old order is pregnant with the new, charismatic leaders arise who formulate new cultural images or ideologues. A struggle ensues until finally new political


25This quotation is taken from page 6 of the typescript of Ms. Oduyoye’s criticism of The Poverty Makers which is included as an appendix to the text by David Millwood.

26Macpherson, p. 19.
leaders succeed in translating these visions into social movements and programmes of action which transform both the social and the cultural process at the same time, or at least in close dialectical sequence. But this usually only occurs when it becomes clear to certain big fish that prudence and principle, interest and idea, coincide. China's cultural revolution began among the elite during Mao's "Long March"; it produced a social revolution, but in order to succeed the social revolution required a cultural revolution of the masses. This is so because character structure is even more tenacious than social structure. Thus both the westernizers (followers of Chiang Kai-shek who remained on the mainland) and the traditionalists (Confucian peasants and feudal lords) had to undergo a cultural revolution.

The transfer of a new culture from the few to the many is the hardest and most daunting task of all, but as Amical Cabral has said, "without it nothing can be done." Cultural development is "the development of people as distinct from the growth of things." It calls for a new socio-cultural vision, and new objectives which do not lie within the reach of the inherited situation, but which turn away in new directions. To draw the rural millions into new methods and relations of production, and into far more intimate forms of social and political participation; to bring purposive because self-imposed order into the confusion of ideas and attitudes which now animate the newly urbanized multitude; to raise structures which can revolutionize the social consciousness of all these peoples; while exploiting the technology and skills of science, co-operation, and manufacture; to resolve the contradictions between ethnic separatism, however valid or valuable, and regional or even continental forms of unity, functional unity, such as can alone establish a solid basis for overall socio-economic expansion; and to do this by a synthesis in which constituent parts and totality may be composed in a sufficient harmony: these are the kind of objectives which, more clearly now with every year that passes, begin to be seen as essential to human development here.

Cultural development is ideological development, new metaphors, images and road maps to forge ahead through uncharted territory, to win a new sense of individual dignity and social purpose as well as new patterns of social relations. Ideological development, therefore, is the key to initiating meaningful social change. It is not a sufficient condition—many other fortuitous circumstances can either facilitate or impede ideological forces—but it is a necessary condition. Let us turn, then, to an examination of the ideology of authenticity espoused by Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko and promoted by his Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR), and suggest how Christian theology can contribute to an authentic African revolution.

27Cited by Davidson, p. 169, note 17.
28Davidson, p. 154.
29Ideology alone is insufficient. "It will take administrative skill, technical knowledge, personal courage and resolution, endless patience and tolerance, enormous self-sacrifice, a virtually incorruptible public conscience, and a very great deal of sheer... good luck... Ideological formulation, no matter how elegant, can substitute for none of these elements; and, in fact, in their absence, it degenerates... into a smokescreen for failure, a diversion to stave off despair, a mask to conceal reality rather than a portrait to reveal it." Geertz, p. 70.
IV. Authenticity: Self-Reliance and the Exorcism of Foreign Devils:

The ideology of *authenticity* can only be understood against the background of Zaire’s history. Belgian colonialism was the most paternalistic of any on the continent of Africa, and the tenacles of the colonial trinity (administration, extracting companies, and missions) reached into the intimate lives of every villager. Based on ethnocentric racism, the “mission civilisatrice” was consciously designed to eradicate “pagan” traditional African culture and replace it with “Christian” European culture. Forced change in the form of intervention in chieftaincy selection, the relocation of forest villages on roadways, direct taxation and production quotas, mandatory sanitation and inspections, etc. was official policy. Under the corvée system every adult male villager laboured 60 days a year (later 45) for the state. Advancement required schooling which demanded Christianization and westernization. Only the most remote, centrally organized, and tenacious tribes such as the Bakuba of central Zaire were able to preserve any resemblance of their former culture.

However, the system contained an inherent contradiction, for whereas the old culture was destroyed, only a few Zairois were permitted access into the lower echelons of government, business and the mission, thus preventing genuine assimilation. Acculturation was required in order to be regarded as “civilized”, but the social system blocked genuine acculturation, resulting in a cultural vacuum and personal anxiety. Severed from rootage in their heritage and denied full access into the new, Zaire floundered both before and after independence. After a tumultuous beginning, Mobutu seized power in 1965 and set out to reunite the country. By 1970 he was firmly in power, having centralized the government, expelled the mercenaries, eliminated his rivals, come to terms with imperalistic economic and political forces, controlled the media, founded a single political party, and established for himself almost absolute power and authority. With the preliminary tasks behind him he was ready to turn his full attention to the problems of economic development. However, there was one powerful institution in society which he had not yet tamed, namely the Catholic Church. Periodically the princes of the church criticized his policies either in sermons or in church journals, and Cardinal Malula even dared voice his criticisms at holiday religious ceremonies where Mobutu was present.

A sizeable group of Zairois elite resented the power and influence of the clergy, as well as the continued Western bias of Christianity with its disdain for African culture. Many of the elite had been educated in major seminaries during the colonial era, personally experiencing but never willingly consenting to the destruction of cultural pride. Already in the early 1960’s Mabika Kalanda had written a book entitled *La remise en question: Base de la décolonisation mentale*, but the problems of mental alienation attracted low priority during most of the 1960s. Gradually the perception formed that the clergy were not only a political impediment, but also a constant reminder of cultural alienation. Thus, the stage was set
for authenticity, which served not only to counter clerical influence and combat alienation, but also provided a much needed ideology for cultural and political development.

When the official campaign for authenticity got underway in late 1971, the clerical hierarchy perceived the nature of the threat not only to their brand of Christianity, but also to their political and cultural influence. In the ensuing dispute Cardinal Malula was expelled from his residence and obliged to take exile in Rome for a time. Branches of the youth division of the MPR were forcibly installed in all major seminaries (and all other educational institutions as well), Christian journals and radio programs were suppressed, and various other measures were taken to secularize the state. The Catholic clergy had always maintained a close but critical relationship with the state. In their effort to resist the introduction of political units into the seminaries they stated that the clergy should not identify too closely with any political party but rather be “all things to all people”. Mobutu interpreted this to mean “those who are not for me are against me.”

Perhaps the most dramatic episode in this drama was the law of February 1972 requiring that all Zairois drop their European names. Although foreign names had been under fire for sometime, the actual decree was provoked by a Belgian reporter who goaded Mobutu about his own name, Joseph Désiré. He abruptly changed his name, the MPR issued the new law, and thus almost unconsciously infused authenticity with a radical seriousness which it had not possessed up to that time. Let us now seek to evaluate this ideology. In the early days of the campaign the phrase “retours à l’authenticité” (return to authenticity) had been used, giving the impression that Zaire would turn its back on the modern world. Mobutu quickly corrected this to “recours à l’authenticité”, implying that in the forward-looking task of nation-building traditional values of the past would be drawn upon. Being a rather pragmatic leader himself and in a client relationship to powerful imperialistic interests in the West, Mobutu has been hesitant to fill the slogan with content. It remains a vague but powerful emotional slogan. This vagueness permits skillful manipulation as when Mobutu says that his word is law because in traditional society a chief’s word is final. He passes over in silence the fact that traditional chiefs issued ultimata only after consultation; that they depended on consensus because their militia consisted of fellow villagers; that decisions were made in the light of commonly known facts (i.e. without the manipulation of propaganda); and that an unpopular chief could be ousted by the people. In short, he uses authenticity to justify inauthentic absolute power, and suppresses public discussion of how the authentic traditional restraints on power might be contextualized in a large-scale nation-state.

Kenneth Adelman has described authenticity as a civil religion with a belief system, sacred rituals, a code of ethical norms, a “church” (the MPR), and a messianic leader. There is a sense in which he is correct, for “mobutisme” has many characteristics of a political religion. Relying on Emile Durkheim’s analysis of religion as social glue, Adelman believes
that authenticity functions as "‘the cement which holds the structure together’ in Zaire."\(^{30}\) This is undoubtedly Mobutu’s intention, but it is military force, not religious consensus, that holds Zairian society together.

In spite of this, we should not overlook the significance of authenticity. Among francophone African leaders it has wide-spread appeal and is in some ways comparable to “black is beautiful” in the U.S.A. In fact, authenticity carries forward a number of themes from the earlier Négritude movement, and may be considered the philosophical framework of FESTAC (The Second World Black and African Arts Festival, held in Lagos in January 1977).

Moreover, authenticity contains a number of potentially important values. First, its very vagueness means that all questions are in principle open for examination by the people, and not determined in advance by ideological rigidity. This openness provides an incentive for self-reliance and popular participation. Mobutu tries to use it to justify authoritarian rule and mask his ruthless elimination of opposition, but few Zairois are taken in by his propaganda. In fact, many judge him by his own standards and find him wanting, declaring that his style of life, his separation from the people, and his resort to coercion are genuinely inauthentic.

Second, authenticity is an ideology which combines the new with the old, something which neither capitalist entrepreneurs nor socialist revolutionaries are able to do. Both capitalist and socialist programmes of development relegate the tradition to the dustbin of outmoded superstitions, and differ not so much on basic goals of material prosperity but on methods to achieve them. In this respect authenticity reflects a major concern of African theologians, namely the desire to hold together both the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of salvation. That is, African theology stresses both the goodness of this world and God’s revelation in African culture, as well as the need to transform African culture and society.

What authenticity thus far lacks is economic content, both in terms of goals and blueprints to reach them. These are available in the United Nations’ “basic needs” strategy of development, which directs programmes toward the needs of the masses rather than the wants of the elite. What is lacking therefore is popular pressure to force a change of priorities. This is where Christian theology might play a major role, and there are indications that theologians in Zaire are becoming aware of this. The various liberation theologies insist that priority must be accorded to those with the greatest needs, and several brands of mass-oriented populist/socialist strategies are now gaining more and more credibility throughout Africa. What has yet to be challenged in Zaire and elsewhere is the basic image of development as imitation of Western life-styles and patterns of consumption. In other words, authenticity is not yet authentic. In spite of a change of names and local forms of dress, for

Mobutu to be is still to be like, and to be like is still to be like the oppressor.

For Christian theology the disease of catch-up-itus, this desire “to be like the nations”, must be regarded as a form of blindness like idolatry. An idol is that which is less than, and other than the good. It stands in the way of and circumvents the good; it is a false hope—an illusion—a form of blindness with power neither to save nor satisfy. In the end it leads to destruction.

Of course, the rich Western nations are both the source and the perpetuators of this idolatry, for they fashioned it and continue to sell it to the Third World in the form of development theories, aid programmes and consumer products.

Shortly after independence, many churches in Africa sought to serve the people, strengthen their institutional base and improve their public image by wholeheartedly embracing programmes of national development. A biblical basis was discovered in the phrase “The Abundant Life” (“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”, John 10:10), and scores of sermons castigated former generations for their other-worldly theology. Thus the new theology reflected the rising socio-economic expectations of the new ecclesiastical leaders and the middle class which they represented, expectations that at last Africa was on the threshold of an industrial revolution that would banish scarcity and render unnecessary the traditional restraints on possession and consumption. It was a theology reflecting a veritable outburst of appetites.

This optimistic theology failed to take into account three factors: exploitative structures (fishbowls), resource limitations, and the fatal disease of catch-up-itus. It overlooked the persistence of institutional structures which facilitate the enrichment of the few by means of the impoverishment of the many, all in the name of “catching up with the ‘advanced’ countries.” The advocates of an abundant life were correct in saying that man does not live without bread; but instead of linking this idea with mass-oriented strategies for the poor, this slogan became the justification for unlimited accumulation and luxurious life-styles for the rich, life-styles that were derived not from the productivity of the rich but from the exploitation of surplus produced by the poor. Today theologians are discovering the need to redress this emphasis, to recapture the biblical stress upon production and consumption in community, which is also reflected in traditional African societies. The biblical economic ethic stresses the need for sufficiency without superfluity; the necessity to tame the insatiable human appetites; the recognition that we do not live without bread nor by bread alone; and the indissoluble interdependence of the human family.

By challenging the national idols—the life-styles of the affluent both at home and abroad; by questioning the very goals of industrial society—wealth for wealth’s sake and growth for growth’s sake; by denying that the highest human good is to consume more and more with greater and greater ease; by building Christian communities and styles of
leadership with a low profile instead of a triumphalist image; and by projecting a national vision of genuine authenticity, Christian theology can make a vital contribution to the ongoing African revolution. Such authenticity would facilitate a leveling up by a leveling down, thus reversing the push/pull forces of reference groups. National integration would be fostered as the various groups cease chasing one another and turn to re-embrace one another. President Kaunda’s theme song captures an element of this image. “Tiyende pa Modzi,” Zambians sing: “Let’s walk together.” Only a reorientation of culture and a national ideology of community which transforms the images of what people want to be and which reverses the push/pull forces of reference groups will be sufficient to transform the exploitative social system and give birth to a new society. Christian theology can contribute both to the vision and to the motivation necessary to bring the vision into reality.
Pastoral Counseling and the Spiritual Quest*

There are at least six quite different ministries within the Christian church. All of them are legitimate and needed. The basic problem is that most lay people at least unconsciously expect their pastor to be an expert in all of them. Without the gift and ministry of administration the church organization would cease to be. Without the teaching ministry the basic message of the church would not be communicated. The prophetic ministry reminds us of the areas of life which have not been touched by our Christian outreach. Quite different from these is the ministry of liturgy which orchestrates a group into meaningful worship. And then there is the essence of the pastoral ministry. Finally there is the ministry of spiritual guidance in which the pastor tries to facilitate the individual in his spiritual quest. This requires additional training and expertise different from ordinary counseling and is a much needed and little provided ministry within the Christian Church today.

In order to see the relationship between pastoral counseling and spiritual guidance, let us first of all look at the need for it that has been expressed among modern Americans. Then let us see the problems which are posed by recent non-experiential theology. We shall then offer a world view which has a place for religious experience and the altered state of consciousness. We shall point out the difference between much of Western meditation and Eastern non-Christian meditation. We shall conclude with a description of meditation through imagery.

Interest in the Spiritual Quest

There is a growing appreciation of the need for spiritual guides who are also trained as pastoral counselors and therefore know the methods of dealing with individuals and groups in a meaningful way. The California Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Menlo Park, California is trying to reach over into this area from the secular side. The Committee on Priestly Life of the United States Catholic Bishops prepared a paper for the Catholic Bishops meeting in November 1976. That document was published by Crux in their November 15, 1976 newsletter. The Benedictine Abbey in Pecos, New Mexico has begun a training program for spiritual directors. Five times as many people, lay and clerical, applied for training at Pecos as could be accepted. Wainwright House in Rye,

*Reprinted from THE JOURNAL OF PASTORAL CARE, June 1978, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, with the permission of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. This paper was originally presented to the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, 5 May 1978. Dr. Kelsey is Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame.
New York, is planning such a program for training spiritual guides beginning in September of 1978.

The purpose of spiritual direction is to bring men and women into touch with the central meaning of the universe and to enable them to relate all aspects of their lives to this meaning. There was a time when people could be given a rational view of the universe which they could accept and integrate. For many generations the church believed that most people would accept a view of the universe on the authority of the church and live according to the dictates of authority. As long as most people still have faith in reason and authority the task of spiritual direction is relatively simple except for those who have made a special vocation of the life of prayer and contemplation.

However, many modern men and women have lost their faith in both reason and authority as sufficient explanations of life and reality. This is particularly noticeable among intelligent college students. Twenty years ago one could speak dogmatically to students at Notre Dame and they would listen. Today such a presentation of the Christian faith would not even be considered. Dr. Alan McGlashan in *Gravity and Levity* suggests that “the current conflicts of youth against age and authority are in essence a revolt against smugness, against the closed, superior attitude of mind which assumes that somewhere there is always a final truth to be found, if only reason is followed patiently to its conclusion. Youth in some unconscious or intuitive way has tuned in to the physicists’ discovery that there is no final truth to be found anywhere, that reality in the last resort is ambiguous, open-ended, a recurring balance of contraries.”

The modern person of whom the modern youth is a harbinger demands experience as well as reason and authority. Reason and authority are taken seriously only when experiences can be provided to offer verifications.

Thus the person who would provide meaning for the questing modern person must be a facilitator of experience as well as being able to provide a coherent world view. The pastor of seeking, modern people needs to be able to provide methods to attain transpersonal experience which support the world view suggested. In addition he needs also to be able as any pastoral counselor to relate to people in a way which engages the whole person and helps the individual through conflicts and depersonalizing emotional problems.

**Theology and the Spiritual Quest**

At this point we run into a very serious problem. Few theological works in the last two hundred years have any place for Christian experience. John Macquarrie’s *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* carefully critiques one hundred sixty theological thinkers from 1900 to 1960. Only two of these Baron Von Hügel and C. G. Jung, stress the importance of experience within the religious journey. Thus the spiritual director must

---

be able to put together a theological framework of his or her own which has a place for religious experience. Skill in philosophical or theological formulation is not often found in conjunction with pastoral skill. On the one side there are the psychologies (and sometimes even pastoral psychologies) which have nothing to say about transpersonal experience and, on the other side, there are the spiritual directors who know Christian mysticism, but who know little about the complexity of human nature or how to distinguish between neurotic and spiritual problems. For nearly thirty years my personal interest and work have been directed toward bridging these two areas.

It is truly amazing to see how Christian theologians have ignored the religious experience of people, the experiences which involve perception of something different from the space-time continuum. Andrew Greeley received a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to add a group of questions on mysticism to a national random sample questionnaire of some sixteen hundred respondents. The results were quite surprising even to this priest sociologist. Some 39 percent of people replied that they had had mystical experiences. The experience was carefully defined using the four characteristics proposed by William James in the Varieties of Religious Experience.

On post-test recheck the investigators discovered that half of these people had never told anyone of their experiences prior to the test. This was because they feared ridicule from the secular world. He also found that the last person they would tell about their experiences would be professional religious people. The respondents felt that these people didn’t believe in such things anymore! Also built into the questionnaire was a scale to test psychological maturity. Far from being regressive personalities, those who had many mystical experiences had a very high correlation with emotional maturity. A similar study in Great Britain by David Hay and Ann Morisy working out of Manchester College, Oxford and the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, provides very comparable results. It is interesting to note that these figures are similar even though only one-third the number of people attend church in Great Britain as attend in the United States.

The modern human being is far less secular than many thinkers have believed. I have no firm statistics about the use of hallucinogenic drugs among people under twenty-five. My experience at Notre Dame leads me to believe that somewhere between two-thirds and three-fourths of this populace have used marijuana. Half of these have used something stronger. According to Dr. Andrew Weil, in his book The Natural Mind, the present-day drug culture is an attempt to provide altered states of consciousness which religious institutions no longer believe in or provide.3 My students concur with Dr. Weil’s basic thesis.

Meditative attempts to secure transpersonal experience have become so common that a Gallup Poll was taken on this subject in 1976. Some eight million Americans had tried Transcendental Meditation or some

3Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972
other form of Eastern religious practice. Some five million had been involved in some form of Yoga. Three million Americans had been involved with the Charismatic renewal and another three million in some other form of “mysticism.” Nearly 10 percent of the American populace have been searching for some experience which our religious institutions do not seem to provide. And yet I heard the head of one of the leading Catholic seminaries, when presented with the Greeley data, remark: “I do not see what mysticism has to do with training seminarians.”

There is a development in psychology which takes account of this kind of experiences. Robert Ornstein’s *The Psychology of Consciousness* is one example of this trend which shows an interest in the studies of the bicameral brain as well as the other data of transpersonal experience. The paper of Eugene d’Aquili and Charles Laughlin, Jr., in the March 1975 issue of *Zygon* takes these considerations into the study of religious ritual. Their paper is entitled “The Biophysical Determinants of Religious Ritual Behavior.”

**Another View of Reality**

It was Aldous Huxley who provided the first popular framework for understanding the importance of hallucinogenic drugs. After taking mescaline, he reflected upon his experience and wrote these words in his book *Doors of Perception*:

> Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that which is very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful. Most people, most of the time, know only what comes through the reducing valve and is consecrated as genuinely real by the local language. Certainly persons, however, seem to be born with a kind of by-pass that circumsents the reducing valve. In others temporary by-passes may be acquired either spontaneously, or as the result of deliberate “spiritual exercises,” or through hypnosis, or by means of drugs. Through these permanent or temporary by-passes there flows, not indeed the perception “of everything that is happening everywhere in the universe” (for the by-pass does not abolish the reducing valve, which still excludes the total content of Mind at Large), but something more than, and above all something different from, the carefully selected utilitarian material which our narrowed, individual minds regard as complete, or at least sufficient, pictures of reality.  

It is very difficult to perceive what we do not expect to see. Bruner and Postman’s study “On Perception of Incongruity: A Paradigm” points out that anomalous playing cards like a red six of spades are not easily recognized. If this is true of ordinary sensation, how much more true it would be of accepting reports of altered states of consciousness which do not fit into one’s world view or paradigm.

One reason why the data of parapsychology have not been taken more seriously is that they do not fit into the ordinary paradigm of the Western

---

6*Journal of Personality*, 1949, 18, 206-223.
world. In this point of view only physical reality is real and objectively verifiable sense experience alone provides real knowledge of the physical world. Any talk of another dimension of experience or reality is considered talk about illusion. This is particularly clear in the behaviorism of B. F. Skinner, but it is also apparent in many existential psychologies.

In 1955 Robert Openheimer was asked to address the American Psychological Association. His address, entitled “Analogy in Science,” pointed out that psychologists were unreasonable to base their psychology on a model of physics which physics had abandoned. Twentieth-century science has become less and less certain about the ultimate nature of matter and far less sure that there are not other dimensions of experience. There is no longer universal certainty about all experience being essentially reducible to material reality. The new uncertainty is traced by T. S. Kuhns in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Even in mathematics “Godel’s Proof” has put an end to universal certainty about mathematical truth. The scientific community is entering a new era of far less materialistic dogmatism and far more openness to talk about other dimensions of experience.

For several centuries the Western intelligentsia believed that the material world alone was real and the spiritual-psychological-nonphysical world was illusion. Our brothers in the East held largely the opposite point of view. The physical world was illusion and the spiritual world alone was real. The Tibetan Book of the Dead and many other Eastern texts assume this point of view. It is my suggestion that both dimensions are real and the task of the spiritual guide is to deal with both of them. This can be shown diagrammatically in the following chart. A represents the premodern Western viewpoint where only the space-time-energy-mass world is real. B represents the point of view of the East in which only the spiritual world is real. Our suggestion is that both realms of experience are real and that the human psyche has legitimate access to both modes of experience. This is represented by paradigm C. I have elaborated the implications of this diagram in my books, Encounter with God and The Other Side of Silence.

It may seem that we have belabored the theoretical aspect of the spiritual quest. Human beings are more consistent in the long run than we ordinarily believe. Unless, however, one provides a paradigm which gives meaning to one’s actions within a total context, it is difficult to help another person upon an independent investigation of spiritual reality. Once one can provide such a paradigm, one can also direct one’s critical capacity toward an understanding of altered states of consciousness or nonsensory data. Physical science offers this kind of understanding of sensory data. Obviously, if there are legitimate experiences relating to another dimension of experience, the spiritual guide should have

---

2Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1972
A. THE UNKNOWN VOID

- THE SPACE-TIME ENERGY-MASS UNIVERSE

- Consciousness Comprising Some Experience and Reason

B. THE NONPHYSICAL OR PSYCHOID WORLD

- Vague Awareness of Self or Undifferentiated Consciousness, With no separation from the Unconsciousness

- The Psyche

C. THE NONPHYSICAL OR PSYCHOID WORLD

- THE PHYSICAL WORLD OF SPACE AND TIME, ENERGY AND MASS

- Vague Awareness of Self or Undifferentiated Consciousness, With no separation from the Unconsciousness

- The Psyche
experience in this realm or his guidance is a case of the blind leading the blind. Such practice would be like a chemist who had never stepped into a laboratory teaching organic chemistry.

Dr. C. G. Jung also discovered that much of the neurosis in people over thirty-five years of age resulted from ignoring experiences of meaning which seemed to arise from beyond the space-time world. Thus there is another reason why pastoral counselors ought to have some kind of a world view which includes an understanding of such experiences and the practices which relate to them. Indeed, Jung told me in a personal conversation that there was only one reason that he investigated this area of experience so deeply. He could not find clergymen equipped to or willing to deal with patients whose neurosis involved being cut off from spiritual experience.

Plato in the fourth century B.C. laid out a philosophical framework for the world view we are describing. He pointed out that, in addition to sense perception and reason, humankind was endowed with mathematical intuition and also with four forms of “divine madness.” This was madness in the sense that it was unreasonable and similar in its givenness to sense experience. The forms of it were: the prophetic perception, the healing or cathartic intuition or perception, the artistic understanding and, maddest of all, the perception which was given to the one in love. Poets and artists of all ages have pointed out that their inward perception was of a reality beyond their making. No one has expressed this more clearly than William Blake as he struggled against the tendencies toward rational materialism in the early days of the Enlightenment.

Religion has usually been an attempt to bring the individual into a creative relationship with ultimate meanings which are experienced in altered states of consciousness as well as through ordinary sensory channels. Men and women have spontaneous religious experiences as Greeley and others so carefully report. Religious ritual is yet another way of using the right side of the brain and so involving the individual in image-thinking and a different kind of perception, as Eugene d’Aquili and Charles Laughlin, Jr., have pointed out. Meditation is still another method by which the individual attempts to deal in an active and creative way with the realm of nonphysical reality. The spiritual guide needs knowledge of both kinds of experience.

The Difference Between East and West

Essentially there are two kinds of meditation, one characterized by Eastern Mystics and by some schools of Western spiritual writers, and the other by the general stream of Western Spirituality both Catholic and Orthodox. The Eastern method involves quietness and seeks to come to imagelessness. It is typified by TM, Zen and several other forms of Buddhism. The other form understands the image as a form of psychoid reality which cannot be superseded. Indeed, ultimate religious experience can be expressed by images in the same sort of inadequate way that sensory experience and images describe the physical world.

Various systems of Western meditation attempt to facilitate the
individual in his interaction with that world. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola provide one example of this kind of meditation. Loyola’s genius consisted more in the form that he gave the exercises than in any original contribution. He was giving form to the general practice of the ten centuries before him.

If, indeed, there is another dimension of reality, it is important to know something of its nature. East and West view it differently. The East on the whole (and all generalizations are only partially true) sees ultimate reality as cosmic mind with which one merges and so loses one’s ego identity. Christianity in its most characteristic practice perceives the core of the universe as love with which one relates. The first path leads to imagelessness and to the loss of much of one’s sense of individuality and separateness. The second never transcends the use of images in meditation and leads to an enhanced sense of individuality achieved through an encounter with God. One’s method of spiritual direction will depend upon one’s view of ultimate reality.

Several modern schools of therapy have used the image method of meditation for psychological goals. Assagioli has provided the method of psychosynthesis and Jung has suggested the method of active imagination. Jung’s method has been elaborated by Walter Wink in his excellent book, The Bible in Human Transformation, and by Elizabeth Howes and Sheila Moon in Man the Choicemaker. I have tried to relate the same method to the classical Christian devotional method in my book The Other Side of Silence. The basic idea of this point of view is that emotion expresses the depth of the psyche and can be dealt with creatively only as it is allowed to reveal the image hidden within it.

Both Eastern and Western methods suggest the importance of relaxation and silence, of detachment and the asceticism of quietness. Imageless detachment often becomes an end in itself in the East, while in the West one returns after silence to the image. The image is seen to lead the individual not only to the depth of the human psyche, but also to the psychoid world which impinges upon us human beings.

Jung describes his method of active imagination in an answer to a question during a seminar which he gave in England in 1933 and is reported in his book, Analytical Psychology, Its Theory and Practice. He was treating a young artist who needed to untangle his life by using imagination therapeutically. The patient was an artist and usually gave his imagination free reign. He learned how to use it by looking at a poster and imagining himself in the poster among the cows on a hill in the Bernese Alps. Then he imagined he was passing over the brow of the hill and down the other side, over a stile at a hedge and around a rock until he found a chapel. There on the altar was a statue of the mother of God and just in a flash he saw something with pointed ears disappear like a flash behind the altar. When he questioned his experience it disappeared, but he

discovered that, returning to this experience, the same content repeated itself. The moment he went over the brow of the hill he encountered unconscious data. His imagination was expressing something real within and perhaps even beyond the artist. And so he learned how to use his imagination for psychological purposes. This method, of course, embodies the same principle utilized in the Rorschach and TAT tests.

**Five Methods of Meditation**

I have found five different ways in which this form of meditational activity can be used with people who are seeking spiritual guidance. Sometimes they are helpful with college students who, because of involvement in the drug culture, have been precipitated into contact with this reality at an early age. They are important psychological and pastoral tools. I have given examples of each of these methods in the last chapter of *The Other Side of Silence*.

The first method is that of entering into the mythological story. I use myth in the way that C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams have described it—as a pattern of reality which can be revealed either in imagination or in history or in both. By stepping into the biblical or mythological story imaginatively one can share in its power and transformation. One of the great values of liturgy is that it is an acting-out of a mythological pattern. It is religious play in which the participants step into the very reality of that pattern. One of the reasons that many people get little value from reading the Bible and other religious literature is that they read with the head rather than imaginatively stepping into the story. One can imagine one’s self going with Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem and realize how hard it is to have the Christ child born in one, an arduous task with rejection all along the way, and then even a flight into Egypt. Coming into the religious way is not easy. Or one in deep depression over loss can imagine oneself in the garden of resurrection with Mary and share with her in the experience of joy and victory as she met the Risen Christ. One can step into the story of the Samaritan and the man who fell among the thieves or any other parable. Since the biblical stories all point toward victory, stepping into them can facilitate the possibility of victory within the individual’s life.

A second way of using the imagination meditatively and therapeutically is by the inner dialogue. Many schools of psychotherapeutic thought have suggested dialogues with dream symbols to allow these symbols to reveal their meaning and affective value. Progoff stresses this kind of method in his writing on the Intensive Journal. Gestalt therapy uses the same method. It is only a step from this to the religious colloquy of Ignatius Loyola in which one dialogues with the Risen Christ or the Virgin or some other religious figure. One can dialogue with one’s favorite saint or any religious figure in any religious tradition. This can open up a level of meaning which can hardly be reached in any other way. Such an exercise may even bring one to a relationship with a highly creative level of the objective psyche external to one’s own personal psyche.

When Jung was passing through his own dark night of the soul
following his break with Freud he discovered that as he allowed his affect to be expressed in images he was able to deal with it in a creative way. The very problem of moods is that they are so amorphous and unconfrontable. James Hillman in his profound study of human affect, *Emotions*, has shown how deeply related inner images are to emotions. As one is able to allow the mood or image to express itself in an image, one can sometimes begin to deal with the emotional situation. One can gently lead the imaginary situation toward a positive solution. When this occurs the worst of the mood of anger or fear or depression is often dissipated. One friend found that, only as the novel which he was writing could be brought to a non-tragic solution, did his own inner emotional situation begin to heal and mend. One can seldom become what one has not first of all conceived imaginatively.

Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is a magnificent example of such imagination written in superb poetry. Dante moves from the dark of his inner fears to the white rose of paradise as Helen Luke shows in her study of Dante, *Dark Wood to White Rose*.14 Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* is another example of imaginative working-through of one’s inner psychological and religious problems. St. John of the Cross’ “Stanzas of the Soul” is another example of such creative imaging. Many people find this method of dealing with their inner reality incredibly creative and transforming.

The dream is the natural altered state of consciousness. Paying attention to the dream is a fourth method of meditational practice. The dream often reveals the depth of one’s self through images and pictures and stories. One does not have to have expertise in dream analysis to find meaning in one’s dreams. One student gave me a series of dreams which charted the way for him through a time of crisis and transformation. He never had an hour of analysis. In his book *The Savage and Beautiful Country* Dr. McGlashan asks the question: “Who is the dreamer within who provides a picture of inner condition and the health of one’s relationship with the outer as well as the inner world?”15 Understanding the dream can become a kind of imaginative play in which one finds one’s inner direction. One can also start with a negative dream, imagine and nudge it in a more positive direction, and actually change the quality of the human psyche and its relationship to the world around it.

And, finally, there is the method of becoming quiet and coming to observe the flow of one’s inner life. Both by sensory deprivation and through concentration on a symbol or mantra one can step out of ordinary experience and observe the flow of images which can ordinarily be found in dreaming. Since one is more conscious during meditation, one can more easily alter the flow of images within this state. It is also possible to bring the image of a healing and transforming figure or power into one’s meditative situation. This can change the direction of the inner imagery and also the general direction of the personality using this method. It is

nearly impossible to bring a person to religious creativity until that person has first imagined the possibility and expressed it imaginatively.

This process can be experienced not only in writing, but in drawing, modeling clay, weaving, dance and sculpture. Through this method one can often come into touch with deep and often hidden aspects of the personality and integrate them into a creative solution to life.

Guiding others on the spiritual quest should certainly be one area of expertise for the pastoral counselor. Since modern theology offers but little help in providing a framework for such practice, the pastoral counselor is faced with the difficulty of forging his own synthesis. Likewise he needs to learn methods of meditational techniques which have been all but forgotten not only in Protestant but also in Catholic practice as well. One cannot ethically guide another in such an understanding where one has no experience one’s self. The field is wide open and there is great need. Guiding people on the spiritual quest would appear to be one of the most important and distinctive areas in pastoral counseling in the decades to come.
A Response to Morton Kelsey*

Distinguished lecturer, fellow respondent, presider and colleagues. It gives me a tremendous sense of accomplishment and achievement to stand before you as a responder to the lecture given by Dr. Morton Kelsey. It came as an complete surprise to me when Dr. John Patton presented this opportunity, but I gladly accept it as an honor for me and the institution that I serve.

My reactions to Dr. Morton Kelsey’s lecture are three. The first examines what I think his contribution is to the pastoral counseling movement. The second supports his call for the pastoral counselor to develop a theological and spiritual worldview in addition to a behavioral science worldview; and the third affirms the practical need for spiritual guidance as an integral part of pastoral counseling.

One question that Dr. Kelsey raises for me is: should pastoral counseling have a theological end? Of course, many of us would say yes to this. Many of us would say that the goal of wholeness and restoration of good interpersonal relationships are in line with what the gospel teaches. My criticism of this point of view is that it is horizontal, and there is nothing to distinguish it from what other professionals do in therapy. Kelsey, on the other hand, has a vertical as well as horizontal viewpoint, and it is this vertical orientation that gives what he does a distinctly theological bent. For him the goal of spiritual guidance is not only wholeness but it is sacramental, which means that the goal of spiritual guidance is to provide an experience where the counselee or parishioner can encounter the central meaning of the universe. If pastoral counseling is to be really theological, should it take Kelsey’s lead and adopt a sacramental view as the ultimate end of all of its counseling? This would indeed be a way of punctuating its uniqueness.

In emphasizing the sacramental end of spiritual guidance Dr. Morton Kelsey’s major contribution is the challenging of the pastoral counseling field to accept its uniqueness. He effectively argues that pastoral counselors need to expand their worldview to include not only an understanding of emotions and behavior, but he is also highlighting the need to include a place for religious experience. His lecture pushes us beyond the easy alliance with the behavioral sciences and asks us to risk the relinquishing of our univocal correlations with them. He summons us to include in our perspective the transcendent dimension which is a resource for transforming the whole person, and he calls us to be

* Dr. Wimberly is Assistant Professor of Psychology and Pastoral Care at The Interdenominational Theological Center. This response was given at The National Meeting of The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, 5 May 1978, Chicago, Illinois.
prepared for a new generation that is not encapsulated in the throes of scientific positivism.

When one is expanding one’s worldview, it is also important to adopt a spiritual understanding of images. Dr. Kelsey’s emphasis is upon the place of images in spiritual guidance and pastoral counseling, and he argues for the inclusion of this understanding of images in the worldview. I agree with this argument, but what disturbs me is the suspicion that we might ignore the image’s spiritual significance and adopt a nontranscendent phenomenological approach to them. Therefore, it is important to understand the difference between the transcendent and nontranscendent view of images in order to construct a proper worldview.

Although Dr. Kelsey draws heavily upon Carl Jung for his understanding of images, there is a difference between them. Jung has a nontranscendent phenomenological approach to images and Kelsey has a spiritual transcendent view of images. Jung himself draws attention to the transcendent and nontranscendent distinction relative to images.

To interpret symbol-formation in terms of instinctual processes is a legitimate scientific attitude, which does not, however, claim to be the only possible one. I readily admit that the creation of symbols could also be explained from the spiritual side, but in order to do so, one would need the hypothesis that the “spirit” is an autonomous reality which commands a specific energy powerful enough to bend the instincts round and constrain them into spiritual forms. This hypothesis has its disadvantages for the scientific mind, even though, in the end, we still know so little about the nature of the psyche that we can think of no decisive reason against such an assumption. In accordance with my empirical attitude I nevertheless prefer to describe and explain symbol-formation as a natural process, though I am fully conscious of the probable one-sidedness of this point of view. (Symbols of Transformation, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 228.)

Like Jung we must know the similarities and differences in explaining the origin of images. However, as pastoral counselors, should we take our lead from Morton Kelsey and claim the autonomous force behind the images and include this understanding in constructing our worldview?

Including a place for a spiritual understanding of images and for religious experience in our pastoral counseling worldview has pragmatic implications also. Jung and Kelsey both talk about the positive and negative nature of religious experience, and there are persons who will bring increasingly to counseling transpersonal religious experiences where they have only experienced the negative side of God which is thwarting their growth. These persons will be convinced of the genuine nature of their religious experience, and in many ways it will not be easy to persuade them that there is another side to God. As a result of their obstinence, they will remain emotionally and spiritually immature and not avail themselves to experiences of a more positive nature. Pastoral counselors would need to accept the person’s understanding of his/her religious encounter and, in this context, would need to follow Kelsey’s lead and help the person to turn inward to discover and explore God images in order to provide an experience for encountering the positive side of God. However, the pastoral counselor will not recognize this need unless his/her worldview is expanded to include the transpersonal spiritual dimension.
In conclusion, I genuinely appreciate the guidance I have received from Dr. Morton Kelsey’s work, and it has indeed broadened and deepened my personal life and my counseling. I hope that as pastoral counselors we do not miss the opportunity to declare and claim the uniqueness of pastoral counseling in terms of the sacramental end. Morton Kelsey has taken the lead, can we follow?
The Impact of the Black Church: Sole Surviving Black Institution

You are correct in including a discussion on the Black Church in any conference dealing with black culture, past, present or future. Indeed, as a minister and theologian, I am overjoyed to be a part of this significant conference. The Black Church was born in the African forests and has been our extended family during our experience of our sojourn in the New World. The black religious experience is the essence of our heritage, both oral and written. In a recent conversation with one of our greatest black churchmen, Rev. Dr. Thomas Kilgore of the Second Baptist Church of L.A. and president of the Progressive Baptist Convention, the observation was made that “our black religious heritage is too rich to be consigned to history. It must be preserved “for our posterity.” He, therefore, pledged his moral support for those who are busy recording our religious heritage. I was greatly encouraged by these remarks, as I am by my invitation to share this conference experience with you.

We, as black theologians, have too often talked of our blackness, but have been writing mainly for a white readership. We must consciously change our style, and we must seek now to reach our non-theologically trained constituency, reaching beyond the Halls of Ivy. All blacks share a common black religious heritage. It is this common experience that we are called to make plain. We turn now to the assigned subject. I have elected to divide my subject-matter into three parts: (1) The history of the black church experience, (2) The theological understanding of the church in the Black experience, and (3) The mission of the black church.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK CHURCH EXPERIENCE

Africans always have been a deeply religious people. Religion as religion is a social force for cohesion. It provides an interpretation of ultimate reality, and it supplies meaning for every phase of the life cycle. African religions formed a complete belief-system with its own theology, ritual, faith and life style.

Osadolor Imasogie, a Nigerian religious scholar, provides us with a brief but helpful discussion on African Traditional Religion. He also indicates how this contextual religious experience is transformed by the
encounter with the Christian Faith. Against the protest of many Western writers, Imasogie argues for a common African religious experience. He takes the position that there are differences, but that these divergences are overshadowed by beliefs held in common, e.g., The Eternal Supreme Creator. The differences, he suggests, are determined by socio-political and geographical situations.¹

He rejects the polytheism of Geoffrey Parrinder. That is the belief that the traditional African belief was in many gods. Imasogie also rejects the conclusions of Father Schmidt. Schmidt’s contribution was that he discovered a Supreme Being among the Pigmy people of Central Africa. This was a gain over Emil Ludwig’s view that deity is a philosophical concept, Africans were incapable of such a profound idea. While Schmidt argued for the presence of this belief, he misread the content of the belief. Indeed, it seems that all Western scholars fall short at this point. The Supreme Being was understood to be a deistic god—a god who was a creator but not a provider. God was believed to be one who created the world and removed his presence and power from this world. It was, therefore, left to the lesser spirits to control affairs among humans in this world.²

It has been left to African scholars to clear up this confusion. Indeed, there seems to be almost universal agreement among African theologians that European scholars misread the African understanding of God. Our writer quotes from John Mbiti as well as from Idowu of his own country in asserting both that God is one and that the lesser spirits and the ancestors are understood as messengers and instruments of this one God. Furthermore, this God is not only the creator, but the one near at hand as provider. This God is also in some sense the redeemer in the African religious consciousness.³

We now quote from the black sociologist of religion, C. Eric Lincoln who renounces the white man’s racial and cultural arrogance as he dismissed the black man’s religion during slavery. Lincoln says:

> The African he dismissed arbitrarily as heathen did . . . believe in a supreme God . . . . What the white man dismissed as African ancestor worship was a highly sophisticated expression of love and respect for the family, and a recognition of the continuity of its relationships . . . . What is more, the African moral codes were consistent with the notion of One God of all people.⁴

James H. Cone is correct in saying that the black church was born in slavery. His focus is on the pre-Civil War black church. This church, according to Cone, was related to a quest for social justice in this world. The slave preachers saw that slavery was inconsistent with Christianity. This recognition made early black churches the center of protest against the slave system. Cone dares to say:

² Ibid., p. 228.
³ Ibid., pp. 289-90.
white Christianity in America was born in heresy. Its very coming to be was an attempt to reconcile the impossible—slavery and Christianity. And the existence of the black churches is a visible reminder of its apostasy. The black church is the only church in America which remained recognizably Christian during pre-Civil-War days. Its stand on freedom and equality through word and action is true to the spirit of Christ.\footnote{James H. Cone, \textit{Black Theology and Black Power}, New York: Seabury Press, 1969, p. 103.}

The post-Civil War black church, according to Cone, soon became "a place of retreat from the dehumanizing forces of white power."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 107.} It was a place where blacks were safe from the racist structures that replaced slavery. The black church gradually became an instrument of escape instead of, as formerly, an instrument of protests. Black ministers perpetuated the white system of black dehumanization. The white society recruited black leaders from the black churches, who had bought into white theology and ethics. Blacks were told that they should live an upright life in preparation for heaven. But, on the other hand, they should not be concerned about white injustice—this was a sign of a loss of faith. They were to be prepared for patience and long-suffering in preparation for the final judgment. It was thus that black ministers were duped by the reign of Jim Crow in the churches as well as the society, and as Uncle Toms, they led black churches into a state of apostasy. Cone says: "The black church identified white words wth God's Word and convinced its people that by listening in faithful obedience to the 'great white father' they would surely enter the 'pearly gates.'"\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 108-09.}

Cone leaps historically from the pre-Civil War black church to Dr. King's ministry. King, according to Cone, saw clearly the meaning of the gospel with its social implications and sought to instill its true spirit in the hearts and minds of black and white in this land. He was a prophet with a dream grounded not in the hopes of white America but in God. His dream led him to responsibilities in the present. Cone sees black power as the only hope for the black church. He goes so far as to say that even though King did not endorse black power, he prepared the way for its coming.\footnote{Major J. Jones, \textit{Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope}. New York: Abingdon Press, 1971, p. 54.}

Major Jones, covering the same period, the post-Civil War church, argues that the black church "guided a people through a time of great danger." To preach the Gospel with its fullness, might well have invited genocide, Jones argues. I quote:

\begin{quote}
Whether one is critical of the black church for its lack of aggressive protest, or rather praises it for its strategy of deception, which surely saved a people, may be determined by how one reads post-Civil War history.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}
\end{quote}

The years immediately following the Civil War, roughly 1867-1877, were troubled times. DuBois called these "mystic years." The North decided to try democracy. Many ministers turned to politics. Churches were meeting places. Ministers were often the only persons in a
community sufficiently well developed to lead the people. They, therefore, had to devote themselves not just to church work, but to every matter of concern to the race. Whites had loosened black chains and were busy congratulating themselves for their selflessness and benevolence. Their sense of responsibility was at an end. Blacks who were landless, ignorant and penniless were left free to deal with starvation, poverty and want. Blacks were free for a few years. They were the political tools of the Republican party. But, when the Southern whites decided to take matters into their hands again, the government merely turned its head and allowed blacks to endure a new type of enslavement. The white man was free to take the lives of blacks with impunity, and sharecropping provided another form of enslavement.

We cannot gainsay the role which black ministers and churches played during these troubled times. And, then, due to the oppression blacks experienced in the South, they fled North and West into major urban centers. They were soon to discover in the cities that they could not compete with the opportunities offered to white ethnic emigrants from Europe who were racial cousins to those in power. It was then that the dark ghetto was born with its heinous crime and poverty, and the black man’s heaven turned into hell.

The black religion nurtured us through all of these tragic experiences. It has African roots, but it has been transformed by the tragic soul-life of both slaves and so-called freed men. The churches under the leadership of black ministers, laymen and women have weathered this storm and guided us through this long night of suffering. The black church has been not merely an ark of salvation, but a hospital for the sick, a haven for the lonely, an agent of social action and change. It has been a center of protest, but it has also been a place where we have found meaning and healing for our bodies, minds and spirits. In sum, this is the role of the church in the history of black people.

II. THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH

The church is a fellowship or a community of believers. In the Christian tradition, the church is a group of people who have accepted the discipleship of Jesus Christ. The fact that we are discussing the church rather than a mosque or a synagogue implies that we are addressing the Christian congregation.

This does not mean, however, that we are unaware that some blacks are Moslem, Jewish and secular. Indeed, some blacks are religious without belonging to any religious community. We are concerned, furthermore, that we partake of an ecumenical spirit which will enable us to work for our liberation across denominational and inter-religious lines. In fact, our churches must consider an operational unity which will enable us to support even secular organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League, which have a good track record in the cause of racial justice.

Our task here is to seek a deeper understanding of the nature of the black church. It is both an organism of the Spirit and a historic organization or institution. It is invisible as well as visible. Here we do not
refer to “invisible” in a sociological sense as E. Franklin Frazier does in his valuable study on the black church. Frazier had in mind the unofficial and often secret religious gatherings of slaves unknown to their masters. Our reference is rather to the theological distinction the Protestant Reformers made between the earthly fellowship of believers in Christ and the communion of saints in heavenly places. It is the distinction the adherents of the social gospel made between the church militant and the church triumphant.

After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, some of his devotees waited in Jerusalem for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit descended upon the faithful. Those disciples who had been downcast with doubt and despair were transfigured into forceful proclaimers of the Good News that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. Many lives were changed to new moral and spiritual directions. A fellowship was born in which there were great sharing and caring. It was a community of love. It was a spirit-filled assembly. The Apostle Paul was later to refer to it as the Household of Faith or the Family of God. We will return to this image of the church as family. It is my impression that this image of the church taken out of the New Testament is essential to the self-understanding of the black church.

In I Cor. 12:14 the Apostle Paul asserts that we are many members in one body. Here we may draw upon the meaning of an East African term harambee (unity). Africans tell us that all traditional cultures on that vast continent have a strong sense of unity within community. The statement “because I am we are” is often repeated to express this type of kinship.

The religious experience of our forebears contained this type of unity within community. Again, this is why, I believe, the black slaves understood the Bible and its message almost by instinct. Both the synagogue of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament contextually belong to a non-western social milieu. The relation of God to old Israel, the Hebrews, and to New Israel, the Church, could be readily understood by people aware of the presence and power of God in their midst. Africans understand religion as permeating the life of the entire life cycle and community. And this is at the heart of the biblical message.

Now, Paul discusses the church as the body of Christ. In essence he is saying that a body has many parts. Each organ or limb has a special function. But, on the other hand, the body is a unity.

It follows that the parts are inter-dependent. The health and wholeness of the one body depends upon how well each part functions and its harmonious working in concert with other parts. We now know, even better than Paul, the profundity of his insight. We can now go even further and point to the delicate relationship between mind and body. A good neuro-surgeon will check out all the physical and nerve connections to the brain, and if all is in order and the patient is still complaining, he will perhaps inquire concerning the patients’ personal relations. Are you

---

facing pressures on your job? Are you and your spouse having marital problems?

Paul, then, was insightful of something when he described the church as a body. A body is a unity-in-diversity. It allows for persons to fulfill themselves morally and spiritually, but it provides this self-fulfillment in the context of community. It is unity without conformity. There is room for self-expression, but this too is related to the well-being of others. We are a people needing to find a unity-in-diversity, but a unity-without-conformity. We need to know who we are as a people and forge our way to an operational unity if we would be free. But there must be an opportunity for each person to work through the identity-crisis which racism has foisted upon us and realize our potential. We must have healthy individuals if our group life is to be healthy and whole.

This church, however, is first and foremost a spiritual organism, a living body. Christ is the head of the church. The church exists under his lordship. It is anchored in faith. It is sustained by the Spirit’s presence and power.

All the affirmations of the Christian belief-system converge in our understanding of the church. What we understand about God, sin, salvation, the redemption through Christ, the work of the Spirit, preaching, sacraments and the life after death—all these are aspects of the faith of the church. It is through the life of its members committed to this faith, bound in a covenant with each other under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and throught the guidance and power of the Spirit, that the Christian mission is carried forth in the world.

In Ephesians 3:15 the Apostle Paul refers to the “whole family in heaven and earth.” African theologians are now concerned about the “communion of the saints” against the background of an extended family which has a built-in reverence for ancestors. This religious tradition holds a belief in kinship that connects the living with the so-called living dead. This has real implications concerning respect for the elderly as well as for those ancestors who have departed this life. All of these concerns must be dealt with by African Christian theologians when they speak of the “communion of the saints.”

While we can learn much from this discussion that will help us to overcome the tension between the haves and have-nots in our pews and the relation between the young and the old, our focus will be limited to the family image in the African religious community, in the black church and, of course, with the New Testament.

The word *Ujamma* (familyhood) is considered by Julius Nyere, President of Tanzania, as the African way to socialism. As a socio-eco-political program in that country, it is developed out of African and Christian components. But *ujamma* is African in a traditional sense. It refers primarily to the kinship ties within the extended family. This concept of family is at the heart of social organization and it is permeated with religious beliefs and rituals. The life cycle of the individual as well as the destiny of the community is understood in the context of *ujamma*.

The black family and church have always been closely related in this
country. In a real sense the church is a family when it is true to its purpose in the black community. W. E. B. DuBois said some place that the church was a family for blacks when they had no family life.

Black families were divided on the auction block. Slavery dealt a terrible blow to black family life, notwithstanding Gutmann’s study. Those who were able to keep the family afloat did so through an almost invincible love and determination. After emancipation, economic necessity again separated the family. The flight to the urban North either divided the family or consigned it to the woes of the dark ghettos of the North. Unemployment and the welfare system almost finished the black family off. These are socio-historic realities. The black church, South and North, was the place where blacks came together in a fellowship of sharing and caring. The black church has been the place where the lonely could find friendship, where have-s and have-nots could rejoice together and affirm faith in a common Lord. Let us not forget the healing ministry of the black church. Even when the black church has been other-worldly in its message, it has enabled black people to assume dignity and maintain their sanity in an otherwise insane society.

But, I am proud to report that historically and at this moment the black church has been more than a haven for the lonely; it is a militant church—a prophetic church. Our understanding of religion has always been holistic. Even the spirituals which capture the tragic soul life of the slaves address themselves to freedom here as well as hereafter. Dr. Miles Mark Fisher, an authority on the black spiritual and the history of the black church, writes in Slaves Songs in the United States concerning the double meaning of the spirituals.

While white Christians divide up between those concerned about heaven and those concerned about life here and now, black Christians under the leadership of ministers and laypersons have always used their faith as a protest against injustices. Thus we as the family of God may now use our togetherness as a means for our deliverance. This is a tradition out of our historic black churches we need now both to celebrate and program.

We need to cultivate the presence of God as we come together for worship and service. Only thus will the worship and life of the black churches be prepared to fulfill their mission. The black church will not be able to function as an institutional agent of social change unless it brings the power and perspectives of its worship and life to bear upon its mission of liberation.

A colleague, Major Jones, has written a passage which I find helpful in making this point. He distinguishes between a static and dynamic concept of the church. The church, Jones argues, is not an ecclesia or community formed and founded once and for all and remains constant and unchanged. He speaks rather of the true church as “a congregating church.” The people of God become an ecclesia only by the fact of a repeated concrete event when God meets them. Jesus said when two or three assemble in my name, I will be in their midst. Thus Jones writes that the gathered church has the potential of becoming the “event church.” If
the people gathered lay hold of the entire promise of the gospel, become aware of the grace of the Father and are conscious of the abiding presence of Christ. The true church, then, is a group of people called of God to be the church of God in the world, accepting such a calling, and gathered as a people of God in his name. It is only then that the “event status” is conferred upon those gathered.10

If the impact of the black church is to continue, we must take seriously the tradition to which we belong. It is a heritage with a deep spirituality which has brought healing to a long-suffering people. Its songs, sermons and ceremonies have bound up the wound inflicted upon us by an inhumane social order. Its priestly tradition has brought meaning and healing to us as persons. But the black church has produced prophets as well as priests. Therefore, black churches as institutions have been agents of social change for the liberation of black people.

III. THE WITNESS OF THE BLACK CHURCH

The black church remains as the strongest historic and nation-wide institution we control as a people. In some sense the black church is an “ethnic” church which is capable of rallying issues which relate to black survival.

As we have said before, white churches are mainly spiritual comfort stations. This is the reason why conservative evangelical churches are growing. A white church concerned about social change and ethical issues is usually small and ineffective. It sits, as it were, on the fringe of church life. Many ethically concerned whites have had to leave their churches and form small cell groups to deal with what seems vital for them.

Because black churches are spiritually alive and socially concerned at the same time, there is a lot of promise for black churches to witness with great force in society. White preachers dare not preach on social evils from their pulpits lest they face a dwindling membership and a shrinking budget. In some cases they are disciplined by district superintendents and bishops. But, in many instances, black ministers must run to catch up with their people in social concern. We as a people need to hear a word of deliverance from our pulpits, and we expect those who utter these words to be ahead of us in social involvements. The oppressed need and appreciate a word of deliverance. Only in this form is the Gospel Good News.


William V. Shannon sums up the situation well:

After two centuries of slavery and another century of Jim Crow second-class citizenship, the court decisions and civil rights legislation of the 1950’s and 60’s finally destroyed segregation and overt racial discrimination. . . . 11

---

10 Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.
Shanon rightly conceives of these gains of the 50's and 60's as merely laying the foundation for further progress. He agrees with remarks made by President Lyndon Johnson in a commencement address at Howard University in June, 1965. Johnson referred to the long period of deprivation of human rights blacks had endured and suggested that much needed to be done to upgrade these disabilities before all blacks would be able to compete. Johnson said: "It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates." He further states:

This is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.¹³

Harvard sociologist Glazer is saying "no" to Johnson. Glazer asserts that affirmative action has failed the black masses. It has helped those blacks who could have made it on their own—the black middle class. His argument is an example of the new form of racism which exalts "merit" as the standard for progress. Glazer does not understand what it means to be black in a society saturated with racism. There are scores of jobs which would be crowded out by white applicants if the Federal Government did not intervene to make sure that blacks obtained their share of such jobs. We need to remind those blacks who are doing well of their responsibility of reaching back, aiding those who are still struggling to survive.

While continuing to be a soul-winning church, the black church must realize its awesome responsibility in dealing with collective evils. Many people are not even aware of their participation in a system that destroys black people. Joseph R. Washington, Jr., writes about racism as a pre-conscious and irrational fact in white America. To be born white provides a white male with a ten-fold advantage and a white-female with at least a five-fold advantage over either a black male or female. Most black middle class people of my generation, with few exceptions, are the first affluent generation. Compare this with two hundred or more years of affluence in some white families. We are a people struggling to survive.

Personal friendships with whites and even inter-racial marriages will not overcome this cleavage between the races. There is a systemic, cultural and institutional problem to be tackled. Whatever our personal preferences may be, we have a responsibility to free a whole people and our personal freedom is tied to their liberation. There is no place in this society where we can escape racism. There is no status we can achieve where racism does not haunt us or someone we love.

The black church as a powerful institution, made up of gifted and influential people from our race, has great potential as an agent of liberation for black people. But it is only partially mobilized. It needs to become conscious of its opportunity and its resources in this freedom struggle.

¹² Ibid.
¹³ Ibid.
We need a socially-conscious and well-trained multiple-staff in our large congregations. A single person at the helm of a 3,000-4,000 membership congregation is drained of all of his/her energy and is dealing with emergency basket cases. We need to arouse, organize and activate the considerable lay leadership in our midst, including our youth. To this end, we may no longer rely on the annual revival, as important as this is, to renew the faith of members as well as call to repentance the unsaved.

There must be persistent Christian nurture through teaching and counseling as well as preaching and worship. Our people must be educated in their new consciousness and responsibilities. They must understand the form and dimensions of the problems we face. They must understand the this-worldly message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of the Church. The black church must be concerned with personal crises and do a good job in pastoral care. It must minister to the sick, the helpless, the dying and the bereaved. It must be engaged in social welfare. It must meet personal, family and community emergencies. But as an institution it must confront the unjust organizations and systems of power for the end of social transformation. The black church, following the example of Dr. King, must deal with political, social and economic causes which make life more human.

But the black church must be wise in its efforts. The church must always be true to its nature and mission in the world. It must bring to bear its understanding of the Gospel upon all causes and movements. Its critical and objective frame of judgment must be anchored in the Bible and the confession of the Christian Creed. Therefore, the black church is not just another agency—it is not just another organization. The power of the black church is not merely a material power. It is spiritual. It is anchored in a community of believers who serve and work under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The church may cooperate with secular institutions for humanizing the social order. It may give its support on issues which it endorses out of its commitment to the worth of each person under God. But the role of the church is not merely functional. Its task is to bring to its material resources a transcendent, spiritual perspective and moral insights which enrich and empower any effort for human fulfillment and social justice. Should our black churches deny their Lord and uproot themselves from a rich spiritual heritage, like Samson of old they would lose their spiritual power and hence their physical strength, and would be readily defeated by the evils we face. As a secular institution the black church, with its meager personnel and financial resources, would be easily defeated. The strength of the black church is first of all in its power to motivate, organize and empower black people to face great odds in the moral struggle for human dignity. The black church is and will continue to be an awesome force for the liberation of black people, if it remains true to its faith and its Lord, maintains its integrity and spirituality and is unbossed and unbought by the forces of injustice in our society:

"Never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."
By Herman E. Thomas*

Toward an Understanding of Religion and Slavery in J.W.C. Pennington

While one can isolate several significant themes in the life and work of James W. C. Pennington, this investigation focuses on religion and slavery. These two themes constitute major focal points in the life of this black minister whose public life spanned the period of "militant abolitionism" and much of Reconstruction. To demonstrate the inter-relationship between religion and slavery in his life, we shall discuss Pennington's (1) refutation of the religious proslavery argument and (2) his defense of affiliating with a denomination with slaveholders. This essay will show that Pennington based his opposition to slavery on a rational interpretation of Biblical literature and defended his affiliation with the Presbyterian denomination as a right of individual conscience. Since no detailed biographical account of this black religionist has been published, a very brief sketch of his life seems in order.

Born a slave on a plantation in Maryland, January 15, 1809, James Pembroke assumed the name of Pennington after his escape in 1827 at the age of eighteen. Following a sojourn of almost a year at Quaker residences in Pennsylvania, he located in Newton, Long Island, New York. Shortly after settling in Newton, he became a Christian convert. Even before his conversion, Pennington contemplated what he could do for those still in slavery (especially his biological parents and eleven brothers and sisters) as well as for blacks in the North. Following reconciliation with God, he decided to focus on helping the free black population in the North. It was not, however, until 1835 that Pennington began formal preparation for the Christian ministry by moving to New Haven, Connecticut. He taught in a black school and was allowed to sit outside the classroom and hear lectures at Yale Divinity School. In 1838, he returned to Newtown, was ordained a minister, and served the black "Presbyterian Church" there for two years. This was the first of seven churches in three denominations (Presbyterian, Congregational and AME) Pennington would serve as pastor over a ministerial career of some 32 years.

Concurrent with his career as minister, Pennington achieved wide recognition as an abolitionist and reformer. Shortly after becoming a Christian, he launched his public career as an opponent of colonization and an advocate of the abolition of slavery. He attended the first "National Convention of Colored People" in 1830, and was elected President of the Convention in 1853.

*Herman E. Thomas is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Assistant Director of Afro-American and African Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
In addition to participating in the Convention movement, Pennington spoke, wrote, and travelled in support of the abolition of slavery. Pennington delivered two very important addresses, *An Address Delivered at Newark, New Jersey, At the First Anniversary of West Indian Emancipation, August 1, 1839*; and *The Reasonableness of the Abolition of Slavery at the South, a Legitimate Conference from the Success of British Emancipation: An Address Delivered at Hartford, Connecticut on the First of August 1856*. He also published a number of invigorating intellectual articles including “A Review of the Slave Trade,” and “The Self-Redeeming Power of the Colored Races of the World” both of which appeared in the *Anglo-African Magazine* (1859). His proclamation of the “gospel” of abolition carried Pennington to Europe, and the West Indies. During his second visit to Europe in 1849-50 (his first had been in 1843), the University of Heidelberg respectfully conferred a doctor of divinity degree upon Pennington. The degree was awarded, not because of his accomplishments as a scholar though he had a number of publications including his *Text Book History* and *The Fugitive Blacksmith* by late 1849, but for what he symbolized: what a black former slaver turned black abolitionist could achieve if given a chance. Without a doubt, Pennington’s potential for success achievements in spite of the odds were evident. He had largely educated himself; was renown teacher and preacher, and organizer of the Union Missionary Society in 1841, the forerunner of the American Missionary Association of 1846; and the official representative of the free black people of Connecticut at the World Anti-Slavery Convention meeting in London, England in 1843. These accomplishments pre-dated the conferral of the D.D. degree. Later, in mid-1855, Pennington would ride inside a New York City streetcar in defiance of a city ordiance permitting black passengers only on the outside, take the issue to court, and end segregated streetcars in New York City, and thus prefigure Martin L. King and Montgomery ninety-nine and one-half years later.

But by late 1855, Pennington’s public career had reached its zenith. For unknown reasons, he was no longer pastor of Shiloh (First Colored Presbyterian Church) in New York after 1855. Lewis Tappan, his longtime associate in the abolition and missions movement, recorded that Pennington had succumbed to alcohol in late 1854.

Pennington also recovered from addiction to alcohol and continued his crusade against slavery through the Civil War. In 1865, Pennington travelled South, was ordained an AME minister, and assigned to the Natchez, Mississippi charge. By 1868 he was in Portland, Maine at the Fourth Congregational Church which he left in 1870 to become pastor of a black Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida. He died in October, 1870, still ministering to the needs of his people.

Pennington was a black man committed to the utilization of Christianity as both a faith and a vehicle of racial uplift.

1. Pennington's Refutation of the Religious Pro-Slavery Argument
Even in the confines of slavery Pennington felt that slavery was wrong. After his escape to free territory, he encountered both black and white
abolitionists who embraced contrasting concepts as to the most effective approach to abolish the “peculiar institution.” He sympathized with most of their views without moderating his inherent, personal resentment of the slave system. A few years after his ordination to the ministry he set out to refute the contention that Biblical literature sanctioned institutional slavery.

In the North, where he was exposed to evangelical Protestantism, the Bible greatly influenced Pennington’s development into an active abolitionist and an opponent of slavery. In approaching the issue of slavery and the Bible, Pennington carefully selected his words in asking the question “Is slave holding consistent with the Gospel? That men in other ages had been slaveholders was a fact in the Bible. But the Bible was more important for what it revealed “as consistent or inconsistent with the moral nature of God.” With specific regard for slavery, Pennington’s primary concern was “is it consistent wi [th] the will of God?” or is it shown to be “right in His sight?”¹

Applying the test of consistency to the Old Testament for those who argued that black people were descended from Cain, Pennington retorted with what he called “the schoolboy’s textbook fact, that Cain lived before the deluge, [and] that all his posterity were swallowed up!”² Moreover, black people were not descendants of Canaan, the youngest son of Ham, presumably cursed by his grandfather, Noah, and his posterity doomed to slavery. Ham’s son, Canaan had settled in the land called Canaan, but his son Sabetecha settled in Africa from whence black people came.³

Furthermore, the argument that the curse was intended to extend to Canaan’s posterity was generally “inferred from the fact that the land which they [the Canaanites] inhabited,” was given to the Israelites.⁴ However, for Pennington, the inference was not clear, for the very fact of the Canaanites possessing the land “may have been the reason why they were doomed.” Pennington thought that God appropriated the land before the Canaanites occupied it; therefore, they had no claim upon it. The land was already destined by God to be Israel’s.

Finally, there was no evidence that the words of Noah carried divine punitive sanction. Pennington saw no evidence to support the proslavery claim. If such support was to be found, then God might be made to

³ Ibid., pp. 15, 12.
⁴ Genesis 17:8
contradict himself, for according to Ezekiel, neither the father nor the son was accountable for the sins of the other. Probably the most convincing proof that Noah’s utterance was made without divine approval was the fact that he was under the influence of wine. Thus, of Noah’s so-called damnation of black people, Pennington asked, “Is the spirit of wine the spirit of God?”

He also maintained that American slavery existed in violation of a Biblical understanding of the covenant relationship. A “covenant” was an agreement to do something which was either right or wrong. It was right only if it was the “embodied expression” of God’s righteous will. A covenant was wrong from the time of inception if it bound men to do wrong and did not carry divine sanction. In the twenty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, the rulers of Jerusalem made a covenant with death and an agreement with Sheol. It was wrong and unalterable except by a new covenant which would annul the one with death and Sheol.

By perpetuating slavery, he contended, the United States had made a covenant with death and that not only was American slavery inconsistent with a Biblical understanding of the covenant relationship particularly in the Old Testament, it was proscribed by Jesus in the gospel. “The gospel rightly understood, taught, received, felt and practiced,” Pennington proclaimed, in a letter to his family, “is as anti-slavery as it is anti-sin.”

Rather than citing chapter and verse condemning slavery, he quoted legal definitions and attributes of slavery. More specifically, he quoted from the Synod of Kentucky’s exposition of slavery:

There are now in our whole land two millions of human beings, exposed, defenceless, to every insult, short of maiming or death, which their fellow men may choose to inflict. They suffer all that can be inflicted by wanton caprice, by brutal lust, by malignant spite, and by insane anger. Their happiness is the sport of every whim, and the prey of every passion that may, occasionally, or habitually, infest the master’s bosom. If we could calculate the amount of woe endured by ill-treated slaves, it would overwhelm every compassionate heart—it would move even the obdurate to sympathy. There is also a vast sum of suffering inflicted upon the slave by humane masters, as a punishment for that kind of idleness and misconduct which slavery naturally produces.

After exclaiming that he wanted “no higher authority than this” Pennington asked how this description of slavery compared with the Gospel. “Does it [the Gospel] sanction ‘cruelty’? Does it sanction ‘mangling’? Does it sanction ‘starvation’? Does it sanction ‘imprisonment’? Does it sanction ‘torture’?”

The Gospel sanctioned none

---

1 Pennington, Text Book History, p. 18.
2 Ibid.
3 James W. C. Pennington, “Covenants Involving Moral Wrong Are Not Obligatory Upon Man: A Sermon Delivered In The Fifth Congregational Church, Hartford, On Thanksgiving Day, November 17th, 1842 (Hartford: H. T. Wells, 1842), p. 3
4 Ibid.
6 James W. C. Pennington, A Two Year’s Absence; Or, A Farewell Sermon, Preached In the Fifth Congregational Church, November 2nd, 1845 (Hartford: H. T. Wells, 1845), p. 28.
of these, and it, therefore, did not approve of slavery, he concluded.

Pennington also appealed to the day of judgment to augment his belief that slavery was inconsistent with the Bible. He encouraged slaveholders to desist from wrongdoing and perform “a little for the glory of God before the day of account” came for both slaves and masters. In anticipation of the day of judgment, slaveholders were being informed that they would not inherit eternal life for they had denied the opportunity of salvation to slaves who also were God’s creatures. For Pennington, it mattered not whether a slaveholder was a seller of rum or a professor of religion; his duty was to free the slave. Slavery was contrary to the will of God and unsanctioned, in Pennington’s mind, by the Bible. In spite of his argument that slavery was un-Biblical, Pennington was accused of affiliating with a slaveholding denomination.

2. Pennington’s Defense of Affiliating with a Denomination with Slaveholding Members

In 1853, Pennington was elected Moderator of the Third Presbytery of New York. About a year later, he was accused by an unidentified antislavery writer of Canastota, New York of being proslavery ecclesiastically. The writer stated in a May 29, 1854 article that Pennington was:

a member of the Third Presbytery of New York a body in full communion with men thieves . . . who have labored to make it easy for the dragon of slavery to slime his way through these Northern States represented by the celebrated Dr. Cox, who rejoiced in General Assembly, that they had capped the volcano, by strangling the cry of the slave for at least three years. The New York and New Jersey Synods echoed the voice of the Teneral Assembly by declaring agitation on the slavery question ‘undesirable and inexpedient.’

The author concluded by contending that Pennington “concurred in the [General Assembly] resolution,” and wanted to know if “Dr. Pennington” would sever his ecclesiastical relationship with the Presbyterian Church.

In response to the accusation of “pro-slavery sentiment and action,” Pennington commented: “I have never spoken one word, or cast a vote, on any occasion, or in any place, pro-slavery wise, positive or implied . . . and if any man, or party of men, persist in the charge, [I will] challenge the proof; where did it come, let me have it!”

In his second installment, he proceeded to summarize his experience as a free man noting that “In 1827, I escaped, without the aid or assistance of any human being, from Maryland slavery to Pennsylvania freedom.” He

---

11 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
12 Pennington, “Farewell Sermon,” p. 29.
14 Douglass’ Paper, June 9, 1854.
15 Ibid. At the time this charge and question were leveled, Pennington was involved in negotiations to rescue his recently captured brother from re-enslavement. See Douglass’ Paper, May 11, 1855.
also stated that he had lived "in Connecticut 8 years, in Great Britain 2 years, in Jamaica, Long Island 8 months, in France, Germany, Russia and Belgium, together 3 months." In addition, "I am a black man," he proudly proclaimed, "of 3rd generation line pure Mandingo stock." Since "no descendant of [his] race" had made such a charge against him, he wondered "why should white men seek this quarrel with me?" Abusing and misrepresenting him would not free enslaved black people, he reasoned.16

Pennington presented himself as a self-made man who had achieved some standing among the "men of this [United States] land." Yet he felt himself pounced upon as though he were "an Alabama slaveholder." He had promised God as he escaped that "if God [would] deliver me from my pursuers, I [would] never surrender my manhood to mortal men . . . that oath I never have and never will violate."17

For this reason, he addressed a Newtown meeting related to selecting delegates to the first National Negro Convention in 1830, and was elected a delegate. At the time he penned this anti-colonization address, he was a servant in the home of the President to the Brooklyn Colonization Society, who confronted him with it following his return from the National Convention. Pennington informed this gentleman that black people at the Convention in Philadelphia did not wish to be returned to Africa. Not wishing to work against the desires of black people, the President went to the meeting of the Society that day, and disbanded the organization, and Pennington worked for this gentleman for almost two more years. Moreover, Pennington declared that his "own patriotic spirit" motivated him to commence his activity on behalf of the race. Asking for approval by any "license" agency such as white anti-slavery societies, he observed, "never occurred to me."18

Pennington devoted the third installment to repudiating charges of affiliating with a proslavery presbytery. The accusatory article was published in the Pennsylvania Freeman by an unidentified author. The author charged Pennington with being a member of the presbytery in which Dr. S. H. Cox, a proslaveryman, was a member, and explained that enigma by supposing that Pennington was "either ignorant of the position of that church in respect and sympathy for them in bonds," or he supported the proslavery position of the church.19

Pennington immediately removed the thunder from the first charge by saying: "As a minister, I have never been a member of any presbytery with Dr. Cox."20 It was true that after his conversion Pennington became a member of Laight Street Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn of which Cox was the minister. At that time, however, Pennington was not a minister, but a member of the session. Cox’s house was attacked in 1835 because of

---

16 Douglass' Paper, February 23, 1855.  
17 Ibid.  
18 Ibid.  
19 Douglass' Paper, April 6, 1855.  
20 Douglass' Paper, May 4, 1855.
his antislavery stand. That same year, he resigned as pastor of the Laight Street Church and accepted a professorship at Auburn Seminary. Later he was minister of the New School First Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. By 1846, he had become a proslaveryman who supported the inclusion of slaveholders in the Evangelical Alliance, an ecumenical association of Protestants for temperance and Sabbath reform. The shift was clear when Cox, in a letter, charged Frederick Douglass, who spoke at the London meeting, with interjecting slavery into the proceedings and then charging American temperance societies with racial prejudice. Cox, then, was an abolitionist who defected from the movement and became an antiabolitionist. The first Presbyterian church he served in Brooklyn, however, was not a part of the Third Presbytery in which Pennington was a minister. Since Pennington’s Shiloh Church was a part of the New School Third Presbytery and Cox’s church was probably a part of the Presbytery of Brooklyn, they were not, and had not, been ministers in the same presbytery.²¹

As a matter of fact, in 1845, Pennington had clarified his relationship to his former pastor. In a preface to an appropriately titled “Farewell Sermon” he acknowledged the adoption of the “sentiment of my former pastor and venerable father in the gospel” on the subject of applying “church discipline to slaveholding.” According to Pennington, Cox had written in 1836 that slaveholders should be “excluded from the communion of the church” and that “members of the church, individually, ought to withdraw communion from slaveholders and slavedealers universally.”²² Pennington concluded by noting that he believed Cox’s statement when he first read it and still did. “If my beloved pastor has changed from this sentiment,” he added, “I have not changed with him.” Pennington, then accepted Cox’s views stated in 1836, but he rejected his mentor’s post-1836 thoughts upon the relationship between the Church and slavery.²³

Since Cox remained in the New School Presbyterian Church, the Freeman was apparently alluding to the action of Cox during the General Assembly in 1853. This New School Assembly voted to request the presbyteries in each of the slaveholding states “to submit to the next assembly specific information regarding the exact number of slaveholders in connection with the churches under their jurisdiction, and the number of slaves held by them,” and “whether slaves are admitted to equal privileges and powers in the church courts.”²⁴ Generally speaking, the Assembly wanted information about “the religious well-being of the enslaved.”²⁵ While the request infuriated southern representatives, they only submitted a statement of protest to the Assembly. Cox, however,

²¹ Ibid.
²² Ibid. This discussion on Cox is based on Theodore Savage, The Presbyterian Church in New York City (New York: The Presbytery of New York, 1949), pp, 172, 173, 17, 204, 17.
²⁴ Ibid.
composed a very lengthy statement of objection. Basically, he was convinced that “by the proposed act Slavery [would] not be at all shaken [but] strengthened—if assailed through that most questionable and ambiguous principle which abolitionists are now laboring to force upon our acceptance, even that the slaveholding is in itself a ground of exclusion from the Christian sacraments.” Cox was opposed to Christian abolitionism which embraced no fellowship with slaveholders by denying them both church membership and the Lord’s Supper. Pennington, of course, supported the position of the General Assembly and opposed the views of Cox.

Pennington was fully aware of the proslavery sentiment in the Presbyterian Church. In July, 1853, as the moderator of the New School Third Presbytery of New York, he informed his fellow ministers: “It is to be deeply regretted that some leading Presbyterian theologians among us have . . . undertaken to justify slavery from the Bible.” Because he was certain that “a fair and open discussion would prove that the proslavery men were in error,’ he called upon Presbyterian ministers and members to cease their support of slavery and adopt the “progressive opinion” of some in the denomination who viewed slavery as unBiblical and un-Christian. Pennington had in mind Presbyterians, among others, who supported such voluntary associations as the American Home Missionary Society which received financial assistance from Presbyterians and Congregationalists and admitted slaveholders to church membership. He knew also that some Presbyterians contributed to the American Bible Society which had rejected a $5,000 grant from the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1834 for the purpose of placing Bibles in the hands of all slaves. Pennington was also aware that the American Tract Society refused to circulate literature dealing with slavery. By calling for open debate while refusing to allow fellowship with slaveholders, through his leadership as moderator Pennington was trying to move the Presbytery, and possibly the New School, closer to adopting a Christian abolitionist stance.

On a more personal level, Pennington maintained that the Freeman (newspaper), “notwithstanding the import of his name,” had not learned that “colored men have as strong a jealousy of their rights of private judgment and conscience as white men have, and as high a sense of propriety.” As a black man, therefore, he was free to be a Presbyterian if that was the desire of his conscience. Consequently, if the Freeman had a quarrel with the Presbyterian Church “as a body,” that would have been understandable, for it would have been a matter of church doctrine or policy. “But,” Pennington explained, “to single me out as an offender [of my people], and purposely linking [sic] my name with that of an odious individual white man [Dr. S. H. Cox]—falsely,—too and then tell me virtually that in no constituent part of the Presbyterian Church shall my fugitive heels find a resting place, is equivalent to telling me that I shall

26 Ibid., p. 393.
27 Ibid., pp. 395-396.
not be a Presbyterian! Private judgment is the domain of the black man as well as the white. Any man, or body of men, who attempts to invade that sacred right, I must regard as the most dangerous of all men to me."

In addition to arguing that as a black man he was entitled to think for himself, Pennington perceived the charge by the Freeman as an attack upon “colored men, by professed friends of the race.” He explained: “We become obnoxious to some of our professed friends when we do not gee and haw . . . at their bidding. I have yet to learn that a mere profession of abolitionism gives any white man a right to take me by the coat button and lead me whithersoever he will.”

In his May, 1855 final installment on the matter of his alleged proslavery sentiments, Pennington submitted a letter from the Albion Anti-Slavery Society charging him by stating that “in one of your late Conventions in New York” a resolution declaring agitation on the slavery question “undesirable and inexpedient.” The letter from this Michigan society also deemed it “undesirable and inexpedient” to send “any aid” for the “pretended deep affliction” of Pennington concerning his fugitive brother, Stephen.

The response of Pennington to this charge was sharp and precise. “First,” he said, “I made no appeal to Mr. Tuttle [the Society’s corresponding Secretary] or his society in the redemption of my brother—Stephen Pembroke, from slavery,” and second, that he did not support the resolution alluded to in the letter. In the third point of his refutation, he stated that he had received “letters of tender sympathy, enclosing material ‘aid’ from persons of all classes,” which had permitted the return of his brother and some of the family one month after their capture in New York City. Finally, since no response had been received from the Albion Society, “Let the world,” Pennington advised his readers, “be the judge between us.”

In this contest with his adversaries, Pennington demonstrated that from a religious perspective slavery was wrong and unjust. In addition, he showed that a black man was capable of intellectual reflection; that he was entitled to private judgment and that a black man in high position would still act for the good of the race.

Pennington was a black Christian minister and abolitionist who utilized religion in the fight against slavery. More than a century after the abolition of physical slavery and the death of Pennington, freeing individuals and institutions of religion from “mental slavery” to work for the reform of a society that continues to oppress black people, remains a formidable challenge for black religionists.

---

29 Douglass’ Paper, May 4, 1855.
30 Ibid.
31 Douglass’ Paper, May 11, 1855.
32 Ibid.
The Wesleys In Georgia: An Evaluation

How are we to assess the Georgia sojourn of the Wesleys? Lamentably, it has become commonplace to dismiss 1736-1737 as failure. But was it? Was it the ill-starred venture we customarily assume? Or is it to be regarded as a major milestone—a necessary seasoning—for the brothers soon to lead the evangelical revival? Has the propitious moment not come to sound a new and positive note regarding Georgia, and should that word not emanate from Georgia? In Georgia the Wesleys painfully burned their fingers in the fire of reality, yet in the torturing experience, they learned and matured.

Rarely do we find young men so highly motivated, so naive, so guileless. The Wesleys came to Georgia fresh from their Holy Club background, their chief impetus the quest for holiness. By preaching to the Indians, John Wesley would be able to share the unsearchable riches of Christ with the pure, unspoiled Noble Savage—so vividly characterized by Rousseau.

It was Dr. John Burton of Corpus Christi, Oxford, Trustee for Georgia and patron of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, who wrote John, September 8, 1735, “Your short conference with Mr. Oglethorpe has raised the hopes of many good persons that you and yours would join in an undertaking which cannot be better executed than by such instruments.”

Wesley’s reply, October 10, 1735, clearly enunciated his basic inducement, “My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul.” He insisted, “I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen . . .” He continued, “But you will perhaps ask: ‘Cannot you save your own soul in England as well as in Georgia?’ I answer,—No; neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there.”

It was settled. Accompanying the Wesleys were Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delamotte. The Earl of Egmont perceived, “I take the sudden resolution of the four gentlemen now mentioned of going over to help the

---

2 Ibid., I:188-190.

*Dr. Smith is Assistant Professor of Church History at The Interdenominational Theological Center. The major portion of this paper was read on Tuesday, December 28, 1976 at The Bicentennial Christmas Conference of United Methodists of Georgia and Florida, meeting in Savannah, Georgia.
cause of religion as a particular providence and mark of God's favour to our designs." All were convinced the mission was of God and had God's blessing.

The Voyage

About 9:00 A.M. on Tuesday, October 14, 1735 the party "took boat for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia." John commented:

Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want, God having given us plenty of temporal blessings, nor to gain riches or honour, [which we trust He will ever enable us to look on as no other than dung and dross;] but singly this—to save our souls, to live wholly to the glory of God.

No sooner had the Simmonds gotten under way than strict—yea tyrannical—Holy Club procedure made its way into life aboard ship:

We now began to be a little regular. Our common way of living was this: From four in the morning till five each of us used private prayer. From five to seven we read the Bible together, carefully comparing it (that we might not lean to our own understandings) with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers, at which were present usually between thirty or forty of our eighty passengers.

The spiritual pace accelerated hour by hour throughout the day until finally, "Between nine and ten we went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea nor the motion of the ship could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us." And this was to be their life style in pioneer Georgia!

A series of frightful storms overtook the vessel, and Wesley candidly delineated the state of his soul, his haunting fear of death, "At night I was awakened by the tossing of the ship and roaring of the wind, and plainly showed I was unfit, for I was unwilling, to die." During this traumatic, extended turbulence he later acknowledged, "The Germans... calmly sang on." After inquiry, he was told, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die." The indelible impression made by these Moravians became increasingly evident throughout the Georgia experience.

Arrival

At last the protracted voyage ended. On Wednesday, February 4, 1736, "About noon the trees [of Georgia] were visible from the mast, and in the afternoon from the main deck." That evening Wesley read the lesson, "A great door and effectual is opened [1 Corinthians 16:9]." The following day, "Between two and three in the afternoon God brought us all safe into the Savannah river. We cast anchor near Tybee Island." Then on Friday, February 6, 1736 "About eight in the morning I first saw my

---

5 Ibid., dated Tuesday, October 14, 1735.
6 Ibid., I:112-113, dated Tuesday, October 21, 1735.
7 Ibid., I:122-123, dated Sunday, November 23, 1735.
8 Ibid., I:142-143, dated January 25, 1736. Wesley then "went to their crying, trembling neighbours' and spoke "in boldness." He continued, "At twelve the wind fell. This was the most glorious day which I have hitherto seen."
foot on American ground. It was a small uninhabited island, . . . over against Tybee.” The English called it Peeper—now known as Cockspur—Island. Oglethorpe led the party to “a rising ground” where they knelt to give thanks to God. When the other people came on shore, in an open place, “surrounded with myrtles, bays, and cedars” a prayer service was held, and Wesley read from Mark 6, passages “wonderfully suited to the occasion” telling of John the Baptist and “our Lord’s directions to the first preachers of His gospel.” Wesley commented, “God grant that, through patience and comfort of His Holy Word, we may ever hold fast the blessed hope of our calling!”

Georgia in 1736 was the youngest of the English colonies with a small population, half of whom—“some 700 souls”—lived in Savannah. It was a community beginning to take shape: houses were under construction, streets being laid out. The first group of Georgia settlers—120—had come with Oglethorpe aboard the Anne, arriving on February 12, 1733 (Gregorian Calendar). The Wesleys came to a fledgling English colony. When did Blacks first come to Georgia? In terms of English governance, the answer is undoubtedly linked to the ordinance forbidding slaves—not on moral but economic grounds—“His Majesty thought fit to pass some laws since the Charter, whereby the Inhabitants are restrained from the use of Negroes, from the use of Rum, and from Trading with the Indians without Lycence.” There soon followed “An Act for rendering the Colony of Georgia more defensible by Prohibiting the Importation and use of Black Slaves or Negroes into the same.” It was assumed the Georgia colonists “could ill afford the purchase” of Africans. White indentured servants “did not appear to offer the disadvantages” that were assumed attendant upon use of slaves. Slavery flourished, however, in neighboring South Carolina. Blacks probably came from that colony, either in flight to escape bondage or they were brought covertly as slaves—public notice carefully avoided. Even so, “Col. Bull brought with him 4 of his Negroes, who were Sawyers, to assist the Colony; and also, brought provision for them, being resolved to put the Trust to no expense.” Possibly these are the first recorded Black people in the Georgia venture.

The pervading fear in Georgia was not so much from native Indians, but the Spanish in St. Augustine who might at any time launch an attack.

---

9 Ibid., I:145-149.
10 Ibid., I:371. Charles Wesley estimated “about 200 houses . . . and 700 souls,” in Egmont Diary, II:313. John’s approximation is 518 people, as of 1737.
14 From A Brief Account of the Establishment of a Colony of Georgia under General James Oglethorpe, February 1, 1733, quoted in Spencer B. King, Jr., Georgia Voices: A Documentary History to 1872 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966), p. 12. Blacks may have accompanied the Spanish to Georgia as early as 1540.
It was the frontier milieu which in large measure explains many of the blunders of the Wesleys. No longer was there the supportive Epworth household. Samuel, Sr. had died April 25, 1735 and Susanna was living with her children. Letters were exchanged, but the Atlantic now separated the family. There was no Holy Club—albeit Burton’s suggestion to transfer it in toto to Georgia. Stability and comfort of the University of Oxford were gone. Likewise there were no refreshing, delightful visits to the Kirkham rectory at Stanton Harcourt. The Wesleys were confronting an altogether new environment.

Charles Wesley, “Secretary for Indian Affairs”—also secretary to General Oglethorpe—had a doleful ministry lasting but five months. On Tuesday, March 9, 1736, “about three in the afternoon, I first set foot on St. Simon’s island,” he recorded. “I spent the afternoon in conference with my parishioners. (With what trembling ought I to call them mine!) At seven we had evening prayers, in the open air, at which Mr. Oglethorpe was present.”15 The following day, “Between five and six in the morning I read short prayers to a few at the fire, before Mr. Oglethorpe’s tent, in a hard shower of rain.”16

Charles' astonishing naivety was soon apparent, on the 11th he “heard the first harsh word from Mr. Oglethorpe, when I asked for something for a poor woman ... I know not how to account for his increasing coldness.”17 Neither did Charles comprehend malicious gossip which was being harranged in the General’s ear. From the beginning Charles was at cross purposes with his people. Even his attempt to befriend a serving girl resulted in a humiliating scene, “while I was talking in the street with poor Catherine, her mistress came up to us, and fell upon me with the utmost bitterness and scourility;” he went on melancholically, she “said she would blow me up, and my brother ... she would be revenged, and expose my d—d hypocrisy, my prayers four times a day by beat of drum, and abundance more,” at which point it is almost possible to see the downcast Charles take a long breath and continue, “which I cannot write, and thought no woman, though taken from Drurylane, could have spoken.”18

Brother John was hastily summoned from Savannah to bring peace between Charles and the General. Later Charles took flight to Savannah, seeking a respite, only to return to Frederica to face a rapidly worsening situation. It was July 21st that Charles learned the happy news he was to return to England. Oglethorpe’s parting advise, “I should recommend to you marriage, rather than celibacy.” Charles read the lesson for July 26, “Arise, let us go hence,” and noted, “Accordingly at twelve I took my
final leave of Savannah. When the boat put off I was surprised that I felt no more joy in leaving such a scene of sorrows.\[19\]

John accompanied his brother to Charleston, where Charles confirmed their suspicions regarding the treatment of slaves in South Carolina:

I had observed much, and heard more, of the cruelty of masters toward their negroes \[sic\]; but now I received an authentic account of some horrid instances thereof. The giving a child a slave of its own age to tyrannize over, to beat and abuse out of sport, was, I myself saw, a common practice. \[20\]

Once back in London, Charles sang a somewhat different tune to the Trustees of Georgia, reporting in less grim fashion of his ministry in the colony and that of his brother John. Earlier lamentations about Georgia are noticeably lacking:

That when he arrived at Savannah he found the people had been miserably neglected by our late minister, Mr. Quiney; that but three persons partook of the communion, and the people diverted themselves with shooting on Sundays; but before he came away his brother, who is minister now there, had forty communicants every Sunday and on great holy days; that he preaches by heart and has a full assembly; that prayers are said twice every day, in the morning and at night, by reason the day is spent at labour in the fields.\[21\]

As Charles was giving his account, John was in Georgia demonstrating a relentless earnestness.

\[A Clergyman at Work\]

John Wesley’s ministrations in Georgia, from the outset, had a practical note; which accentuated as time passed:

I began taking a more exact account of my parishioners by going from house to house. By the best computation I can make, there are now in the town of Savannah five hundred and eighteen souls, one hundred and forty-nine of whom are under sixteen years of age. About one hundred and eighty of the adults are, or are called, of the Church of England.\[22\]

Wesley’s visitation pattern warrants attention, “I set apart the time when they cannot work, because of the heat, viz. from twelve till three in the afternoon.”\[23\] What a picture! Wesley walked about Savannah under a blazing sun, interrupting the noonday nap of the sweltering citizens. Maladroit though he may have been, Wesley labored assiduously. His people were not neglected. He wrote George Whitefield, “I had long since begun to visit my parishioners in order from house to house. But I could not go on two days longer;” he paused, “the sick were increasing so fast as to require all the time I had to spare, from one to five in the afternoon.”\[24\]

\[19\] Ibid., I:35-36. In England, on Tuesday, February 15, 1737, Charles noted, “I told Mr. Oglethorpe of my desire of returning with him to Georgia, . . . as a Clergyman; but as to my Secretary’s place, I begged . . . where, when, and how I should resign it.” I:68-69.
\[20\] Ibid., I:36, dated Monday, August 2, 1736.
\[22\] J. Wesley Journal I:371, dated Saturday, July 30, 1737.
\[23\] Ibid., I:213-214, dated Monday, May 10, 1736.
\[24\] J. Wesley Letters I:204-205, dated September 10, 1736, from Savannah.
As a pastor, Wesley depicted burying “the only child of a fond parent” the child having fallen into a well “being stifled there before those with whom he had been just playing could help him.” He described in detail a conversation with a young Black woman in Carolina, originally from Barbados who “had lived there in a minister's family from a child.” When asked “whether she went to church” she answered, “Yes.” When asked if she learned anything, she replied, “Nothing.” The conversation continued a second day. He also told of meeting a young Black man, “... I found [him] both very desirous and very capable of instruction.” Wesley suggested:

... perhaps one of the easiest and shortest ways to instruct the American negroes [sic] in Christianity would be, first, to inquire after and find out some of the most serious of their planters. Then, having inquired of them which of their slaves were best inclined and understood English, to go to them from plantation to plantation, staying as long as appeared necessary at each.27

Wesley spoke critically of Dr. Tailfer, the unscrupulous malcontent who wanted to bring slaves into Georgia and establish a system similar to that in South Carolina. Wesley likewise pointed out Tailfer’s blatant promiscuity.28

John Wesley delighted in the schools he and Ingham established.29 A full report was rendered:

Our general method is this: A young gentleman, who came with me, teaches between thirty and forty children to read, write, and cast accounts. Before school in the morning, and after school in the afternoon, he catechizes the lowest class, and endeavours to fix something of what was said in their understandings as well as their memories. In the evening he instructs the larger children. On Saturday, in the afternoon, I catechize them all.30

Some of the boys in Delamotte’s school wore shoes and stockings, the others did not and there was considerable ridicule. When Delamotte failed to put an end to this rudeness, Wesley made a suggestion, “I think I can cure it. If you will take charge of my school next week I will take charge of yours, and will try.” On Monday morning Wesley appeared at school—barefoot. It was only a week before the entire matter appeared “effectually cured.”31

Wesley’s concern for the Indians was expressed repeatedly, “Mr. Ingham has made some progress in the Creek language, but a short conversation I had with the chief of the Chickasaws ... moves me to desire rather to learn their language, if God shall give me opportunity ...” He went on, “What will become of this poor people, a few of whom

---

28 J. Wesley Journal 1:361-362, dated Friday, June 10, 1737.
29 Ibid., I:350-351, dated Saturday, April 23, 1737.
27 Ibid., I:352-353, dated Wednesday, April 27, 1737. Earlier, August 20, 1736, Wesley spent two hours of that Friday reading The Negro's Advocate, I:260.
28 Ibid., I:185, 244, 296.
29 J. Wesley Letters I:211, probably to John Hutchings, February 16, 1737, from “Savannah, America.”
30 Ibid., I:214, to Dr. Bray's Associates, from Savannah, February 26, 1737.
now see the light and bless God for it.” He sighed wearily, “the work is too weighty for me. A parish of above two hundred miles in length laughs at the labours of one man.” Wesley faithfully recorded his lengthy conversation with “Five of the Chicasaw [sic] Indians” with Mr. Andrews acting as interpreter. Life also was made up of trivia. During a trip to Frederica, Wesley was “Tormented by flies” and next day delighted in dining on “oysters.” He faithfully recorded his lengthy conversation with “Five of the Chicasaw Indians” with Mr. Andrews acting as interpreter. Life also was made up of trivia. During a trip to Frederica, Wesley was “Tormented by flies” and next day delighted in dining on “oysters.” Wesley faithfully recorded his lengthy conversation with “Five of the Chicasaw Indians” with Mr. Andrews acting as interpreter.

He carefully studied the Moravian orders. He was intrigued by the Early Church Fathers. He read Bishop Hall’s *Meditation on Heaven* and Milton’s *Paradise Regained*. He raised a number of questions regarding devotional treatises, “I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith,” he wrote his brother Samuel, “was the writings of the Mystics.” Always there was the Bible—in Hebrew and Greek.

**Miss Sophy**

John Wesley’s well known—but oft little understood—love affair with Sophia Christiana Hopkey, eighteen year old niece of Thomas Causton, chief magistrate of Savannah, must be seen in proper perspective. It holds a prominent place in the Georgia saga, but it must not overshadow all other events. Neither can it be dismissed. Miss Sophy played a stellar role in the drama of the innocent Wesley who seemed unable to comprehend her—neither could he fathom the gossip-mongering Mrs. Hawkins or Mrs. Welch. He even went so far as to write “An Account of Miss Sophy”—for personal and family use.

Why did Wesley not take the charming Miss Sophy as his bride? Part of the answer is the avowed celibate aim in his life, his “towering vocational consciousness” as Dr. George Croft Cell described it. Whatever his reason, Wesley best expressed it in one letter:

32 J. Wesley *Letters* 1:228, to James Vernon, dated September 11, 1736, Savannah.
33 J. Wesley *Journal* 1:248-250, dated Tuesday, July 20, 1736.
34 Ibid., I:195-196, from the *Diary* for Saturday, April 17, 1736.
35 Ibid., I:183-184, from the *Diary* for Monday, March 15, 1736.
38 J. Wesley *Journal* 1:351, from the *Diary*, dated Monday, April 25, 1737.
40 A number of attempts have been made to tell this appealing story. One of the latest is Willie Snow Ethridge, *Strange Fires: The True Story of John Wesley’s Love Affair in Georgia* (New York: The Vangard Press, Inc., 1971).
I find, Miss Sophy, I can't take fire into my bosom, and not be burnt. I am therefore retiring for a while to desire the direction of God. Join with me, my friend, in fervent prayer that He would show me what is best to be done.42

Not many weeks later Wesley hit upon the perfect solution to a matter of the heart—thanks to the Moravians:

I accordingly made three lots. In one was writ 'Marry'; in the second, 'Think not of it this year.' After we had prayed to God to 'give a perfect lot,' Mr. Delamotte drew the third, in which were these words, 'Think of it no more.' Instead of the agony I had reason to expect, I was enabled to say cheerfully, 'Thy will be done.' We cast lots once again to know whether I ought to converse with her any more; and the direction I received from God was, 'Only in presence of Mr. Delamotte.'43

If ever a match was advocated, pushed, espoused by outsiders, Wesley's was. Oglethorpe once commanded Wesley to escort Sophy personally from Frederica to Savannah, a trip of five days. Her aunt, Mrs. Causton, pleaded, "Mr. Wesley, I wish you would take her; take her away with ye." To which he lamely replied, "Miss Sophy is welcome to my house, or anything that I have," and then added—to himself—"About ten I went home, though with such an unwillingness and heaviness as I had scarce ever felt before."44

It is in the rejection of Sophy from Holy Communion that Wesley is seen as the jilted lover, who, as a High Churchman was technically correct—she had been repeatedly warned—but profoundly insensitive to a woman's feelings. It was "Saturday, March 12, 1737" that she was married in South Carolina, and not until Sunday, August 7, 1737 that "I repelled Mrs. Williamson from the Holy Communion."45 Some days later the unhappy Mrs. Williamson suffered a miscarriage, and this only added to public resentment against Wesley. In his zeal to do good, Wesley here presents an almost comical figure of the spiritual busybody, incessantly dashing to and fro, frustrating himself, stirring up increased animosity, incurring resentment.

Departure

Georgia was crucial in Wesley's personal spiritual development. His frustrations, his sense of failure, his disappointment in love, his personal controversies, and his constant tripping over his own feet—all contributed significantly to his later awakening. Georgia had a powerful impact on the nascent revival. Of his Georgia years, Wesley wrote, "I cannot but observe that these were the first rudiments of the Methodist societies. But who could then have even formed a conjecture whereto they would grow?" He continued, "On Friday, December 2, finding there was no possibility of preaching to the Indians, I left Savannah."46

42 J. Wesley Letters I:211, dated February 6, 1737.
43 J. Wesley Journal I:325-326, entry for Friday, March 4, 1737. Casting lots had been engaged in by the Moravians, Saturday, February 5, 1737.
44 Ibid., I:329, entry for Tuesday, March 8, 1737.
Reflection

Much of the Georgia interpretation comes from reminiscence by Wesley himself, in which he takes a dim view of his ministry—all in retrospect. As he sadly made ready to leave Georgia he wrote, “I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me? who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion.” Writing amid gloom, he was as near the brink of despondency as at any point in his life. A few days passed, his dispirited theme continued:

It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why, what I the least of all suspected, that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.48

In late May, 1738, now back in England, Wesley calmly and quietly reviewed his life, “All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air.”49 Was he? Or was he just coming to understand himself? Was he coming to see that even the best one has to offer, when seen in the light of Christ, is inadequate? “I shook off the dust of my feet, and left Georgia, after having preached the gospel there [with much weakness indeed and many infirmities,] not as I ought, but as I was able,”50 he had written in December of 1737. Then on May 24, 1738 he was able to record, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”51

With the passing of time, a healing hand rested on the Georgia memories. Not all the citizens of the colony had rejected Wesley. In September, 1749 he noted, “I was refreshed with a friendly letter from an excellent man, whom I had not heard from for several years. Part of it was as follows:

Ebenezer, In Georgia, July 25, 1749

Rev. and Dear Sir,

The sincere love to your worthy person and faithful performance of your holy office, which the Lord kindled in my heart during your presence at Savannah, hath not been abated, but rather increased, since the providence of God called you from us, and showed you another field for the labour of your ministry . . . Yours most affectionately, John Martin Boltzius.

“What a truly Christian piety and simplicity breathe in these lines!” Wesley thoughtfully noted, “And yet this very man, when I was at Savannah, did I refuse to admit to the Lord’s Table,” he continued, “because he was not baptized—that is, not baptized by a minister who had been episcopally ordained. Can any one carry High Church zeal

---

47 J. Wesley Journal I:418, entry for Tuesday, January 24, 1738.
48 Ibid., I:421-422, entry for Sunday, January 29, 1738. There is question regarding Wesley’s intention of ever publishing this entry, see Cameron, p. 372.
49 J. Wesley Journal I:470, dated May 23, 24, 25, 1738, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.
50 Ibid., I:400, entry for Friday, December 2, 1737.
51 Ibid., I:476, entry for Wednesday, May 24, 1738.
higher than this? And how well have I been since beaten with mine own staff!"52 Yes, Wesley seems to have learned a great deal.

As John Wesley prepared to write his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* he remembered a quatrain he had composed in Savannah:

> Is there a thing beneath the sun,  
> That strives with thee my heart to share?  
> Ah! tear it thence, and reign alone,  
> The Lord of every motion there!

He also recalled lines written at the beginning of 1738, upon returning from Georgia, as his heart cried out:

> O grant that nothing in my soul  
> May dwell, but thy pure love alone!  
> O may thy love possess me whole,  
> My joy, my treasure, and my crown!  
> Strange fires far from my heart remove;  
> My every act, word, thought, be love!53

**Contributions**

As the years progressed the nexus between Georgia and the Wesleys became increasingly evident. The colony had provided a particular environment for maturation—emotional and spiritual.54 Both brothers began to acquire a new understanding of people, an empathy, which in turn, helped them see themselves. In their encounters with blunt, forthright Georgia colonists, the two Oxonians had faced reality. The American Indians, for the Wesleys, were no longer the stylized figures imagined by writers of the Age of Reason, and Tomochichi and Mary Musgrove had become part of their personal experience. The brothers were introduced to the hardy, soul-searching piety of the Moravians, as John learned German in order to engage in those never-to-be-forgotten conversations with David Nitschmann and August Gottlieb Spangenberg. The Wesley eyes had been opened to the horrors of "that execrable villany"—the slave trade—with John's subsequent publication in 1774 of *Thoughts Upon Slavery* and his prophetic letter to William Wilberforce in 1791.

John had come to know the Scottish Highlanders at Darien, and the Salzburgers at Ebenezer. He had likewise begun learning Spanish "in order to converse with my Jewish parishioners."55 He also undertook writing a German Dictionary and a French Grammar.

In Georgia, John Wesley had even been willing to unbend sufficiently

52 Ibid., III:433-434, entry for Tuesday, September 26, 1749.
55 J. Wesley *Journal* 1:345-346, entry for Monday, April 4, 1737.
to preach, occasionally, without a manuscript, and he had experimented in forming prayer cells:

And we agreed (1) to advise the more serious among them to form themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to reprove, instruct, and exhort one another. (2) To select out of these a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other, which might be forwarded, partly by our conversing singly with each, and partly by inviting them all together to our house; and this, accordingly, we determined to do every Sunday in the afternoon.56

As Wesley later contemplated the origins of Methodism, he said that first there was Oxford, then "the second was in Savannah, in April 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house; . . . "57 For his Georgians he prepared a hymn book, *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, published in 1737.

At the time of John Wesley’s death, March 2, 1791, Thomas Coke was in America. Coke displayed embarrassing candor in his *Sermon* as he described frontier Georgia “a country just laid out for colonization” contrasting it with the glories of Oxford’s “varieties and luxuries” as opposed to the colony’s “vast simplicity,” thus illustrating “the sacrifices made by Mr. Wesley.”58 The Wesleys had made sacrifices in coming to Georgia; likewise they had gained much. The Wesleys cannot be disassociated from Georgia and Georgia cannot be separated from the Wesley pilgrimage. Furthermore, Georgia’s history is all the brighter and richer because two brothers named Wesley came this way.

56 Ibid., I:197-205.

Dr. Frank Baker, a Britisher and Professor of English Church History at Duke Divinity School is, of all men, an impeccable historian who has devoted his life to ferreting out missing pieces in important historical puzzles—and then reconstructing the whole. We are grateful for his prodigious research and the voluminous output of his unwearyed pen. From Wesley to Asbury is his attempt “to bring to life some aspects of early Methodism in this great country, and to do so especially in the light thrown by early Methodism in the British Isles.” (p. xi). It does not purport to be a history of American Methodism, rather “an examination of some persons, events, and emphases” and herein lie both strength and weakness. There is considerable overlapping due to each chapter’s originating as an independent lecture, paper or article. A functional bibliography (pp. 207-216) enhances the work.

Baker begins by recreating the Zeitgeist of the 18th century in order that the reader may learn “something about what made these distant ancestors tick.” (p. viii). We see the Wesleys in Georgia “It may be claimed that the Blacks were indirectly responsible for bringing the Wesleys to America.” (p. 3.). We are given the story of Methodism’s beginnings in America and a very illuminating chapter on the laypeople who pioneered in the colonies. Perhaps most enlightening is chapter 5, wherein Baker has discovered and reconstructed the “Thomas Taylor Letter” of April 11, 1768. Taylor, heretofore largely unknown, was a layman who in coming to America was converted aboard ship and “made a new covenant with the Lord, that I would go to the uttermost parts of the earth, provided he would raise up a people with whom I might join in praises.” (p. 72). The original document (probably lost) went through many editions and was finally published by Wesley. It gives fresh insights into the establishing of New York Methodism and it provides valuable references to George Whitefield.

Considerable attention is rightly given to early lay preachers who played a conspicuous role in evangelical outreach “Methodism has usually propagated itself by means of converted laymen, who from telling others of their own experience of salvation have graduated to preaching from a text, the exhorter thus becoming a preacher.” (p. 84). The fully ordained Thomas Coke is also presented—but as the Bishop whose influence was “significant.” Baker carefully delineates the pattern whereby doctrine was formulated as “the founding fathers of the Methodist Episcopal Church transformed Wesley’s Minutes into their Discipline.” (p. 164).

In discussing Francis Asbury (chapters 7 and 8), Baker makes a lucid analysis “Asbury was a religious pragmatist,” (p. 120) which explains much of the philosophy of the frontier church. If it did not work, it was put
BOOK REVIEWS

aside, as in Anglican liturgy which was made subsidiary to camp meeting and the love feast. We thus have an important clue to Asbury’s view on slavery. There is no question as to his sympathy—yea, empathy—for Blacks:

I have lately been impressed with a deep concern for bringing about the freedom of slaves in America, and feel resolved to do what I can to promote it. If God in His providence hath detained me in this country to be instrumental in so merciful and great an undertaking, I hope He will give me wisdom and courage sufficient, and will enable me to give Him all the glory. I am strongly persuaded that if the Methodists will not yield on this point and emancipate their slaves, God will depart from them... (p. 121, note).

Tragically, Asbury finally permitted emancipation to be regarded as a disruptive issue that “seemed likely to hinder the major task of building up the church. This goal, therefore, was regretfully modified, and left for fulfilment by a later generation.”

In assessing the volume, one wishes that Baker had devoted a chapter to Blacks in American Methodism, or had interwoven more of the Black presence into the entire work. His deep interest is patently clear “From the outset both Boardmen and Pilmore were impressed with the response of Blacks to Methodist preaching and fellowship.” (p. 88). There are references to Betty “one of the founding members of the New York society” and Peter Williams “who worked out his freedom as sexton there, and became one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.” (p. 89, note). Harry Hosier is likewise referred to in passing. A full coverage would have added immeasurably giving the entire work breadth and completeness.

Warren Thomas Smith
Assistant Professor of Church History
The Interdenominational Theological Center


One must have a motive or message—and courage—before adventuring into territory already well traversed by a host of scholars. Robert G. Tuttle, Jr. has produced an interesting study of the oft-studied John Wesley, reflecting charismatic interest and influence. As example, Tuttle describes the impact of his dissertation which was handed to an “atheist” friend. “Then, much to my surprise, a few weeks later a quotation from John Wesley in a footnote of that manuscript led him to faith in Christ.” (p. 17) A work thus saturated causes one to inquire: to what extent is an author permitted to project his views into a biographical study? Or, does this volume represent a mid-1970 counter to the Anglo-Catholic high church view of Wesley; the Lutheran interpretation with its heavy stress on justification; or the 1920-40 social activism—all found in earlier studies?

Tuttle’s gestalt is, to say the least, individualistic. Written in first person (frankly a rather dubious approach for a historical piece), Wesley tells his own story, in retrospect. It opens as the evangelist plans his trip
from Bristol (March 17, 1788) to Macclesfield (April 4, 1788). The volume is in four Parts, each concluding with an Analysis in Tuttle's words. A separate bibliography is attached each time (excessively repetitious). This reviewer found the format exceedingly cumbersome. Would a more conventional chronological outline have been simpler, avoiding duplication? In short, we ask, what type book is it? Why has the author mixed so many literary forms and styles?

What of the theological message? Wesley's spiritual progress is carefully delineated, including the 18th century background, family at Epworth and Susanna’s influence, with her well known admonition:

> Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things... that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself. (p. 67)

Appropriate emphasis is given to the Oxford sojourn, assiduous reading of Jeremy Taylor and *Imitation of Christ* amid visits to the Kirkhams (pp. 64ff), ordination, the Georgia mission. As Wesley sailed from America back to England many conflicts raged in his wearied soul. “Both Luther and Calvin seemed to magnify faith to such an amazing degree that it hid all the rest of the commandments.” He failed to see

> ... this was the natural effect of their overgrown fear of Popery. The mystic writers in their ‘noble’ descriptions of union with God and internal religion made everything else appear ‘mean, flat, and insipid, ... even good works appear so too; yea, and faith itself.’ (pp. 179-180)

Moravian influence is stressed. “After the year 1735 (the height of Wesley’s mystical experiment), the Moravians became associated with many of the critical phases in his spiritual development.” (p. 220)

Drawing heavily on previous studies, the author gives special attention to 1724-1729 and then to May 24, 1738. Of the latter, Wesley “first began to understand experientially” (p. 193) what he had been preaching for weeks: it was assurance of faith, now “known for the first time” (p. 215). The author insists “Spangenberg and Böhler combined a strong sense of mystical piety with the internal witness of the Holy Spirit appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ.” (p. 221) The subsequent synthesis was appealing to Wesley.

Three-fourths of the book deals with the period prior to and including Aldersgate, after which Wesley went on “... experiencing alternately peace and heaviness, joy and temptation, but more peace and joy than ... ever known before. Truly the tide had turned! Preaching came easier. People responded as if by the power of God.” (p. 201) Yet “a kind of soreness” remained in the heart, so he made his trip to Herrnhut.

Wesley’s wrestling with William Law (pp. 120ff) is lucidly outlined, as is his avid study of the mystics, including Tauler, Eckhart, Rodriguez, François de Sales, Fénelon, Castanzia, Ephraem Syrus. Pieces of the theological puzzle began to fall into place with new insights into the old terms: justification, sanctification and then perfection. Tuttle drives his point home, using another grand quotation:
Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense or grace, bawl out something about Christ and his blood or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, ‘What a fine Gospel sermon! . . . We know no gospel without salvation from sin.

To this remarkable statement Tuttle adds a footnote, “How is this for a shot at ‘cheap grace’? And you thought Bonhoeffer said it first.” (p. 317)

Colin Williams made the same observation, John Wesley’s Theology Today, p. 188, in 1960.

Only the concluding Part IV is devoted to the years following 1739, “The Revival” and it is understandable. The primary intent of the author is examination and interpretation of the intense struggle, and outcome, prior to and embracing 1738. Once brought into focus, the remaining fifty-two plus years are spent in proclamation, traveling “some quarter of a million miles” and preaching “some 40,000 sermons,” organizing the Societies. There is the unhappy marriage, mentioned in passing—Wesley was human. Throughout, “discipline did not quench the Spirit . . . Spiritual gifts were still prevalent . . .” (p. 308) in spite of some dull preachers. His “war on stillness” was such that he

. . . sifted the gold of mystical purification by detachment and countered its extreme quietism with an emphasis on ‘the social factor’ which taught that the spiritual experience is not an end in itself, but a means of gathering ‘a richer harvest of souls.’ (pp. 333-334)

Has the author overlooked certain aspects of Wesley, as in his familiar “Solitary religion is not to be found there . . . The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.” (Works, Emory, ed. VII:593)? Slavery, for example is hardly mentioned. It was but one of the monstrous evils, “That execrable sum of all villanies, . . .” that he attacked vociferously.

It is a refreshing study, product of one who had found a treasure in Wesley. This reviewer can testify to the same. We have a portrait of Wesley the evangelical with a passion for souls.

Warren Thomas Smith
Assistant Professor of Church History
The Interdenominational Theological Center


This book is a sound introduction to the religious meaning of dreams for pastors and lay persons who have not previously considered dreams as an important source of God’s self-disclosure to His people. This book is intended as a primer for those who are interested in exploring the dimensions of the non-rational and the symbolic through dreams in their search for self understanding and for a deeper relationship with God. Dr. Kelsey is a pioneer in seeking to recover for the Church and her people the fact that symbolic communication emerging from the unconscious in dreams is important to attend to in one’s spiritual pilgrimage. He summarizes his central theme by saying, “God still does break through
into the lives of ordinary people, and we can perhaps best recognize this through the dream." The author, an Episcopalian priest who is on the faculty of the University of Notre Dame, is basically seeking to help persons become aware of the breakthrough of the spiritual world into their consciousness through dreams.

This book grew out of the requests made to Dr. Kelsey to publish an introduction to the religious interpretation of dreams for persons who have little background in either psychology or theology. In this brief and easily read book, Dr. Kelsey has synthesized and summarized extensive knowledge concerning the religious meaning of dreams which can be helpful to individuals and to small study groups for their spiritual development.

The author reviews the history of the Judaeo-Christian tradition in regard to its many centuries of befriending dreams as a way of being open to insight and revelation from God. He points out critically how the development of the scientific mentality limited the human perspective on truth to that which is rational, intellectual and empirically verifiable. Likewise within the Church, Aristotelian and Thomist ways of rational thinking negated and distorted the traditional Biblical and theological perspective of embracing and including the nonrational, in addition to the rational, as a significant part of religious experience. He includes chapters on dreams in the Bible, the understanding of dreams in the early church tradition, and the interpretation of some contemporary religious dreams as they mark spiritual growth for the dreamer.

For many people the most relevant part of the book will be the author’s seven basic rules for the interpretation of one’s dreams. He suggests (1) take one’s dreams seriously; (2) write them down; (3) pay attention to and familiarize oneself with the inner images revealed in dreams; (4) pay attention to and elicit the associations which the various images in a dream can have with one’s life experiences; (5) recognize the importance of a recurrent dream as a message of some unresolved issue or problem that is asking for attention; (6) listen to a dream as if it were a play or a movie so that one encourages the dream to tell its meaningful tale; and (7) learn to understand the archetypal symbols which carry a universal meaning in addition to the personal meaning within the dream.

While there are a number of viewpoints that can be utilized as a context for an understanding of the intimations of the spiritual world being revealed through dreams, Dr. Kelsey has done a fine job in writing this introductory book from a Jungian perspective to help persons move into the exciting inner adventure of discovering religious truth through an understanding of their dreams.

Merle R. Jordan
Associate Professor of Pastoral Psychology
School of Theology
Boston University

One approaches this book with a mildly disturbing sense of anomaly: blacks in the Reformed Church? How came black Americans to be members of a communion in which a constituent body, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, acts as the spiritual guardian of the hated system of apartheid? Yet as this helpful, though brief, study by Noel Erskine shows, the history of blacks in the Reformed Church of America is in many ways emblematic of many basic anomalies in the black experience in America, and in the historic religious bodies of America: blacks' tenacity in perceiving the liberating nature of a God ostensibly worshipped by their oppressors, their appointed audacity in viewing themselves as agents of renewal and reconciliation in a church that in many ways spurned its own liberation by remaining a captive of cultural racism.

It is apparent that Prof. Erskine's methodology in the first half of the book is to isolate and identify the spiritual progenitors of the Afro and Euro-Americans, he points to the figures and movements which flourished in the Netherlands of the 14th and 15th centuries. Of particular importance were men such as Gerhard de Groote (1340-1384), whose preaching and ministry founded the Brethren of the Common Life, a body whose devotional manual, The Imitation of Christ, is recognized as one of the great spiritual treasures of Medieval Christianity; the great humanist, Erasmus, whose satirical attacks on the Church made way for the Reformation. The church was planted on American soil during the early years of Holland's quest for commercial expansion in the New World. Here was a classic case of Empire beseeching the blessings of heaven, for after having been a province for only three years, one Domine Jonas Michaelius arrived in New Amsterdam in 1628 to minister to the Dutch settlers. In the case of the Afro-American presence, Prof. Erskine rightly points to the religious traditions of the West African peoples, many of whom became slaves in the New World. Following very closely the work of scholars such as John Mbiti and J.K. Agbete, he discusses the traditional African view of God, the universe and human destiny. The confluence of the destinies of these people—Europeans and Africans—takes place initially in the institution of slavery. We are told in one sentence, chilling in its bare understatement, how Peter Minuit, the director general of the colony of New Amsterdam sat himself about in 1625 to "study the needs of the colony and arranged for the shipment of various kinds of seeds, domestic animals and implements, and African slaves." Thus members of the church openly owned slaves and apparently did not begin to seriously consider allowing blacks to become official members of churches until 1783. Prof. Erskine suggests that the willingness on the part of the church to even broach the subject of black membership may be a result of the liberal and reformist tendencies unleashed by the First Great Awakening. He shows how the Awakening prompted the Baptists and Methodists to assume some anti-slavery
positions but exactly how the Awakening affected the Reformed Church remains somewhat vague and unclear. Furthermore, it is not clear how the proposal before the Synod in 1783 was resolved. Similarly, there is something of a gap in the chronology between 1783 and 1855, when we catch a glimpse of the General Synod enroiled in the issue of slavery itself. The issue was introduced innocently enough: a missive from the North Carolina Classis of the German Reformed Church made overtures to the Dutch Church requesting steps toward union. Some clergy within the Dutch Church were repelled at the thought of union with a body from the slave-holding section of the country. A heated debate, therefore, ensued on the floor, the import of which often went further than consideration to effect union with the German Church. The debate centered around the presumed theological sanctions for and against slavery itself. Prof. Erskine tells us that a vote was taken, showing considerable pro-slavery sentiment, but one is left to imagine the final outcome of the issue.

In a chapter entitled “Breaking the Silence” Prof. Erskine begins to discern some positive steps taken by the Reformed Church toward effecting a ministry for blacks. Yet, as he shows, even at this point such steps were halting and unsure, and in some respects almost regressive. Even with the incessant prodding of Rev. W.L. Johnson (1844-1913), perhaps the church’s first black graduate from the Seminary in New Brunswick, N.J., the church did not take a vigorous attitude toward establishing churches or missions in predominantly black areas in the South, and apparently felt content to relinquish such territories to other denominations. Yet one of Rev. Johnson’s dreams did come true—the erection of the trade school for black youngsters in Brewton, Alabama. Rev. Johnson had requested the establishment of such a school as early as 1904. Initially turned down by church authorities, he persisted in his requests for this service for black youth. But almost as if true to some inner calculus which dictated a minimal degree of involvement in the destiny of its black constituents, the church delayed any action on the school until 1919 when plans at last were made for construction, and when, sadly, William Johnson had been dead for six years.

The purview of the last two chapters are especially familiar to those who were close to the ferment which erupted in the American church establishment in the 1960’s as a result of a new black consciousness. The figure of James Forman looms large in these chapters, for it was his Black Manifesto which troubled the waters in so many American denominations. The scenario of events in the Reformed Church during those heady days after 1968 was similar to that which took place in many others: the Manifesto stirred the consciousness of a black constituency within the church which in turned formed itself into a Black Caucus, in the case of the Reformed Church, the Black Council, which came into being in 1970. Taking a decidedly moderate position on the demands James Forman had hurled at the American churches, the Black Council began to focus its energies in attempts to stir the ministries of the less than twenty-five predominantly black congregations in the church and, of course, to
discover ways whereby the total black presence in the church, numbered less than 1%, could celebrate their dual heritage of blackness and Christian faith.

Thus Prof. Erskine has given us a brief, but in some ways very concise, history of blacks in the Reformed Church in America. It is obvious that the author has availed himself of the Reformed Church archives housed at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and because of this one leaves the work with a sure sense of historicity, especially in the earlier periods. Some readers may be offended by the author’s use of “negro” in passages other than those of period documents; others may find the gaps in chronology something of a problem. But for its overall achievement, Prof. Erskine’s book is to be commended. It has added a significant contribution to our meager store of knowledge of the history of American blacks in American’s religious denominations. And, for this we are in his debt.

Samuel K. Roberts
Assistant Professor,
Church and Society
Union Theological Seminary


Alexis de Tocqueville, a French citizen who traveled in and wrote about colonial America, has for 200 years been one of the richest and most valued sources of objective information on the America he wrote about. Even today researchers cite de Tocqueville with finality on everything colonial from the promise of democracy to the treatment of slaves with the assurance that his name will command a hearing for whatever other arguments or assertions there may be offered in context. De Tocqueville’s “magic” was both the critical quality of his observation and analysis, and the presumption of a higher quality of disinterested objectiveness because he was French rather than American, i.e., he was a “friendly critic,” intimate enough to see our flaws, but independent enough to be honest about them. There is some of the spirit of de Tocqueville in Peter Paris, a black Canadian theologian, who having grown up in Nova Scotia presumably escaped the peculiar trauma he would have known had he grown up in the black America he has undertaken to write about in a book called Black Leaders in Conflict. Fortunately for his readers, although he may have escaped the trauma, Paris did not escape the drama of black America, for having spent a good part of his life studying and teaching in the United States, he writes about black America with the knowledge and perspective of involvement.

Black Leaders in Conflict is a challenging study of the personalities, the strategies, the styles and the political theologies of four of the more prominent black leaders to emerge in America since World War II. They are Adam Clayton Powell, the flamboyant, outspoken Congressman who went to Congress from the pastorship of Harlem’s historic Abyssinian Baptist Church; Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, President (since 1953) of the
National Baptist Convention, the largest affiliation of black people in the country; Malcolm X who came to prominence as chief spokesman for the Black Muslim movement, and Martin Luther King, whose crusades in Christian non-violent protest against the way things were helped usher in an era of visible change. Certainly, Professor Paris could not have chosen a more disparate selection of individual personalities—not taken together, a more controversial group of black leaders. With the exception of Malcolm X, all are Baptist preachers, and even he was the son of one. However, Paris’ study reveals that while “as religious men and race leaders they were strongly opposed to racism, . . . they were also opposed to one another, and that constituted a major political problem.” Nevertheless, Dr. Paris argues, their differences are essentially theological rather than personal or political. Or perhaps it is more accurate to interpret him as believing that differing theological understandings precipitate diverging political philosophies which appear to be in conflict, but which, in any case, have important implications for intragroup cooperation in the struggle for human rights. In any case, the focus of Dr. Paris’ study is religion and politics, which he understands to be critical areas of human association respectively designed for “ordering the relationship between humans and the source of their ultimate meaning,” and human relationships “formed for the purpose of structuring the relationships between humans in order to construct a human world.”

Dr. Paris defines as his task the critical examination and analysis of the theological and political thought of his subjects in order to find the (peculiar!) differences and (elusive!) similarities which in the end more clearly illustrate their relationships which he thinks should logically be consummated in a pluralistic synthesis of a four part dialectic. His is not a casual undertaking, for he is convinced that the lack of cooperation among religious leaders has been a disabling plague on the black community in combatting racism, that the problem derives primarily from an inordinate concern for the preservation of leadership identity, and that the problem can be solved on the basis of arguments set forth in the concluding chapters of his book. So in true schoolman tradition, he dissects the problem to better understand the nuances and subtleties of its substructures. Each leader has his religious and political understanding reduced to a kind of political theology which then becomes the prism through which such issues as civil disobedience, school boycotts, black power and the goodness of America are carefully refracted. Predictably, there is found to be substantial correlation between the religious and theological understandings of each of the leaders, for each believed racism to be the fundamental social problem and the most formidable threat to Christian morality. But Paris also finds that abstracted from the problem of racism, “their theological propositions and political principles . . . provide little ground for cooperative action,” a dismaying consideration for all those who assumed the essential unanimity of black belief and the inevitability of black coalition. Paris himself suggests the possibility of a much more effective level of black cooperation without the
sacrifice of either the diversity of style and strategy, or the identity of personal leadership. His formula for “diversity in unity” assumes the essential complimentarity (rather than mutual exclusion) of the several positions of the leaders studied, and sees the problem of cooperation as political. The solution Professor Paris offers is “some sort of federal association which would include all the diversity” discovered in his study of Powell, Jackson, King and Malcolm X.

Herein lies the essential weakness of what is up to this point a clear and practical analysis of black leadership. Neither political federations nor religious federations are easily come by, and Dr. Paris introduces and dismisses his solution to the problem in one brief paragraph with no suggestions as to how it might be accomplished. He then moves on to a brief discussion of alternatives for federation “as an appropriate associational form of cooperative activity,” but the “alternatives” prove to be highly problematic and unconvincing. Obviously, there is no ready solution to the very complex problem of disparity and individualization in black leadership. It sort of comes with the packaging. In any case, Dr. Paris’ attempts at solution were in a sense gratuitous: his fascinating, critical analysis of black leadership is a valuable contribution in its own right, and it did not necessitate a “solution” to the problem. The solution is so long overdue that it can wait a little longer—perhaps for the good doctor’s second time around.

C. Eric Lincoln
Professor, Sociology of Religion
Duke University

BOOKS RECEIVED


Contents
Volume VI, 1978-1979

The Problem of Identity in Selected Early Essays of James Baldwin
   Jocelyn Whitehead Jackson ........................................ 1
The Proper Study of Mankind
   Virginia Stem Owens ............................................. 16
White Christianity and Black Commitment: A Comment on The Power of Faith and Socialization
   C. Eric Lincoln .................................................. 21
Flight as Affirmation in Two Plays of Eugène Ionesco
   Gayle Pye Altizer .................................................. 33
An Homage to Betelgeuse
   Jeffrey G. Sobosan ................................................ 43
Changing Perspectives in The Study of Afro-American Religion
   Thomas R. Frazier ................................................ 51
The Liberation of Oppressors
   Jurgen Moltmann ................................................ 69
The Black Church in the American Society: A New Responsibility
   C. Eric Lincoln ................................................... 83
Configurational Patterns in The Function of The Church for Aging Persons: A Black Perspective
   Anne Streaty Wimberly .......................................... 94
Fishbowls, Foreign Devils and Authenticity: Religion and Ideology in the African Revolution
   Walter T. Davis .................................................. 106
Pastoral Counseling and the Spiritual Quest
   Morton T. Kelsey ................................................ 124
A Response to Morton T. Kelsey
   Edward P. Wimberly ............................................... 135
The Impact of the Black Church: Sole Surviving Institution
   J. Deotis Roberts ................................................ 138
Toward an Understanding of Religion and Slavery in J.W.C. Pennington
   Herman E. Thomas ............................................... 148
The Wesleys In Georgia: An Evaluation
   Warren Thomas Smith ........................................... 157

Book Reviews
Frank Baker, From Wesley to Asbury: Studies in Early American Methodism
   W. Thomas Smith ................................................ 168
Robert G. Tuttle, John Wesley: His Life and Theology
   W. Thomas Smith ................................................ 169
Morton T. Kelsey, Dreams: A Way to Listen to God
   Merle R. Jordan ................................................ 171
Noel Leo Erskine, Black People and The Reformed Church in America
   Samuel K. Roberts .............................................. 173
Peter J. Paris, Black Leaders in Conflict
   C. Eric Lincoln ................................................ 175

Books Received ..................................................... 177
The Journal of The Interdenominational Theological Center

Date____________________

Please, enter my subscription for the JITC.

NAME________________________________________

STREET________________________________________

CITY_________ STATE______ ZIP_________

Subscription for one year________________________ $6.00, 2 issues

" for two years_________________________ 12.00, 4 issues

" for three years_________________________ 18.00, 6 issues

Note: Institutional Subscribers add 2.00 per year (ie, one year, 8.00; two years, 16.00; three years, 24.00).

Enter the following GIFT SUBSCRIPTION:

NAME________________________________________

STREET________________________________________

CITY_________ STATE______ ZIP_________

I enclose the following amount $____________________

Mail to the following address:

Mr. Wilson N. Flemister
Associate Editor for Circulation
The Journal of the ITC
671 Beckwith Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30314
THE JOURNAL OF THE
INTERDENOMINATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL CENTER

671 BECKWITH STREET, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30314