

Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God
"Sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth."



What is Black Liberation Theology?

By Anthony B. Bradley

(This is part 1 of 3)

What is Black liberation theology anyway? Barack Obama's former pastor, Jeremiah Wright catapulted black liberation theology onto a national stage, when America discovered Trinity United Church of Christ. Understanding the background of the movement might give better clarity into Wright's recent vitriolic preaching. A clear definition of Black theology was first given formulation in 1969 by the National Committee of Black Church Men in the midst of the civil-rights movement:

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

In the 1960s, Black churches began to focus their attention beyond helping Blacks cope with national racial discrimination particularly in urban areas.

The notion of "Blackness" is not merely a reference to skin color, but rather is a symbol of oppression that can be applied to all

persons of color who have a history of oppression (except Whites, of course). So in this sense, as Wright notes, "Jesus was a poor black man" because he lived in oppression at the hands of "rich White people." The overall emphasis of Black liberation theology is the Black struggle for liberation from various forms of "White racism" and oppression.

James Cone, the chief architect of black liberation theology in his book *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), develops Black theology as a system. In this new formulation, Christian theology is a theology of liberation--"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," writes Cone. Black consciousness and the Black experience of oppression orient black liberation theology--i.e., one of victimization from White oppression.

One of the tasks of Black theology, says Cone, is to analyze the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ in light of the experience of oppressed Blacks. For Cone, no theology is Christian theology unless it arises from oppressed communities and interprets Jesus' work as that of liberation. Christian theology is understood in terms of systemic and structural relationships between two main groups: victims (the oppressed) and victimizers (oppressors). In Cone's context, writing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the great event of Christ's liberation was freeing African Americans from the centuries-old tyranny of White racism and White oppression.

American White theology, which Cone never clearly defines, is charged with having failed to help Blacks in the struggle for liberation. Black theology exists because "White religionists" failed to relate the gospel of Jesus to the pain of being Black in a White racist society.

For Black theologians White Americans do not have the ability to recognize the humanity in persons of color, Blacks need their own theology to affirm their identity in terms of a reality that is anti-Black--Blackness stands for all victims of White oppression. "White theology," when formed in isolation from the Black experience, becomes a theology of White oppressors, serving as divine sanction from criminal acts committed against Blacks. Cone argues that even those White theologians who try to connect theology to Black suffering rarely utter a word that is relevant to the Black experience in America. White theology is not Christian theology at all. There is but one guiding principle of Black theology: an unqualified commitment to the Black community as that community seeks to define its existence in the light of God's liberating work in the world.

As such, Black theology is a survival theology because it helps Blacks navigate White dominance in American culture. In Cone's view, Whites consider Blacks animals, outside of the realm of humanity, and attempted to destroy Black identity through racial assimilation and integration programs--as if Blacks have no legitimate existence apart from Whiteness. Black theology is the theological expression of a people deprived of social and political power. God is not the God of White religion but the God of Black existence. In Cone's understanding, truth is not objective but subjective--a personal experience of the Ultimate in the midst of degradation.

The echoes of Cone's theology bled through, the now infamous, anti-Hilary excerpt by Rev. Wright. Clinton is among the oppressing class ("rich White people") and is incapable of understanding oppression ("ain't never been

called a n-gg-r") but Jesus knows what it was like because he was "a poor black man" oppressed by "rich White people." While black liberation theology is not main stream in most black churches, many pastors in Wright's generation are burdened by Cone's categories which laid the foundation for many to embrace Marxism and a distorted self-image of perpetual "victim" which we be explored in the next two columns.

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New Note: Islamic Infiltration of Congress

The latest revelation that a former Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) official has been indicted for arranging a trip supportive of Saddam Hussein for three Democratic Congressmen in October 2002 is an indication of just how far and deep the Islamic covert operations have penetrated the United States. This indictment of Muthanna al Hanooti for arranging and paying for a trip by the congressmen to Hussein's Iraq in exchange for some two million barrels of oil is just yet another CAIR or former CAIR official being brought up on terror-related charges. But the indictment speaks volumes about the three congressmen who were not named in the indictment and how Islam has found allies in Congress.

Congressmen Jim McDermott of Washington, David Bonior of Michigan and Mike Thompson of California were not named in the indictment and are saying that they had no idea that the propaganda trip was funded by Hussein's Iraq Intelligence operation. Irrespective, these congressmen served as mouthpieces for the Hussein propaganda machine while they were in Baghdad prior to the U.S. invasion. McDermott, being interviewed from Baghdad by George Stephanopolis, said he believed that Bush was misleading the American people about Iraq

and that Saddam Hussein should be taken at his word.

At the time, commentator George Will remarked "Why Saddam Hussein doesn't pay commercial time for that advertisement for his policy, I do not know." As it turns out, apparently Hussein did pay for it. And these congressmen can claim all day long that they didn't know that Hussein bought and paid for their views to be heard around the world, which they will. Americans may never know the truth from these elected officials. What Americans do know is that Islamic factions in the United States are using money to buy influence and public propaganda from U.S. Congressmen who allow themselves to be used because of their anti-American sympathies.

Just how far and deep CAIR and other Islamic front groups have penetrated the American government is not currently known, but this is just one example of how sympathetic elected officials are used to exploit the citizens who elected them. Americans need to wake up and scrutinize their candidates before they elect them. And they should not be reelected when these evils are revealed. McDermott and others have worked against the nation and Christians in Congress by supporting anti-Christian and pro-abortion, pro-homosexual legislation. And now it is revealed they are mouthpieces paid for by Islam. Proverbs 27:6 says, "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Indeed, especially when the enemy is within.

Some Pertinent Definitions:

contemplative spirituality: a belief system that uses ancient mystical practices to induce altered states of consciousness (the silence) and is rooted in mysticism and the occult but often wrapped in Christian terminology; the premise of contemplative spirituality is pantheistic (God is all) and panentheistic (God is *in* all).

spiritual formation: a movement that has provided a platform and a channel through which contemplative prayer is entering the church. Find spiritual formation being used,

and in nearly every case you will find contemplative spirituality. In fact, contemplative spirituality is the heartbeat of the spiritual formation movement.

Electric Bushes and Trees

Job 14:7, 9

For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease...yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.

Is it silly to speak of plants anticipating a good watering or is it naive to think of a plant anticipating spring? Scientists are learning that although plants do not have a nervous system, they do use electrical signals to respond to their surroundings - and sometimes they respond just like human beings!

Most of us are familiar with the Venus flytrap, which responds very quickly when the trigger hairs are touched. Other plants are "sensitive" and close their leaflets when touched. One mimosa tree was so disturbed by its keeper that it shed all its leaves, seemingly, as one writer put it, having a nervous breakdown. Tomato plants will wilt to conserve water, but if they are overly disturbed, they will wilt even though they don't need to conserve water.

Scientists have found that cells within plants communicate with each other through electrical signals in a similar way to our nervous systems. Such responses are very unexpected in what evolutionists consider simple plants.

However, if we see the creation as the work of a caring Creator Who endowed all of His creation with its own form of emotional sense, then even these limited plant responses are not unreasonable reflections of their Creator. The fact that we can recognize emotional response will hopefully enable us to see the importance of His love.

References: "Earthly sprites," October, Science 82, pp.88 & 90