

*Black Theology:
Its Origin, Method,
and Relation
to Third World Theologies*



by James H. Cone

The concept "black theology" refers to a theological movement that emerged among North American black people during the second-half of the 1960s. During the early part of the 1970s, the North American idea of black theology began to make an impact in South Africa. In this essay, I will limit my analysis to the origin and meaning of North American black theology,¹ with special reference to its methodology, as defined by its dialogue with the Third World theologies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Origin of Black Theology

The origin of black theology has three contexts: (1) the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 60's, largely associated with Martin Luther King, Jr.; (2) the publication of Joseph Washington's book on Black Religion (1964); and (3) the rise of the black power movement,

strongly influenced by Malcolm X's philosophy of black nationalism.

1. Civil Rights Movement. All persons involved in the rise of black theology were also deeply involved in the civil rights movement, and they participated in the protest demonstrations led by Martin King. Unlike most contemporary theological movements in Europe and North America, it is important to note that black theology's origin did not take place in the seminary or the university. In fact, most of its early interpreters did not even hold advanced academic degrees. Black theology came into being in the context of black people's struggle for racial justice, which was initiated in the black churches, but chiefly identified with such protest organizations as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC), Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), and many black caucuses in white churches.

From the beginning black theology was understood by its creators as a Christian theological reflection upon the black struggle for justice and liberation, largely defined in the life and thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. When Martin King and other black churchpeople began to relate the Christian gospel to the struggle for justice in American society, the great majority of white churches and their theologians denied that such a relationship existed. Conservative white Christians claimed that religion and politics did not mix. Liberal white Christians, with few exceptions during the 1950's and early 60's, remained silent on the theme or they advocated a form of gradualism that denounced boycotts, sit-ins, and freedom-rides.

Contrary to popular opinion, Martin King was not well-received by the white American church establishment when he inaugurated the civil rights movement with the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955.² Because black people received no theological support from white churches and their theologians (they were too occupied with Barth, Bultmann, and the death of God controversy!), black people themselves had to search deeply into their own history in order to find a theological basis for their prior political commitment to set free the black poor. They found support in Richard Allen (the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816), Henry Highland Garnet (a 19th century Presbyterian preacher who urged slaves to resist slavery), Nat Turner (a slave Baptist preacher who led an insurrection that killed sixty whites), Henry McNeal Turner (an AME Bishop who claimed in 1898 that "God is a Negro"), and many others.³ When blacks investigated their religious history, they were reminded that their struggle for political freedom did not begin in the 1950's and 60's but had roots stretching back many years. It was also

encouraging to find out that black people's struggle for political justice in North America has always been located in their churches. Whether we speak of the independent Northern churches (AME, AMEZ, Baptists, etc.), the so-called "invisible institution" among slaves in the South (which emerged with the independent black churches after the Civil War), or blacks in white denominations, black Christians have always known that the God of Moses and of Jesus did not create them to be slaves or second-class citizens in North America. In order to make a theological witness of this religious knowledge, black preachers and civil rights activists of the 1960s developed a black theology that rejected racism and affirmed the black struggle for liberation as consistent with the gospel of Jesus.

2. Joseph Washington's Black Religion. When black preachers and lay activist Christians began to search for the radical side of their black church history, they also began to ask about the distinctive religious and theological contributions of black people. It was generally assumed, by most whites and many blacks as well, that black people's culture had no unique contribution to make to Christianity in particular and humanity generally. Indeed white liberal Christians understood integration to mean assimilation, and that meant blacks rejecting their cultural past by becoming like whites, adopting European cultural values. The assumption behind the white definition of integration was the belief that African cultural values among North American blacks were completely destroyed during slavery. Therefore, if blacks were to develop a cultural knowledge of themselves, they had to find it in their identification with white American values.

Joseph Washington, a black scholar, wrote his book in the context of the hegemony of integration in black-white relations in America. Contrary to the dominant view, Washington contended that there was a unique black culture, a distinctive black religion that can be placed along side of Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism and Secularism. Black religion is not identical with white Protestantism or any other expression of Euro-American Christianity. Washington, however, was not pleased with the continued existence of black religion, and he placed the blame squarely upon white Christians. He contended that black religion exists only because black people have been excluded from genuine Christianity of white churches. Because blacks were excluded from the faith of white churches, black churches are not genuine Christian churches. And if there are no genuine Christian churches, there can be no Christian theology. Blacks have only folk religion and folk theology. In Washington's own words: "Negro congregations are not churches but religious societies -- religion can choose to worship whatever gods are pleasing. But a church

without a theology, the interpretation of a response of the will of God for the faithful, is a contradiction in terms."⁴

Although Joe Washington's Black Religion was received with enthusiasm in the white community, it was strongly denounced in the black church community. Indeed, black theology, in part, was created in order to refute Washington's thesis. Black preachers wanted to correct two misconceptions: (1) that black religion is not Christian and thus has no Christian theology; and (2) that the Christian gospel has nothing to do with the struggle for justice in society.

3. Black Power Movement. After the March on Washington in August 1963, the integration theme in the black community began to lose ground to the black nationalist philosophy of Malcolm X.⁵ The riots in the ghettos of U.S. cities were shocking evidence that many blacks agreed with Malcolm X's contention that America was not a dream but a nightmare.

However, it was not until the summer of 1966, after Malcolm X's assassination (1965), that the term black power began to usurp the word integration among many civil rights activists. The occasion was the continuation of the James Meredith "march against fear" (in Mississippi) by Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, and other civil rights activists. Stokely Carmichael seized this occasion to sound the black power slogan, and it was heard loud and clear throughout the U.S.⁶



Black Power

The rise of black power had a profound effect upon the appearance of black theology. When Carmichael and other radical black activists separated themselves from Martin King's absolute commitment to non-violence by proclaiming black power, white churchpeople, especially clergymen, called upon their black brothers and sisters in the gospel to denounce black power as unchristian. To the surprise of white

Christians, black ministers refused to follow their advice and instead wrote a "Black Power" statement that was published in The New York Times, July 31, 1966.⁷

The publication of the "Black Power" statement may be regarded as the beginning of the conscious development of a black theology in which black ministers consciously separated their understanding of the gospel of Jesus from white Christianity and identified it with the struggles of the black poor for justice. Radical black clergy created an ecumenical organization called the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) as well as black caucuses in the National Council of Churches and almost all white churches. Black clergy denounced white racism as the anti-christ, and were unrelenting in their attack on its demonic presence in white denominations. It was in this context that the phrase black theology emerged.

Black Theology as Liberation Theology

It is one thing to proclaim black theology and quite another to give it theological substance. Many white Christians and almost all white theologians dismissed black theology as nothing but rhetoric. Since white theologians controlled the seminaries and university departments of religion, they made many blacks feel that only Europeans and persons who think like them could define what theology is. In order to challenge the white monopoly on the definition of theology, many young black scholars realized that they had to carry the fight to the seminaries and universities where theology was being written.

The first book on black theology was written by me under the title of Black Theology and Black Power (1969). The central thesis of that book was its identification of the liberating elements in black power with the Christian gospel. One year later I authored the second book, A Black Theology of Liberation (1970) and made liberation the organizing center of my theological perspective. I wrote: "Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in the light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ."⁸

After my works appeared, other black theologians joined me, supporting my theological project and also challenging what they regarded as my excesses. In his Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology (1971), J. Deotis Roberts, while supporting my emphasis on liberation, claimed that I overlooked reconciliation as central to the gospel and

black-white relations. A similar position was advocated by Major Jones' Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope (1971). Other black theologians claimed that I was too dependent upon white theology and thus was not sufficiently aware of the African origins of black religion. This position is taken by my brother, Cecil, in his Identity Crisis in Black Theology (1975), and it is also found in Gayraud Wilmore's Black Religion and Black Radicalism (1972).

While my perspective on black theology was challenged by other black scholars, they supported my claim that liberation was the central core of the gospel as found in the scriptures and the religious history of black Americans. For black theologians the political meaning of liberation was best illustrated in the Exodus and its eschatological meaning was found in the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus. The Exodus was interpreted to be analogous to Nat Turner's slave insurrection and Harriet Tubman's liberation of an estimated 300 slaves to freedom. Slave songs (often called "Negro Spirituals"), sermons, and prayers expressed the futuristic character of liberation found in the resurrection of Jesus.

Because many black male theologians were reluctant to take up the subject of sexism and others were openly hostile when black women raised the issue as a critical theological problem, a black feminist theology is emerging as an open challenge to the patriarchal nature of the current perspectives of black theology. Jacquelyn Grant and Pauli Murray are prominent examples.⁹ While they accept the liberation theme of black theology, black feminist theologians reject the narrow limitations of that theme to racism, as if sexism is not an important problem in the black community. Because of the urgency of the problem of sexism, black women have begun to insist on doing theology out of their experience. Black feminist theology is both a challenge to the sexist orientation of black theology and a deepening of the black struggle against racism.

Black Theology's Method and Relation to Third World Theologies

During the beginning of the 1970s, black theologians of North America began to have some contact with other forms of liberation theology in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.¹⁰ Black Theology in South Africa became a natural ally. Black and Latin theologies became co-partners in their identification of the gospel with the liberation of the poor, although one emphasized racism and the other classism. A similar partnership occurred with black, African, and Asian theologians regarding the importance of culture in defining theology.

In black theologians' dialogue with Third World theologians, the striking difference between the theologies of the poor and the theologies of the rich became very clear to us. As long as our dialogue was confined to North American whites who oppressed blacks and the European theologians whom our oppressors venerated, our understanding of the theological task was determined too much by our reactions to white racism in the United States. African, Asian, and Latin American theologians enlarged our vision by challenging us to do theology from a global perspective of oppression. Third World theologians urged us to analyze racism in relation to international capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, world poverty, classism, and sexism. For the first time, black theologians began to seriously consider socialism as an alternative to capitalism. We began to see the connections between the black ghettos in the United States and poverty in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, between the rising unemployment among blacks and other poor people in the U.S. and the exploitation of the labor of Third World peoples, and between the racist practices of white churches of North America and Europe and the activities of their missionaries in the Third World. These discoveries deeply affected our political and theological vision, and we began to see clearly that we could not do theology in isolation from our struggling brothers and sisters in the Third World. As oppressors band themselves together in order to keep the poor of the world in poverty, the world's poor must enter into political and theological solidarity if they expect to create a movement of liberation that is capable of breaking the chains of oppression.

Early in our dialogue, black and Third World theologians realized the importance of building a common theological movement of liberation. Although we experience several differences with each other (especially with Latins during the early stages of our dialogue regarding race and class analyses), our mutual commitment to do theology in solidarity with the poor held us together. We had too much in common to allow our differences to separate us. Furthermore, it became increasingly clear that our differences were largely due to a difference in contexts and to our mutual internalization of the lies that our oppressors had told us about each other. After black and Third World theologians' nearly seven years of dialogue under the auspices of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), including five major conferences, our differences have diminished considerably, and our similarities have increased to the extent that we are now engaged in the exciting task of creating a Third World theology of liberation that we all can support.¹¹

When the question is asked, "how do we do theology?", black and Third World theologians agree that theology is not the first act but

rather the second. Although our Latin American brothers and sisters, with the use of Marxist class analysis, were the first to explicate this methodological point,¹² it was already present and now re-affirmed in all our theologies.¹³ The first act is both a religio-cultural affirmation and a political commitment on behalf of the liberation of the poor and voiceless people of our continents. Our cultural identity and political commitment are worth more than a thousand textbooks of theology. That is why we do not talk about theology as the first order of business in EATWOT. Rather our first concern is with the quality of commitments that each of us has made and will make for those about whom and with whom we claim to do theology. We contend that we know what people believe by what they do and not by what they say in their creeds, conference statements, or theological textbooks.

Praxis (i.e., a reflective political action that includes cultural identity) comes before theology in any formal sense. Therefore, the initial motivation that compels us to do theology is not our desire to place books in university and seminary libraries for professors and their graduate students. On the contrary, our reason for making theology arises from our experience in the ghettos, villages, and churches of the poor in our countries. We do not believe that it is necessary for our people to remain poor. Something must be done about the misery of our people. Doing and saying are therefore bound together so that the meaning of what one says can only be validated by what one does. Theology for us is critical reflection upon a prior religio-cultural affirmation and political commitment to be in solidarity with the victims of our continents.

Because the starting point of black and Third World theologies is defined by a prior cultural affirmation and political commitment to be in solidarity with the poor, our theologies bear the names that reflect our affirmations and commitments. We call our theologies black, African, Hispanic-American, Asian, Red, Latin American, minjung, black feminist, and a host of other names that still sound strange to persons whose theological knowledge has been confined to European and white North American theologies. The identities of our theologies are determined by the human and divine dimensions of reality to which we are attempting to bear witness. We do not begin our theology with a reflection on divine revelation as if the God of our faith is separate from the suffering of our people. We do not believe that revelation is a deposit of fixed doctrines or an objective Word of God that is then applied to the human situation. On the contrary, we contend that there is no truth outside of or beyond the concrete historical events in which people are engaged as agents. Truth is found in the histories, cultures, and

religions of our peoples. Our focus on social and religio-cultural analyses separates our theological enterprise from the progressive and abstract theologies of Europe and North America. It also illuminates the reasons why orthopraxis in contrast to orthodoxy has become for many of us the criterion of theology.¹⁴

Although black and Third World theologians have been accused of reducing theology to ideology by many European and North American critics, that criticism is misplaced because it camouflages the human character of all theologies and particularly the ideological option for the rich that our critics have made. Unlike our critics, we do not claim to be neutral in our theology, because the enormity of the suffering of our people demands that we choose for their liberation and against the structures of oppression. We cannot let the people who support the structures of oppression define what theology is. On this point, black theologians identify with the way Malcolm X expressed it: "Don't let anybody who is oppressing us ever lay the ground rules. Don't go by their game, don't play the game by their rules. Let them know that this is a new game, and we've got new rules."¹⁵ The dominant theologians of Europe and North America want the same theological rules because they made them, and their rules will help to keep the world as it is -- whites controlling blacks, men dominating women, and the rich nations keeping the poor nations dependent. But what most European and North American whites find difficult to understand is that we are living in a new world situation, and this requires a new way of making theology. Again, I like the way Malcolm put it:

The time that we're living in . . . and . . . are facing now is not an era where one who is oppressed is looking toward the oppressor to give him some system or form of logic or reason. What is logical to the oppressor isn't logical to the oppressed. And what is reason to the oppressor isn't reason to the oppressed. The black people in this country are beginning to realize that what sounds reasonable to those who exploit us doesn't sound reasonable to us. There just has to be a new system of reason and logic devised by us who are at the bottom, if we want to get some results in this struggle that is called 'the Negro revolution'.¹⁶

In EATWOT, black and Third World theologians have been attempting to develop together a new way of making theology. In contrast to the dominant theologies of Europe and North America that are largely defined by their responses to the European enlightenment and the problem of the unbeliever that arose from it, our theological enterprise focuses on Europe's and

North America's invasion of the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America inaugurating the slave trade, colonization, and neo-colonialism. Our primary theological question is not how can we believe in God in view of modern, western confidence in reason, science and technology that seem to exclude the necessity for faith in God. Rather our theological problem arises from our encounter of God in the experience of the misery of the poor. How can we speak about Jesus' death on the cross without first speaking about the death of people? How can the poor of our countries achieve worth as human beings in a world that has attempted to destroy our cultures and religions? The chief contradiction out of which our theologies achieve their distinctiveness is the problem of the non-person. That is why our most important conversational partners are not philosophers of metaphysics and other socially disinterested intellectuals in the university; we are primarily interested in talking with social scientists and political activists who are engaged in the liberation of the poor.



Our theological problem arises from our encounter of God in the experience of the misery of the poor.

Black and Third World

Theologians' concern about the oppressed person forced us to establish links with the communities of the poor, and we experienced in their ecclesial life something more than a routine gathering of like-minded people. In poor people's worship-life is revealed a knowledge of themselves that cannot be destroyed by the structures that oppress them. The liberating character of their spirituality can be seen in the way poor people's faith in God evolves out of their cultural and political aspirations. It can be observed in the Basic Christian Communities of Latin America, the black and Hispanic churches of North America, the indigenous churches and traditional religions of Africa, and in the religious life of Asia. In their worship, the God of grace and judgment meets the poor and transforms their personhood from nobody to somebody and bestows upon them the power and courage to struggle for

justice. Worship, therefore, is not primarily an expression of the individual's private relationship with God. It is rather a community happening, an eschatological invasion of God into the gathered community of victims, empowering them with "the divine Spirit from on high," "to keep on keeping on" even though the odds might appear to be against them. In the collective presence of the poor at worship, God recreates them as a liberated community who must bring freedom to the oppressed of the land. Black and Third World theologies are being created out of poor people's ecclesial and religious life, and they seek to interpret the God encountered in their religio-cultural and political struggles to overcome Euro-American domination.

It has been within the context of the churches and the religions of the poor that black and Third World theologies have begun to re-read the Bible. In this re-reading many of us began to speak of the "hermeneutical privilege of the poor" and of "God's bias toward the poor." Although Latin theologians have done more exegetical work to demonstrate the biblical option for the poor than others,¹⁷ a similar concern is shared by most Third World theologians. Suh Nam-Dong, an interpreter of the minjung theology of South Korea, may be quoted as an example:

Theological activities do not end with the exposition of biblical texts on salvation or liberation of people by God. In the Bible, the Exodus, the activities of the prophets, and the event of the Cross offer new insights, but these texts ought to be rediscovered and re-interpreted in the context of the human struggle for historical and political liberation today.¹⁸

While acknowledging that the distinctiveness of black and Third World theologies is primarily defined by their particular contexts, their method of making theology may be summarized with the following emphases.

1. Black and Third World theologians make theology in complex religio-cultural contexts and with the political commitment to liberate poor people from oppression. Theology then is reflection upon the meaning of God in solidarity with the poor people who are struggling to overcome cultural and political domination. The acid test of any theological truth is found in whether it aids the victims in their struggle to overcome their victimization. There are no abstract, objective truths that are applicable for all times and situations. Truth is concrete, and it is inseparable from the oppressed who are struggling for freedom.

2. Because the liberation of our people is the central motivation for us to engage in the theological enterprise, the second element of our method is social analysis. Social analysis is bringing to light that which is hidden. It is unmasking untruth so that truth can be seen in a clear light. Black and Third World theologians do not believe that the work of theology can be done unless the truth is known about the systems of domination. Racism, sexism, colonialism, capitalism, and militarism must be comprehensively analyzed so that these demons can be destroyed. We agree with Karl Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." In our use of the critical tools of the social sciences, as well as religio-cultural analyses, black and Third World theologians have been attempting to make theologies of liberation rather than theologies of domestication.

3. Through a political commitment that is informed by social and cultural analyses, a new hermeneutical situation is created. The Bible is no longer a mere ancient document whose meaning can only be uncovered by the historical criticism of biblical experts. Political commitment, informed by social analysis provides an angle of vision that enables us to re-interpret the scripture and thus bring to light that message which European and North American biblical exegetes had covered up.

When the Bible is read in the community of the poor, it is not understood by them as a deposit of doctrines or of revealed truths about God. Rather it becomes a living book that tells the story of God's dealings with God's people. Its importance as a source for creating theology cannot be overstated for black and Third World theologians. Even feminist and South African theologians, who question its authority (largely because of its sexist and racist misuses), do not ignore the Bible.¹⁹ They wrestle with it, refusing to allow an abstract biblical authority, written by men and interpreted by whites to negate the authority of their own experience. God, they insist, cannot be less than the human experience of liberation from oppression. We must not allow an abstract Word of God to usurp God's Word as Spirit who empowers people to be who they are -- fully human in search of the highest beauty, love, and joy.

4. The meaning of the gospel that is derived from our re-reading of the Bible cannot be communicated with old European and white North American theological concepts. The truth derived from our people's struggles must be communicated through the histories and cultures of our people. Truth is embedded in the stories, songs, dances, sermons, paintings, and sayings of our people. Since many of us have learned how to do theology in European and North American universities and seminaries,

we have had to be converted to a radically new way of doing theology. How do we make theology using the history and culture of our people? What method is appropriate for these sources? The answer to this question is not clear to many of us, and that is why several EATWOT members wish to spend the next three to five years working on this methodological problem.

Because black and Third World theologians have been doing theology for a short time and doing it together even less, we do not have a fully developed method for making theology. These points represent my attempt to listen to what we have been saying to each other in our search to build a Third World theology that is derived from the religio-cultural and political struggles of our people to overcome Euro-American domination.



FOOTNOTES

1. For an account of black theology in South Africa, see Basil Moore (ed.), Black Theology: The South African Voice, C. Hurst & Co. 1973; Allan Boesak, Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Power (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY), 1976.

2. For an account of this bus boycott, see Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom (Harper, New York), 1958.

3. The best general history of the black church is Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism (Orbis Books, rev. ed., 1983). See also Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Black Struggle of Freedom in America (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 1981.

4. Black Religion (Beacon, Boston, 1964), pp. 142-143.

5. The best source for an introduction to Malcolm X's nationalist views is his Autobiography (1964).

6. The best analysis of black power is Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (Random House, 1967).

7. This statement is found in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone (ed.), Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979 (Orbis, 1979). This is the most informative single volume on black theology.

8. A Black Theology of Liberation (Lippincott, 1970), p.17.

9. See especially Jacquelyn Grant, "Black Theology and Black Women" and Pauli Murray, "Black Theology and Feminist Theology: A Comparative View" in G. Wilmore and J. Cone (eds.), Black Theology: A Documentary History, pp. 418-433 and 398-417. See also the important essay by Theresa Hoover, "Black Women and the Black Churches: Triple Jeopardy" in the same anthology, pp. 377-388.

10. An important account of black theology's contact with Third World theologies is found in G. Wilmore and J. Cone (eds.), Black Theology: A Documentary History, pp. 445-608. Black theologians have been involved in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians' dialogues since its organizing meeting in Tanzania (1976). Since Tanzania, dialogues have been held in Ghana (1977), Sri Lanka (1979), Brazil (1980), and India (1981). An account of these meetings have been published by Orbis Books: Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella (eds), The Emergent Gospel (1978); Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (eds), African Theology en Route (1979); Virginia Fabella (ed.), Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity (1980); Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (eds.), The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities (1981); Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (eds.), Irruption of The Third World (1983). For an interpretation of black theology's dialogue with African, Asian, and Latin theologies, see my "A Black American Perspective on the Future of African Theology" in African Theology En Route; "A Black American Perspective on the Asian Search for a Full Humanity" in Asia's Struggle For A Full Humanity; "From Geneva to Sao Paulo: A Dialogue Between Black Theology and Latin American Liberation Theology" in The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities; "Reflections from the Perspectives of U.S. Blacks" in Irruption of the Third World.

11. Our first efforts to transcend the particularities of our respective continents and to create a Third World theology of liberation occurred at the New Delhi, India conference (1981). See especially Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (eds.), Irruption of the Third World.

12. The classic description of this methodological point is found in Gustavo Gutierrez: "Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows; it is a second step. . . . The pastoral activity of the Church does not flow as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not produce pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it". (A Theology of Liberation, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1973, p.11.).

13. Black Theology emerged as a reflection upon the civil rights and black power movements. African theology's origin can be located as early as the 1950's and it was inseparable from the movement toward nationhood on that continent. A similar happening occurred earlier on the continent of Asia. An analagous comment can be made about feminist and other forms of liberation theologies as well. The distinctiveness of Latin theology is its careful formulation of this methodological point with the use of Marx's philosophy.

14. Again Latin Americans have been the most articulate in the formulation of this point regarding orthopraxis. See G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 10.

15. Malcolm X, By Any Means Necessary, edited by George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 155.

16. Archie Epps (ed.), The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard (New York: William Morrow, 1968), p. 133.

17. See especially, José Miranda, Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974) and his Being and the Messiah: The Message of St. John, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977); Elsa Tamez, Bible of the Oppressed (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis 1982).

18. "Towards a Theology of Han" in Kim Yong Bock (ed.), Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History (Singapore: Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), pp. 53-54. A further explication of this point is made by Cyris Hee Suk Moon, "An Old Testament Understanding of Minjung and Ahn Byung Mu, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark" in Ibid. For black theology's use

of the Bible, see my God of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury, 1975), especially chapter 4 - 7. For African theologians view of the Bible, see Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (eds.), Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1969).

19. The questioning of the authority of the Bible was sharply expressed by several South African and feminist theologians at EATWOT's Geneva Conference (January 1983). While the attitude of many feminist theologians are well-known, the biblical questioning of South African theologians was new to me. Some North American feminists reject the Bible and Christianity as incurably sexist. For a variety of perspectives on white North American feminist theology, see Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (eds.), Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

It is important to note that many Third World women theologians of Asia, Africa, and Latin America do not like the term "feminist" as a description of their theological work. They view it as western and thus not fully accountable to their cultural and political aspirations. They do, however, affirm the importance of women's experience in making theology. See especially Amba Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies" in V. Fabella and S. Torres (eds.) Irruption of the Third World, pp. 193-200. While black North American women do not reject the term feminist, they are not as negative in their attitude toward the Bible and Jesus as are many white feminists.