

Chapter 1 : James Hal Cone | Liberation Theologies

*Black Theology in Dialogue [J. Deotis Roberts] on blog.quintoapp.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Challenging all who are concerned about religion in today's world, J. Deotis Roberts outlines a new way of looking at the essential questions.*

Part Two in a Three-Part Series on Liberation Theology by Ron Rhodes Between and it is estimated that twenty million blacks were captured in Africa, transported to America, and brutally enslaved. The experience of these blacks - and their descendants - serves as the backdrop for understanding contemporary black liberation theology. During slave trading days, blacks were crammed into ships like sardines into a can and brought across the Atlantic. Many died at sea from dysentery, smallpox, and other diseases. To prevent this form of suicide, hot coals were applied to the lips to force the slaves to open their mouths to eat. Even old and ailing slaves were forced to work. The brutality shown to the slaves is among the saddest chapters in American history. Black theologian Anthony Evans tells us that "black women were raped at will by their masters at the threat of death while their husbands could only look on. Families were separated as they were bought and sold like cattle. The Congress solved the problem by passing a bill that authorized the U. Census Bureau to count each slave as three-fifths of a person. Eric Lincoln tells us there were three principal reasons for this: Morgan Godwyn, a graduate of Oxford University who served in churches in Virginia around , wrote that slavemasters would commonly exclaim, "What, such as they? What, those black dogs be made Christians? What, shall they be like us? Payne, in his book *The Negro: What Is His Ethnological* blacks are present with us today, they must have been in the ark. As one of the beasts in the ark, the black has no soul to be saved. Regardless of such preposterous arguments, missionary work eventually began among the slaves in the early s and many of them became Christians. The brand of Christianity that was preached to them, however, was one that justified slavery. It was argued that Paul and other New Testament writers issued specific instructions for master-slave relations, thus apparently sanctioning the practice. Moreover, a curse of slavery was placed on the "sons of Ham" Gen. Furthermore, slavery was considered a "religious good," for it amounted to importing unsaved heathens to a Christian land where they could hear the gospel and be saved. However, though Paul gave instructions on master-slave relations, his underlying belief was that slaves should be freed [1 Cor. As for slavery being a "religious good," this seems an absurd claim in view of the cruel, inhuman treatment shown to the slaves. Most blacks accepted the slave brand of Christianity at face value. Moreover, white missionaries persuaded the blacks that life on earth was insignificant because "obedient servants of God could expect a reward in heaven after death. As more blacks began attending white Christian churches, restrictions in seating, communion services, and property ownership caused many blacks to seek autonomy in their own congregations and ultimately, separate denominations. So, by the mids, black slaves had begun meeting in private to worship since authentic worship with whites was impossible. There is sufficient historical evidence to conclude that themes later developed by black liberation theologians were present in these early slave meetings in at least a nascent form. For example, God was interpreted by the slaves as a loving Father who would eventually deliver them from slavery just as He had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. Jesus was considered both a Savior and an elder brother who was a fellow sufferer. Heaven had a dual implication for black slaves. Yes, it referred to the future life, but it also came to refer to a state of liberation in the present. Because of the risk involved in preaching liberation, the slave learned how to sing liberation in the very presence of his master: I looked over Jordan Ohio River - border between North and South And what did I see, Coming for to carry me home A band of angels northern emancipators with the underground coming after me. Coming for to carry me home. There are many important figures who contributed to the cause of black liberation throughout black history. We can only mention a few here. Nat Turner was the most notorious slave preacher who ever lived on American soil. Indeed, Turner killed nearly sixty white people before being captured and hanged in September, This violent revolt marked the beginning of the black struggle for liberation. Marcus Garvey is regarded by many as "the apostle of black theology in the United States of America. Thurman also noted that Jesus was a member of a minority group the Jews in the midst of a larger

and controlling dominant group the Romans. Thurman thus drew many applications for the black experience from the life of Jesus. Martin Luther King, Jr. Though he cannot be called a formal participant in the black theology movement, he nevertheless roused the conscience of black America to passionate commitment to liberation. King was an advocate of Gandhian nonviolent social change. Through nonviolent suffering, King believed that "blacks would not only liberate themselves from the necessity of bitterness and the feeling of inferiority toward whites, but would also prick the conscience of whites and liberate them from a feeling of superiority. Albert Cleage was one of the more militant black writers of the s. His claim to fame was *The Black Messiah*, a collection of sermons in which he set forth his brand of black nationalism. Cleage rejected the Pauline books in the New Testament. He said that - in contrast to the black Messiah - there was a spiritualized Jesus constructed by the apostle Paul who "never knew Jesus and who modified his teaching to conform to the pagan philosophers of the white gentiles. Beginning with the "black power" movement in , black clergy in many major denominations began to reassess the relationship of the Christian church to the black community. Black caucuses developed in the Catholic, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches. They insisted that this starting point must be defined by people at the bottom and not the top of the socioeconomic ladder. The most prolific and sophisticated writer of this new theological movement has been James Cone. No one has matched him either in terms of sheer volume of writing, or in terms of the challenge posed by his books. For this reason, we shall examine his theology in depth. Theologian of Black Liberation In assessing the theology of James Cone, it is critical to recognize that he sees black experience as the fundamental starting point for ascertaining theological truth. And his own writings are a reflection of his own "black experience" - that is, the discrimination he suffered while growing up as a child in Bearden, Arkansas. What was it like in Bearden? It meant refusing to retaliate when called a nigger unless you were prepared to leave town at the precise moment of your rebellion. What I write is urged out of my blood. To put it simply, Black Theology knows no authority more binding than the experience of oppression itself. This alone must be the ultimate authority in religious matters. Indeed, his view seems very close to the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, as when Cone writes: *Black Theology and Black Power*. Based on the preeminence of "black experience," Cone defines theology as "a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ. Cone notes two aspects of blackness: In the first sense, "black" indicates a physiological trait. It refers to "a particular black-skinned people in America. Whiteness symbolizes sickness and oppression. White theology is therefore viewed as a theological extension of that sickness and oppression. Because God is helping oppressed blacks and has identified with them, God Himself is spoken of as "black. He is to be seen, not in the transcendent way of Greek philosophy, but immanent, among His people. This is very similar to the idea of the immanence of God in process theology. The Chalcedonian creed A. Jesus Christ "is God himself coming into the very depths of human existence for the sole purpose of striking off the chains of slavery, thereby freeing man from ungodly principalities and powers that hinder his relationship with God. For whites to find him with big lips and kinky hair is as offensive as it was for the Pharisees to find him partying with tax-collectors. But whether whites want to hear it or not, Christ is black, baby, with all of the features which are so detestable to white society" emphasis in original. In reality, Christ was not white, not European. It is not just a future-oriented hope in a heavenly compensation for earthly woes. Rather, it is a hope that focuses on the future in such a way that it prevents blacks from tolerating present inequities. Salvation for Cone primarily has to do with earthly reality, not heavenly hopes. Cone believes the black church has played an instrumental role in the religious and social life of black America. He says the black church was the creation of a black people "whose daily existence was an encounter with the overwhelming and brutalizing reality of white power. For the slaves it was the sole source of identity and the sense of community. The black church became the only sphere of black experience that was free of white power. He argues that in order to survive, the black churches have given up their freedom and dignity. After the Civil War, black churches became passive in the struggle for civil rights and freedom while currying favors from the white establishment. This condition, Cone says, has persisted up to the present day, rendering the black church "the lifeless pawn of the status quo. He says that a continued emphasis on black power is "the only hope of the black church in America. It is this

emphasis that Cone says has been missing in many black churches. Cone rejects what he terms the "white lie" that Christianity is primarily concerned with life in the next world: Black theology has hope for this life. Unless the future can become present, thereby forcing us to make changes in this world, what significance could eschatology have for black people who believe that their self-determination must become a reality now? I would be remiss to close this discussion of James Cone without noting his views on revolution and violence. Cone defines liberation as the "emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary."

Chapter 2 : Black Theology in Dialogue Paper - J. Deotis Roberts : Westminster John Knox Press

Among his books are The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology for Ministry, Black Theology in Dialogue, Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology, and A Black Political Theology, all available from WJK.

Development[edit] Modern American origins of contemporary Black theology can be traced to July 31, , when an ad hoc group of 51 concerned clergy, calling themselves the National Committee of Negro Churchmen NCNC , bought a full page ad in The New York Times to publish their "Black Power Statement," which proposed a more aggressive approach to combating racism using the Bible for inspiration. This non-binding resolution declared that racism, in all its forms, is deplorable" and "lamented on a national scale and is also repudiated in history as an act of evil from which a continued bitter harvest unfortunately is reaped. Yet Christ; the forerunner of christian behavior professed individuality and in living testimony is demonized for the pursuit of individually targeted sanctuary. It explains Christianity as a matter of liberation here and now, rather than in an afterlife. The goal of Black theology is not for special treatment. Instead, "All Black theologians are asking for is for freedom and justice. No more, and no less. In asking for this, the Black theologians, turn to scripture as the sanction for their demand. The Psalmist writes for instance, "If God is going to see righteousness established in the land, he himself must be particularly active as "the helper of the fatherless" Psalm Black theology in the United States[edit] Main article: James Cone believed that the New Testament revealed Jesus as one who identified with those suffering under oppression, the socially marginalized and the cultural outcasts. And since the socially constructed categories of race in America i. Black theology asks whose side should God be onâ€”the side of the oppressed or the side of the oppressors. If God values justice over victimization, then God desires that all oppressed people should be liberated. According to Cone, if God is not just, if God does not desire justice, then God needs to be done away with. Liberation from a false god who privileges whites, and the realization of an alternative and true God who desires the empowerment of the oppressed through self-definition, self-affirmation, and self-determination is the core of Black theology. The Old Testament God of Moses freeing the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian rulers was the central theme of African American popular religion, as well as abolitionists like Harriet Tubman. While trinitarian theology is a big concern, Jesus is still considered to be God. Immanence is stressed over transcendence , and as a result God is seen to be "in flux" or "always changing". He compared the United States to Egypt, predicting that oppressed people will soon be led to a promised land. Cone uses the Gospel of Luke to illustrate this point: Their suffering becomes his; their despair, divine despair. Our choices are not the same as his. In reality, Christ was not white, not European. He states, "Whether the American system is beyond redemption we will have to wait and see. But we can be certain that Black patience has run out, and unless White America responds positively to the theory and activity of Black Power, then a bloody, protracted civil war is inevitable. Some suggest that this is a response to the discomfort some White Americans feel with the ideas of Black empowerment and threat of being dealt with unapologetically as equals. It should also be noted that Christ forgave his oppressors and there is no focus on retribution for past wrong in the writings of Cone and other leaders. Criticisms[edit] Anthony Bradley of the Christian Post interprets that the language of "economic parity" and references to "mal-distribution" as nothing more than channeling the views of Karl Marx. He believes James Cone and Cornel West have worked to incorporate Marxist thought into the Black church, forming an ethical framework predicated on a system of oppressor class versus a victim much like Marxism. He quoted Black theologian Obery M. It helped to give rise to, and developed in parallel with, the Black Consciousness Movement. Black theology was particularly influential in South Africa and Namibia for motivating resistance to apartheid. He was the first in the UK to develop and teach a course on Black theology at an academic level.

The participants of "Black Theology and Womanist Theology in Dialogue" are half women and half men; half practitioners and half academics; three generations of black theologians and womanist theologians speaking not only to themselves, but to the future of America.

From the point of view of the Christian church, one of the most significant things to come out of the racial situation is black theology. When that is mentioned, of course, we think of you, Jim. You have moved us, angered us, and illuminated us. However, many readers have problems with your work. They feel that, because they were born with skin of the wrong color, you have excluded them from dialogue. But do you always follow this definition? But, if that is so, is the statement universally correct? While I do not minimize the need for logical consistency, there are times when rationalistic logic breaks down. This is especially true when one is dealing with concrete historical experiences that are not universal. There is the situation of the oppressed as they reflect theologically upon the significance of their oppression and liberation. Because oppressors are the persons who devise the language tools for communication, their canons of logic do not include a form of the oppressed. If the oppressed are to attain their freedom, they must begin to create a new style of communication which is consistent with their struggle for liberation. In part they must deny the accepted canons of logic, allowing the liberation struggle alone to be the logical test for meaningful discourse. Logical consistency, as defined by the oppressors, is irrelevant. I do not apologize for the apparently vague use of the terms. Rather I insist that the ambiguity is indispensable. In this regard, I contend that theological language must be paradoxical because of the necessity of affirming two dimensions of reality which appear to be contradictory. For example, my experience of being black-skinned means that I cannot de-emphasize the literal significance of blackness. My people were enslaved, lynched, and ghettoized in the name of God and country because of their color. No amount of theologizing can remove the reality of that experience from my consciousness. And because blacks were dehumanized by white-skinned people who created a cultural style based on black oppression, the literal importance of whiteness has historical referents. But that is only one aspect of my experience. When I begin to investigate the particular experience of blackness and whiteness in America, I begin to see beyond it. The same is true for the literal and symbolic meaning of whiteness, which has the opposite meaning of blackness. In other words, you believe that your critics want to move too quickly from the particular to the universal. Once you have redefined the symbolic meaning of white and black, the white-skinned critic immediately wants to be called black. The universal has no meaning independent of the particular. When people move too rapidly to the universal, they minimize the every experience which defines the universal. Blackness then must, without qualification, refer to black-skinned people who bear the scars of oppression; and whiteness must refer to the people responsible for that oppression. That is an must remain the starting point for all talk about God and man in a society where color is the defining point of humiliation. When this reality of the gospel and historical experience is taken with utmost seriousness, then it is possible to visualize the symbolic significance of blackness and whiteness "but not before. To guard against the easy, symbolic identification of white-skinned people with black-skinned people, it is necessary to stress that there can be no universal understanding of blackness without the particular experience of blackness. To paraphrase a question put to Jesus, who then can become black? I contend that if a white-skinned person is authentically black, then there is no need to assure him of his authenticity. For to be black is to know the ambiguity of the black experience, and this is true for one who is literally black. I see no reason why I should spend time giving him personal counsel on how to be black. I cannot answer that, but I hope they are not excluded from my interpretation of the gospel. In my experience with persons of color who are not Afro-American, they have not raised difficulties with my choice of blackness. I chose blackness because of my experience and what that means in white America. I do not contend that blackness is the appropriate term for all historical situations of oppression and liberation. I only contend that theology must be particular and thus indigenous with the oppressed community so that universal affirmations about liberation are relevant to the historical experiences of the wretched of the land. Therefore, I do not insist that the concreteness of oppression is always and

everywhere black; but I do think that it is a distortion of historical reality if one speaks of oppression in America that ignores black people. Authentic identification with the oppressed involves more than adopting the symbols of oppression. It means adopting their historical experience, realizing that we cannot be unless oppression ceases to be. My difficulty with white students is that they appropriate black symbols without encountering the concrete experiences which gave rise to them. This is not to deny that white students are oppressed. But they have not been enslaved legally and neither have they undergone that peculiar experience that is called blackness. And I do not think that we blacks are ready to do that. Your theology has made a vital contribution by forcing us to recognize that theology cannot be Christian unless it is identified with the liberation of the oppressed. Hopefully, never again will Christians be able to do theology without remembering that Jesus himself put the release of captives high on the list of his goals. But, in making this point, are you not in danger of compressing the whole gospel into this one theme? I am aware of the problem of reductionism, the danger of compressing the gospel into one theme. But that is the danger that must be risked if I am to remain faithful to my understanding of the Bible and the struggle of the oppressed for liberation. Indeed, other theologies have taken similar risks. Every theology must take what he believes to be the central theme of the biblical message and relate that theme to his historical situation. This does not mean that the gospel changes every time a few theological emphasis appears. It only means that Christian theology cannot be written once and for all. There will always be the necessity to interpret the meaning of the gospel in the light of changing situations with new themes and emphases. When a new theme appears it does not mean that the old emphases are discarded, but that the new datum enhances their significance. Black liberation is the new datum. Theology must now ask, What is the essence of the gospel in view of the oppressed of the land? What is good news for the oppressed and humiliated, the weak and the downtrodden? I contend that it is the good news of liberation. Therefore, it is a distortion of the gospel and heretical if it is said that Christians should place liberation high on the list of goals. I deny that conclusion. To draw that conclusion is equivalent to reducing divine revelation to logical abstractions, which may be interesting to debate in a seminar on philosophical logic but has nothing to do with human oppression and liberation. God does not will that people should be oppressed, and that was why he came in Jesus and why he is present as Holy Spirit today. This means that I cannot be free until all men are free. And if in some distant future I am no longer oppressed because of blackness, then I must take upon myself whatever form of human oppression exists in the society, affirming my identity with the victims.

Chapter 4 : Black Theology - African American Studies - Oxford Bibliographies

Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue charts a new course for Black theology which interrogates varieties of Black experience in different contexts through creative and analytical means and then brings them into critical interaction.

Womanist theology, created twenty years later out of black and feminist theologies, emerged with black Christian women embracing the positive relation between their faith and their creative, God-given female and African American identities. Black and womanist theologies maintain their ties to the black church; they share similar theoretical methodologies, developing doctrines on the basis of the Christian experiences of people in churches. Each claims liberation and survival for marginalized communities as essential to ministry, the message of Jesus, and ecclesial mission. Each now proclaims inclusive gender leadership. And as religious movements, black and womanist disciplines have found voices within the academy. Next week, black theology and womanist theology will be in conversation for the first time on a national platform, at the University of Chicago Divinity School and the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Which Way Forward for the Church and the Academy? Half of the speakers are pastors and half are professors, with Protestants and Catholics lecturing along with African American gay and lesbian speakers. An innovative format will foster in-depth debate: Male speakers will reflect on subjects typically associated with womanists, while women will engage themes usually linked to black theology. Topics under discussion include liberation, survival and quality of life, patriarchy in the family, human sexuality, black males as an endangered species, Jesus the Man, Christ as a Woman, global missions, and the future of black theology-womanist theology dialogue in church and academy. An important principle underlies this conference: All parties -- black and womanist academics as well as female and male clergy -- agree that the discipline of theology entails critical reflection on the message and witness of the church. Theology tests whether or not the church is faithful to what it has been called to believe, say, and do. And the church provides the religious community for whose benefit academics develop theology. Mutual accountability thus obtains: Theology serves the church, while the church opens itself for ongoing theological inspection. Before now, a conference of this sort has been impossible, as African American women required the space and time to develop their own voices, apart from the dominating and agenda-setting tendencies of earlier male scholars. And previously there did not exist a sufficient number of black women professors to offset some of the earlier, often arrogant, positions of men. In the last ten years, however, womanist scholars and black male theologians, each in their separate gatherings, have spoken of the need for a venue for critical and collaborative dialogue. Womanist theologians and ethicists have edited volumes calling for African American female thinkers to develop a methodology that starts with the religious beliefs and practices of women, while also embracing the entire constituency of the church. Womanist methodology seeks to be inclusive of the entire community. A growing cohort of second- and third-generation black male theologians is recognizing that partnerships with black female religious scholars and pastors are crucial for church vitality and empowering theological curricula. In fact, black male scholars are reinterpreting the gospel message itself as focusing on the plight of, and prospects for, women. With increased openness and a growing desire to forge dialogue and collaboration, the time has come for a conference facilitating conversation between two vital and important movements in contemporary theology.

Chapter 5 : Black Theology in Dialogue - James Deotis Roberts - Google Books

The symposium sought to bring the Black academy and the Black church into dialogue and explore ways to distill Black theology and make it accessible to the Black church and community. Watch reflections from this rich lecture series below (Pictured: Travis Auditorium).

Based on information reproduced from Wikipedia. James Hal Cone born August 5, is an advocate of Black liberation theology, a theology grounded in the experience of African Americans, and related to other Christian liberation theologies. In , his book *Black Theology and Black Power* provided a new way to articulate the distinctiveness of theology in the black Church. Cain murders his brother, Abel, and when God asks where Abel is, Cain lies: In a similar way, over the past four centuries White Europeans and their descendants, mostly claiming to be Christian, have been responsible for the oppression, enslavement and deaths of millions of Black Africans and their descendants. And similar to Cain in the Genesis story, the White response to these centuries of pain has been, until very recently, a fog of lies, evasions, muddled theologizing and changing the subject. *The Cry of Black Blood*: He received a B. Briggs Chair in systematic theology in . He incorporates the powerful role of the black Church in his life, as well as racism experienced by African Americans. For Cone, the theologians he studied in graduate school did not provide meaningful answers to his questions. This disparity became more apparent when he was teaching theology at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas. Accordingly, his theology was heavily influenced by Malcolm X and the Black Power movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. However, Scripture is not the only source which shapes his theology. In response to criticism from other black theologians including his brother, Cecil , Cone began to make greater use of resources native to the African American Christian community for his theological work, including slave spirituals , the blues , and the writings of prominent African American thinkers like David Walker , Henry McNeal Turner , and W. His theology developed further in response to critiques by black women, leading Cone to consider gender issues more prominently and foster the development of womanist theology , and also in dialogue with Marxist analysis and the sociology of knowledge. The black theologian must reject any conception of God which stifles black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. This is the essence of the Biblical revelation. By electing Israelite slaves as the people of God and by becoming the Oppressed One in Jesus Christ, the human race is made to understand that God is known where human beings experience humiliation and sufferingâ€Liberation is not an afterthought, but the very essence of divine activity. *A Black Theology of Liberation* , pp. Being black means that your heart, your soul, your mind, and your body are where the dispossessed are. I think the time has come for black theologians and black church people to move beyond a mere reaction to white racism in America and begin to extend our vision of a new socially constructed humanity in the whole inhabited worldâ€For humanity is whole, and cannot be isolated into racial and national groups. Critique Theologians, such as Delores Williams, have critiqued James Cone for both male-centered language and for not including the experiences of black women in his sources. Williams, in , acknowledged in a footnote in her book *Sisters in the Wilderness*, that Cone has modified exclusive language for the reprinting of his works and acknowledged the issues with the previous language. However, she argues that he still does not use the experiences of African-American women in his method, and therefore still needs to deal with the sexism of his work. Wright may not necessarily represent black theology. So-called Christianity, as commonly practiced in the United States, is actually the racist Antichrist. *A Dream or a Nightmare? Critical Essays on James H. Orbis Books, , Cone, God of the Oppressed, Orbis Books, , 3. Cone and Black Liberation Theology ; cf. Williams, The Journal of Religion 76 Rowland Cambridge, , pp. Schwartz, Theology in a Global Context Eerdmans, , p. Singleton, Black Theology and Ideology: Deideological Dimensions in the Theology of James H. Cone Colledgeville, MN, , p. Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: Deotis Roberts, Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology Philadelphia, â€” cf. Jones, Is God a White Racist? Boston, â€” cf. Muehl, from The Christian Century 20 February*

Chapter 6 : The new black theology: Retrieving ancient sources to challenge racism | The Christian Century

Black Theology in Dialogue Paper - J. Deotis Roberts: Westminster John Knox Press Challenging all who are concerned about religion in today's world, J. Deotis Roberts outlines a new way of looking at the essential questions.

A Theological Account Oxford University Press, was one of the few books mentioned more than once and the only one that was published in the past five years. What is revolutionary about these three black theologians is that they rely heavily on dogmatic texts from the patristic period to the Reformation. Why is this novel? Because nonwhite male theologians have historically been hesitant to trust these sources—and for good reason. In the worst of times, classic theological texts have been used to oppress persons of color and women. In the best of times, the overwhelming attention given these particular voices obscured other voices, giving the impression that the only Christians speaking and writing about God for the last 2, years were European men. Those who did not fit that description simply did not know how to relate to a tradition that claimed to speak for but did not reflect them. James Cone, considered the father of contemporary black theology, expressed these frustrations four decades ago. Feb 08, issue Many Western theologians in the last few decades have returned to premodern theological sources, representing an intellectual renaissance of sorts as Christians look back to classical theologians from Augustine to Maximus the Confessor to Catherine of Siena for expressions of present-day faith. This was not entirely unexpected as Christianity tried to free itself from the hold the Enlightenment had on the church for so long. However, what is quite surprising is that persons of color and women are increasingly finding their way to these sources. Or at least they could claim as much, allowing them to dismiss much black theology outright no matter how scripturally anchored it was. It is precisely this understanding of difference—difference as witness to and participation within the Trinitarian hypostatic distinctions—that modern logics of race foreclose. Jennings and Carter both insist that bodies matter—and in a particularly Jewish-Christian way. Jewish flesh is most authentically itself when it welcomes the gentile. This hospitality enacts what Carter calls "the theodramatic constitution of existence. The drama of Israel thus is not insular, for it unfolds in such a way as to enfold the nations into its drama. The problem is not simply that Jewish Christians did not easily accept gentiles into the church. Rather, the problem is that after the gentiles were accepted, the question became: What now becomes of the Jews? For Carter, when Christians get this question wrong, they get everything wrong including what it means for creatures to have the kinds of bodies they do , producing in the process the idea that bodies can and should be thought of in terms of race. In European Christianity, the general question about difference settled on the specific question of Jewish difference—what came to be called der Judenfrage the Jewish question. Attempting to espouse a universal conception of humanness independent of and over against the Jewish covenant of promise, European Christians crafted a rival discourse to help explain the Jews and the non-European others whom the Jews exemplified: Speech about "race" helped construe the Jews as a people inordinately attached to their peculiar practices and outdated laws. The Jews become "the other" by which European Christianity defined itself. European Christians, in this view, are the universal race because they, unlike the Jews, are able to shed their religious particularity just the way Jesus superseded the particularity of Jewish law. Or so the story went. When the Enlightenment sought to find the standpoint of universal reason, it could only look down upon people Jewish and some other ethnic groups who—“it was thought—“ could not so easily transcend their bodies. In a vicious but unquestioned bit of circular reasoning, it was decided that only Europeans could achieve this universality of reason. According to Carter, this trumped-up notion of reason resulted in the universality of whiteness according to which non-Europeans comprise lesser hues of whiteness. Nonwhite people simply could not get out of their bodies in the way that white people had. White people, according to this line of thought, "are not a race in the same way that the other human races have become races. The other races have become races in such a way as to be held hostage to their own particularity," says Carter. It is purity, existence free of the blemishes that colored all other races. The power of race lies not only in its ability to license violence perpetuated within what Jennings calls "the colonialist logics. Slaves came to speak the language of their masters and see themselves through European eyes. The devastating violence of colonialism

and slavery resulted in people being deprived of the homes and communities that had for generations provided the narratives for understanding themselves. In the absence of these grounding narratives, they adopted the only discourse available—the discourse of race. That we all now speak the language of race demonstrates the depth and breadth to which our imaginations have been colonized in just the way Jennings lays out. Beauty, intelligence, piety and every other mark of personhood are indexed along a spectrum of whiteness. For example, nonwhite persons who want to be seen by themselves and others as physically attractive have to come up with ways to look white. In the 19th and 20th centuries a veritable industry emerged to supply the cosmetic techniques from methods for hair straightening to skin lighteners to plastic surgery for this passage into whiteness. Carter and Jennings undercut racism by positioning Jewish particularity as the keystone, rather than the barrier, to salvation. One way we can account for the violence of European colonization is by interpreting it as a corrupted mission to the nations that required unprecedented amounts of violence to disguise its falsehood. Instead of Christianity being expressed in a colonizing and slaveholding universalism, Christ is inscribed in the flesh of those whose slave narratives proclaim the good news. This unity "reorders" humanity without overwhelming it. It is at this point that Bantum, Carter and Jennings reinvigorate the likes of Irenaeus, Athanasius and Maximus in their articulations of orthodox Christology. The new theology finds a way forward by returning to what the church long ago affirmed: Having taken on the form of poverty and the form of the slave, God in Christ is the impoverished slave. As such, God enters into the hurts of those who suffer so that from inside those hurts, being fully identified with them to the point of communicating his divinity through them, he heals them. It is the poor slave, one might say, who is closest to God and so reveals God. In *Redeeming Mulatto*, Bantum makes his own use of patristic formulations about Christ in order to address the promises and challenges of interracial existence. According to Bantum, the church speaks the language attuned to this politics of difference: In other words, black theology is reclaiming the theological tradition as its own and, under the banner of orthodoxy, taking on all comers. The debate is no longer fixed on racial identity politics a quagmire from which none can escape ; rather, it takes place on the level playing field of orthodoxy. The new theology reminds us that it was a mistake to call black theology "black theology" in the first place. Consistency at least would have required that European theology equally bear the burden of qualifications "colonizing theology". To be sure, patronizing name-calling allowed black theology to develop its own voice in its own time, just as the segregated black church developed its own styles, saints and stories. But because the margins were managed by white theologians, those voices were heard by whites, and when heard they were regarded as less than equal and so were not allowed to challenge white hegemony and help white theology be anything other than white theology. Accordingly, the new black theology is best described as the new theology, no disqualifying adjective necessary. In it we see Christian theology at long last incarnating the material conditions whereby the good news becomes good news.

Chapter 7 : Black Theology in Dialogue by J. Deotis Roberts - Paperback / softback

BLACK THEOLOGY. African Americans have a long, rich history of spiritually based advocacy for social change. African Americans read their religious texts through their experience. Consequently there is a long tradition of interpreting the Christian gospel in ways that reflect God's involvement in.

African Americans have a long, rich history of spiritually based advocacy for social change. African Americans read their religious texts through their experience. Black Theology as it is largely understood in the early twenty-first century refers to the movement initiated by James Cone b. It is a contextual liberation theology that draws its strength and focus from the historic African American struggle for freedom in North America as it was primarily, although not exclusively, manifested in and through the black church. In this sense it must not be thought of as in anyway an exhaustive or definitive account of African American religious reflection, reflection on African American religious or Christian experience or African American theology. Black Theology is therefore one among a variety of orientations to African American thought on Christian experience in particular and religious experience in general. Moreover we believe that this orientation, while not the only one, has been the most distinctive, persistent, and valuable part of the religious heritage of African Americans in the United States " Cone, , p. Although Black Theology is largely identified with the work of James Cone and his followers, other thinkers and theologians in what is referred to as the first generation, such as J. Cleage, and Major Jones, played a prominent role in the founding of the movement and have continued with the exception of perhaps Cleage to exercise considerable influence in the early twenty-first century. Contributing to the formation of the Black Theology movement, they helped shape its substantive and methodological agenda. Jones, a philosopher; and C. Eric Lincoln, a sociologist, all made valuable contributions to the formation of Black Theology, serving as invaluable resources for the standard interpretation of African American history as the history of resistance if not revolt and as interlocutors raising critical issues with respect to the methodology, epistemological status of, and interpretive claims on the nature of black religious experience as employed in Black Theology, they cannot be identified as "Black Theologians. Origins of Black Theology Black Theology arose from the ferment of the late s as many African American clergy, scholars, and activists, disillusioned by the pace of social change in regard to the condition of the African American masses, moved from the integrationist perspective that served as the touchstone of the Civil Rights movement toward an affirmation of black power i. The Black Theology movement was the Christian theological response to and expression of the burgeoning African American self-affirmation that crystallized during the period. The movement came in answer to the fundamental challenge posed by many in the African American community who saw in Christianity the epitome of not only American but also Western spiritual hypocrisy. Classically conceived, this problematic is twofold, involving, first, the search for justice and, second, the encounter with science. Black Theology has yet to take on the issue of science in any meaningful sense, although the issue is implicated at least at the epistemological level inasmuch as it employs a particular understanding of history and an implicit metaphysics, moves into more dialogue with the social sciences, and attempts a more rigorous social analysis to substantiate claims and make purportedly objective statements about the sociocultural location of African Americans. More to the point, however, is the issue of social justice. In spite of the efforts of some theologians to take the challenge for social justice seriously, European American theology remained strangely and disturbingly silent on the issue of race. The theological concern with social justice in the dominant theology prior to the rise of Black Theology made only passing reference to African Americans or their plight. Given the centrality of race and its concomitant ideologies in the shaping of modernity, from the role played by slavery in the Western articulation of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialist expansion to American Jim Crow, South African apartheid, institutionalized poverty, and second-class citizenship in the second half of the twentieth century, all sanctioned and justified by the dominant Christianity and grounded in its theological articulation. The failure of European American theology to figure in the utter centrality of race fatally compromised its legitimacy and forfeited all pretensions to universality. The centrality of race and the elimination of the epithet social from this new proclamation of

the Gospel effectively and fundamentally distinguished the movement from previous articulations of the "Social Gospel. Are there resources in the Christian faith as experienced by black people for a liberating praxis, or is it the instrument of subjugation some of the more radical and educated voices in the black community have claimed it to be? Can Christianity become the vehicle for freedom, or should it be tossed to the dustbin of history with all the other lies and deceptions heaped upon the backs of the oppressed to keep them bent in bondage? These were the questions no serious-minded African American Christian could ignore. It was the genius of the first generation Black Theologians not only to resist the temptation to sidestep the issues with an apologetic for the failures of historical Christianity but to lead the charge in proclaiming them. Secondly, they turned to a rigorous examination of the African American tradition, confirming both its uniqueness and its affirmation of black humanity. They discovered that not only could African American Christianity provide a liberating vision and praxis for the oppressed but in fact it already had. As the new "suffering servant," the black person "bound" to the white person through slavery has been called to the task "not only of being released from bondage but of releasing [their] captors from their shackles as well" Washington, , p. More than this prescriptive imputation of meaning to the struggle, the sheer identification of a stream of African American folk Christianity with the religion of freedom, equality, and justice was a major contribution. In addition Washington articulated what would become a major theological criterion or hermeneutical lens for evaluating the religious contributions of African Americans in Black Theology. The inauthenticity of the spirituals are those expressions of escape from this world" Washington, , p. Later James Cone examined the spirituals as an expression of the spirit of liberation but dropped the qualifier "all men," affirming their exclusive relevance in Black Theology to black people. In response to the internal critique from many African Americans and the external assumption of many whites that African Americans and their Christian faith was historically essentially quietistic and accommodatingly otherworldly, people such as Vincent Harding *There Is a River* and Gayraud Wilmore *Black Religion, Black Radicalism* uncovered a long, unbroken story of resistance and rebellion that ran through the black tapestry of African American history like a scarlet thread, beginning before the ships made shore in the Americas and continuing through the modern-day Civil Rights movement. The river Harding wrote of may not have always raged beyond its prescribed borders, but even contained the powerful current and strong undertow continued its flow wide and deep. This revolutionary statement exploded expectations in the white church that African American Christians would aid and abet their comfortable conformity with the historically oppressive, traditional power structure and the more gradualist and conservative elements in the African American community. In fact the struggle for black liberation as defined by black power advocates was the mandate of the Gospel, and its emergence was a contemporary manifestation of the liberating activity of the Jesus revealed in New Testament Scripture. Since God was the God of the oppressed, always on the side of the oppressed, and Jesus Christ was his self disclosure and a living historical presence, then he manifests himself amid the oppressed. In the United States, African Americans were the oppressed, and hence Jesus Christ would not only be among them in their struggle for freedom but would manifest himself in them and their struggle. Jesus Christ revealed himself in the black faces affirming their freedom. In the United States therefore Jesus was black. Other voices forcefully entered the fray emphasizing other aspects of Black Theology, some at least implicitly and others explicitly critical of Cone. Black Theology for Cone was theology of, by, and for black people. Deotis Roberts insisted upon the preeminence of the theme of reconciliation. The emphasis on reconciliation was essential to preserve the doctrinal integrity of Black Theology, given its claim to be Christian and normative. In addition to reconciliation Roberts feared an unhealthy isolation of Black Theology as it divorced itself, through a kind of ideological separatism, from the larger Christian theological tradition. There will be no need to admit the black theologian to the comprehensive field of theology. Some of us have fought too long and hard to give up this territory now" Roberts, , pp. Jones, continuing in this vein with some unique contributions and further elaboration, radicalized the approach to "reconciliation" in his *Christian Ethics for Black Theology* , arguing that the concept presupposed "an ideal prior relationship" that blacks and whites did not share. In this work, while critically examining the Black Theology project, he suggested grounds for building "a totally new relationship that has never heretofore existed between black and white people in America" Jones, , p. Those

that criticized Black Theology were no less committed to the struggle for African American liberation. Nor did they accept the claim that it was somehow free of the traditional conceptual entanglements, challenges, and demands of academic accountability of the "white" theological tradition. Charles Long, in *Significations*, and Cecil Cone, in a more strictly theological vein in *The Identity Crisis in Black Theology*, argued that African American religious experience had to be more broadly interpreted in order to remain true to the nature of the "religious," the sources themselves, as well as maintain the theoretical integrity of theological method. Black Theology came under fire for reducing religious experience primarily to a selective interpretation of black church history. Many critics of Black Theology argue that its method is primarily tautological in that it formulates its conclusions, then shapes the interpretation of the sources it claims to be based on to fit them, dismissively excising or devaluing those dimensions of the experience that remain recalcitrant. In a word, critics have claimed that Black Theology has forced African American religious experience onto the procrustean bed of a quasi-political ideology in view of the methodological prominence of "black power. Hopkins and George C. Cummings ; 2 widening the scope of Black Theology by engaging in conversation with other third world and liberation theologies; and 3 placing themselves in dialogue with indigenous African religious traditions see Josiah U. Young and Will Coleman. There were other earlier attempts to respond to the limitations of the black theological vision, but these have garnered little attention, ironically, because of the academic ascendancy of the one particular vein. One such instructive effort, *Black Theology II: Bruce and William R. Jones*, remains a valuable contribution to the ongoing development of the black theological project. Womanist Theology One of the most promising developments in the movement has been the emergence of Womanist Theology. In addition to challenging the neglect of their experience, they critique the openly oppressive nature of the black church, given the disproportional numbers of women who make up black congregations and their virtual absence in leadership roles in local congregations and denominational hierarchies. Although some "Womanist" Theologians have expressed uneasiness about being identified too closely with a label that carries what many women in the black church consider morally ambiguous baggage, the term has become ensconced in the discourse as the recognized designation. Other notable figures in the Womanist movement are Delores S. Shawn Copeland, and Emily Townes. While the broader themes of Womanist Theology bring coherence to the movement, there are significant differences in approach, theoretical inflection, and theological sensibility see *Introducing Womanist Theology* [] by Stephanie Mitchem. See Also *Liberation Theology. Bibliography* For a rich textured history of the beginning and later development of Black Theology through an assemblage of primary texts, consult Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. A *Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N. Cone and Gayraud S. A *Documentary History*, 2d ed. See also James H. Significant texts in the formation and development of the first generation of Black Theology are Joseph R. Twentieth Anniversary Edition Maryknoll, N. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: Jones, Christian Ethics for Black Theology: The Politics of Liberation* Nashville, Tenn. Second-generation efforts to explicate Black Theology and expand its intellectual and social range include Dwight N. *Politics, Culture, and Liberation* Maryknoll, N. Providence and the Legacies of the Ancestors Trenton, N. For an alternative vision, see Calvin E. Jones, *Is God a White Racist: Andrews, Practical Theology for Black Churches: For an introduction and overview of the Womanist development, see Stephanie Y. Hayes, And Still We Rise: Williams, Sisters in the Wilderness: Sanders, Ministry at the Margins: Womanism and Afrocentrism in Theology* Minneapolis, Minn.

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James H. Cone's Black Theology and Black Power (), *A Black Theology of Liberation* (), and *God of the Oppressed* () were the first major academic works in the field. In them, Cone attempted to reconcile Christian theology and practice with the growing militancy of the burgeoning Black Power movement.

Chapter 9 : Black Theology (by Ron Rhodes)

The new theology reminds us that it was a mistake to call black theology "black theology" in the first place. Consistency at least would have required that European theology equally bear the burden of qualifications ("colonizing theology").