

Excerpts from Black Liberation Theology

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www.meetup.com/stop-obama/

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY - In the table (starting on page 3) are some rather shocking excerpts from James H. Cone's first books on Black Liberation Theology. Barack Obama's self-described spiritual mentor, Jeremiah Wright, said in a nationally-televised, interview by Sean Hannity (see link below) that Black Liberation Theology is the basis of the belief system that he taught at Trinity United Church of Christ.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNTGRL0OJWQ>

J. Wright has been not just a proponent, but the leading "minister" in the US who teaches Black Liberation Theology.

This is a racist, black supremacist and revolutionary belief system, which sanctions the violent overthrow of constitutional democracy in the United States and world revolution against those countries that are seen as part of the global system of "white oppression." Black Liberation Theology holds that the all whites are collectively guilty of past crimes against the black race and that the governmental and traditional religious institutions in the US are thoroughly and irreconcilably racist and 'satanic' and for this reason must be destroyed, by violence, if necessary. These are some of the basic tenets of Black Liberation Theology, which J. Wright taught Barack Obama. These ideas are canonized in the foundation books written by James H. Cone, which some Black Nationalists consider to be scripture.

Black Liberation Theology holds that there is no spiritual heaven and the black race will receive their reward on earth. So, it is really more of a political and social movement with a mystical sense of destiny than a traditional religion based in spiritual beliefs. It is a part of the broader Black Nationalist movement and shares many core beliefs with the rest of the Black Nationalist movement. Strange as it may sound, parallels to Nazism have been noted for many decades, including by the infamous Nazi mystic, Alfred Rosenberg, who alluded to the early Black Nationalist movement in America in the 1930's as a kindred racist movement in his book, *The Myth of the 20th Century*.

Black Liberation Theology is a black identity religion and is also similar (in reverse) to a racist theology developed by the Nazis, ironically called "Positives Christentum" (Positive Christianity). A version of Positive Christianity is still used in America by the Nazi "Christian Identity Movement."

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Another tenet of Black Liberation Theology is the belief that a “black messiah,” who is living today, will destroy “white society” and overturn American governmental/religious institutions and thereby create a utopian millennial theocratic “kingdom” on Earth, which will not be a spiritual event, as many Christians think of these concepts, but a historical, political and social event. The “kingdom” is envisioned as a physical government. As a means to this end, any actions by blacks, such as burning, looting and killing of innocents are sanctioned. Few white people will receive reprieve, according to the doctrine, only those willing to give up their lives in the struggle against the white “Antichrist.” Even liberal whites are considered to be no better than George Wallace, the well-known racist and one-time governor of Alabama.

In general, Black Liberation Theology is similar to the belief systems of many historic messianic millennial cults. Black Nationalist leader, Louis Farrakhan, implied at his annual, Savior’s Day conference in February of 2008 (see link) that Obama is that black messiah prophesied by the broader Black Nationalist movement, which has spawned several cults.

<http://www.box.net/shared/static/cia1s2b2p9.wmv>

It is absurd to assume, as it has been portrayed in the media, that Barack Obama was a leading member of this very peculiar sect for 20 years, but did not have the faintest idea of the fundamental cult-like, racist beliefs of the group. It is much more reasonable to assume that he is a believer and an adherent of this belief system, who distanced himself from it just for purposes of political expediency. Reasonable people would flee such an organization, as soon as they got a hint of its racist and revolutionary beliefs. Whether he believes it or not, though, this information should have been reported to the public, so that they can have an informed opinion.

The question is really, then, why has this not been brought out by the news media and opposition politicians? Why has the public not been completely informed about Obama’s seditious and subversive religious beliefs? Barack Obama was never properly vetted by opposition politicians or the news media. This is an absolutely stunning dereliction of the responsibilities of the media as well as politicians of both parties. It seems clear that many must have been in possession of this information, but simply withheld it for whatever reason, because it is documented in books which are easily available from common retailers. It is unconscionable that the media did not report this in full detail to the American public and that politicians of both parties kept largely silent about the extent of the extremist beliefs of Obama’s church in the presidential campaign of 2008.

The media and politicians of both parties must be held responsible for what amounts to a gigantic fraud perpetrated on the American public. Such racism, anti-American hate and bigotry should not be tolerated in the background of a candidate for the presidency. The news media should report the facts as they are and they should correct this grotesque misrepresentation as soon as possible.

From “A Black Theology of Liberation” by James H. Cone (1970)

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, Printed June 2008

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xii	<p>Opressors never like to hear the truth in a socio-political context defined by their lies. That was why a <i>Black Theology of Liberation</i> was often rejected as racism in reverse by many whites, particularly theologians. For example, Father Andrew M. Greeley referred to my perspective on black theology as a "Nazi mentality," "a theology filled with hatred for white people and the assumption of a moral superiority of black over white." White reactions to black theology never disturbed me too much, because Malcolm X had prepared me for them. "With skillful manipulating of the press," said Malcolm, "they're able to make the victim look like the criminal and the criminal look like the victim."</p>
9	<p>Because white theology has consistently preserved the integrity of the community of oppressors, I conclude that it is not Christian theology at all.' When we speak about God as related to humankind in the black-white struggle, Christian theology can only mean black theology, a theology that speaks of God as related to black liberation. If we agree that the gospel is the proclamation of God's liberating activity, that the Christian community is an oppressed community that participates in that activity and that theology is the discipline arising from within the Christian community as it seeks to develop adequate language for its relationship to God's liberation, then black theology is Christian theology.</p> <p>It is unthinkable that oppressors could identify with oppressed existence and thus say something relevant about God's liberation of the oppressed. In order to be Christian theology, white theology must cease being white theology and become black theology by denying whiteness as an acceptable form of human existence and affirming blackness as God's intention for humanity.</p>
10	<p>Black theology will not spend too much time trying to answer its critics, because it is accountable only to the black community. Refusing to be separated from that community, black theology seeks to articulate the theological self-determination of blacks, providing some ethical and religious categories for the black revolution in America. It maintains that all acts which participate in the destruction of white racism are Christian, the liberating deeds of God. All acts which impede the struggle of black self-determination-black power-are anti-Christian, the work of Satan.</p>
11	<p>That white America has issued a death warrant for being black is evident in the white brutality inflicted on black persons. Though whites may deny it, the ghettos of this country say otherwise. Masters always pretend that they are not masters, insisting that they are only doing what is best for society as a whole, including the slaves. This is, of course, the standard rhetoric of an oppressive society. Blacks know better. They know that whites have only one purpose: the destruction of everything which is not white.</p> <p>In this situation, blacks are continually asking, often unconsciously, "When will the white overlord decide that blackness in any form must be exterminated?" The genocide of Amerindians is a reminder to the black community that white oppressors are capable of pursuing a course of complete annihilation of everything black. And</p>

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	<p>the killing and the caging of black leaders make us think that black genocide has already begun.</p>
12	<p>It is in this situation that black theology seeks to speak the word of God. It says that the God who was revealed in the life of oppressed Israel and who came to us in the incarnate Christ and is present today as the Holy Spirit has made a decision about the black condition. God has chosen to make the black condition God's condition! It is a continuation of the incarnation in twentieth-century America. God's righteousness will liberate the oppressed of this nation and "all flesh shall see it together." It is this certainty that makes physical life less than ultimate and thus enables blacks courageously to affirm blackness and its liberating power as ultimate. When persons feel this way, a revolution is in the making.</p> <p>With the assurance that God is on our side, we can begin to make ready for the inevitable-the decisive encounter between black and white existence. White appeals to "wait and talk it over" are irrelevant when children are dying and men and women are being tortured. We will not let whitey cool this one with his pious love ethic but will seek to enhance our hostility, bringing it to its full manifestation. Black survival is at stake here, and we blacks must define and assert the conditions necessary for our being-in-the-world. Only we can decide how much we can endure from white racists. And as we make our decision in the midst of life and death, being and nonbeing, the role of black theology is to articulate this decision by pointing to the revelation of God in the black liberation struggle.</p>
20	<p>The mind must be freed from the values of an oppressive society. It involves prophetic condemnation of society so that God's word can be clearly distinguished from the words of human beings. Such a task is especially difficult in America, a nation demonically deceived about what is good, true, and beautiful. The oppression in this country is sufficiently camouflaged to allow many Americans to believe that things are not really too bad. White theologians, not having felt the sting of oppression, will find it most difficult to criticize this nation, for the condemnation of America entails their own condemnation.</p> <p>Black thinkers are in a different position. They cannot be black <i>and</i> identified with the powers that be. To be black is to be committed to destroying everything this country loves and adores. Creativity and passion are possible when one stands where the black person stands, the one who has visions of the future because the present is unbearable. And the black person will cling to that future as a means of passionately rejecting the present.</p>
25	<p>The black experience is the feeling one has when attacking the enemy of black humanity by throwing a Molotov cocktail into a white-owned building and watching it go up in flames. We know, of course, that getting rid of evil takes something more than burning down buildings, but one must start somewhere.</p> <p>Being black is a beautiful experience. It is the sane way of living in an insane environment. Whites do not understand it; they can only catch glimpses of it in sociological reports and historical studies. The black experience is possible only for black persons.</p>
28	<p>Blacks need to see some correlations between divine salvation and black culture. For</p>

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	<p>too long Christ has been pictured as a blue-eyed honky. Black theologians are right: we need to dehonkify him and thus make him relevant to the black condition.</p>
30	<p>For black theology, revelation is not just a past event or a contemporary event in which it is difficult to recognize the activity of God. <i>Revelation is a black event -- it is what blacks are doing about their liberation.</i> I have spoken of the black experience, black history, and black culture as theological sources because they are God at work liberating the oppressed.</p>
31	<p>It is indeed the <i>biblical</i> witness that says that God is a God of liberation, who speaks to the oppressed and abused, and assures them that divine righteousness will vindicate their suffering. It is the Bible that tells us that God became human in Jesus Christ so that the kingdom of God would make freedom a reality for all human beings. This is the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus. The human being no longer has to be a slave to anybody, but must rebel against all the principalities and powers which make human existence subhuman. It is in this light that black theology is affirmed as a twentieth-century analysis of God's work in the world.</p>
37	<p>This is an awesome task for black theology. It is so easy to sacrifice one for the other. There is a tendency, on the one hand, to deny the relevance of Jesus Christ for black liberation, especially in view of white prostitution of the gospel in the interests of slavery and white supremacy. One can be convinced that Jesus Christ is the savior and God of whites and thus can have nothing to do with black self-determination. And yet, what other name is there? The name of Jesus has a long history in the black community. Blacks know the source from which the name comes, but they also know the reality to which that name refers. Despite its misuse in the white community (even the devil is not prohibited from adopting God's name), the black community is convinced of the reality of Jesus Christ's presence and his total identification with their suffering. They never believed that slavery was his will. Every time a white master came to his death, blacks believed that it was the work of God inflicting just judgment in recompense for the suffering of God's people. Black theology cannot ignore this spirit in the black community if it is going to win the enthusiasm of the community it serves.</p>
38	<p>Black theology must realize that the white Jesus has no place in the black community, and it is our task to destroy him. We must replace him with the black messiah, as Albert Cleage would say, a messiah who sees his existence as inseparable from black liberation and the destruction of white racism.</p>
38	<p>What does the name (Christ) mean when black people are burning buildings and white people are responding with riot-police control? Whose side is Jesus on? The norm of black theology, which identifies revelation as a manifestation of the black Christ, says that he (Christ) is those very blacks whom white society shoots and kills. The contemporary Christ is in the black ghetto, making decisions about white existence and black liberation.</p> <p>Of course, this interpretation of theology will seem strange to most whites, and even some blacks will wonder whether it is really true that Christ is black. But the truth of the statement is not dependent on white or black affirmation, but on the reality of Christ himself who is presently breaking the power of white racism. This and this alone is the</p>

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	norm for black-talk about God.
46	<p>When we apply this view of God's revelation to the existing situation of blacks in America, we immediately realize that the black revolution in America is the revelation of God. Revelation means black power-that is, the "complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary." It is blacks telling whites where to get off, and a willingness to accept the consequences.</p> <p>God's revelation has nothing to do with white suburban ministers admonishing their congregation to be nice to black persons. It has nothing to do with voting for open occupancy or holding a memorial service for Martin Luther King, Jr. God's revelation means a radical encounter with the structures of power which King fought against to his death. It is what happens in a black ghetto when the ghettoized decide to strike against their enemies. In a word, God's revelation means liberation-nothing more, nothing less.</p>
51	<p>Black theology does not deny that all persons are sinners. What it denies is white reflections on the sin of blacks. Only blacks can speak about sin in a black perspective and apply it to black and white persons. The white vision of reality is too distorted and renders whites incapable of talking to the oppressed about their shortcomings.</p> <p>According to black theology, the sin of the oppressed is not that they are responsible for their own enslavement-far from it. Their sin is that of trying to "understand" enslavers, to "love" them on their own terms. As the oppressed now recognize their situation in the light of God's revelation, they know that they should have killed their oppressors instead of trying to "love" them.</p>
55	<p>The reality of God is presupposed in black theology. Black theology is an attempt to analyze the nature of that reality, asking what we can say about the nature of God in view of God's selfdisclosure in biblical history and the oppressed condition of black Americans.</p> <p>If we take the question seriously, it becomes evident that there is no simple answer to it. To speak of God and God's participation in the liberation of the oppressed of the land is a risky venture in any society. But if the society is racist and also uses God-language as an instrument to further the cause of human humiliation, then the task of authentic theological speech is even more dangerous and difficult. It is <i>dangerous</i> because the true prophet of the gospel of God must become both "anti-Christian" and "unpatriotic." It is impossible to confront a racist society, with the meaning of human existence grounded in commitment to the divine, without at the same time challenging the very existence of the national structure and all its institutions, especially the established churches. All national institutions represent the interests of society as a whole. We live in a nation which is committed to the perpetuation of white supremacy, and it will try to exterminate all who fail to support this ideal. The genocide of the Amerindian is evidence of that fact. Black theology represents that community of blacks who refuse to cooperate in the exaltation of whiteness and the degradation of blackness. It proclaims the reality of the biblical God who is actively destroying everything that is against the manifestation of black human dignity.</p> <p>Because whiteness by its very nature is against blackness, the black prophet is a prophet of national doom. He proclaims the end of the "American Way," for God has stirred the soul of the black community, and now that community will stop at nothing to</p>

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	<p>claim the freedom that is three hundred and fifty years overdue. The black prophet is a rebel with a cause, the cause of over twenty-five million American blacks and all oppressed persons everywhere. It is God's cause because God has chosen the blacks as God's own people. And God has chosen them not for redemptive suffering but for freedom.</p>
59	<p>It is not the task of black theology to remove the influence of the divine in the black community. Its task is to interpret the divine element in the forces and achievements of black liberation. Black theology must retain God-language despite its perils, because the black community perceives its identity in terms of divine presence. Black theology cannot create new symbols independent of the black community and expect blacks to respond. It must stay in the black community and get down to the real issues at hand ("cutting throats" to use LeRoi Jones's phrase) and not waste too much time discussing the legitimacy of religious language.</p> <p>The legitimacy of any language, religious or otherwise, is determined by its usefulness in the struggle for liberation. That the God language of white religion has been used to create a docile spirit among blacks so that whites could aggressively attack them is beyond question. But that does not mean that we cannot kill the white God, so that the presence of the black God can become known in the black-white encounter. The white God is an idol created by racists, and we blacks must perform the iconoclastic task of smashing false images.</p>
61	<p>When black theologians analyze the doctrine of God, seeking to relate it to the emerging black revolution in America, they must be especially careful not to put this new wine (the revelation of God as expressed in black power) into old wineskins (white folk-religion). The black theology view of God must be sharply distinguished from white distortions of God.</p>
62	<p>The goal of black theology is the destruction of <i>everything white</i>, so that blacks can be liberated from alien gods.</p> <p>The God of black liberation will not be confused with a bloodthirsty white idol. Black theology must show that the black God has nothing to do with the God worshiped in white churches whose primary purpose is to sanctify the racism of whites and to daub the wounds of blacks.</p>
63	<p>Because blacks have come to know themselves as <i>black</i>, and because that blackness is the cause of their own love of themselves and hatred of whiteness, the blackness of God is the key to our knowledge of God. The blackness of God, and everything implied by it in a racist society, is the heart of the black theology doctrine of God. There is no place in black theology for a colorless God in a society where human beings suffer precisely because of their color. The black theologian must reject any conception of God which stifles black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience, or God is a God of racism.</p>
65	<p>In contrast to this racist view of God, black theology proclaims God's blackness. Those who want to know who God is and what God is doing must know who black persons are and what they are doing. This does not mean lending a helping hand to the poor and unfortunate blacks of society. It does not mean joining the war on poverty! Such acts are</p>

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	<p>sin offerings that represent a white way of assuring themselves that they are basically "good" persons. Knowing God means being on the side of the oppressed, becoming <i>one with them</i>, and participating in the goal of liberation. <i>We must become black with God!</i></p>
66	<p>...everyone in this country knows, blacks are those who say they are black, regardless of skin color. In the literal sense a black person is anyone who has "even one drop of black blood in his or her veins:"</p> <p>But "becoming black with God" means more than just saying "I am black," if it involves that at all. The question "How can white persons become black?" is analogous to the Philippian jailer's question to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" The implication is that if we work hard enough at it, we can reach the goal. But the misunderstanding here is the failure to see that blackness or salvation (the two are synonymous) is the work of God, not a human work. It is not something we accomplish; it is a gift. That is why Paul and Silas said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."</p> <p><i>To believe</i> is to receive the gift and utterly to reorient one's existence on the basis of, the gift. The gift is so unlike what humans expect that when it is offered and accepted, we become completely new creatures. This is what the Wholly Otherness of God means. God comes to us in God's blackness, which is wholly unlike whiteness. To receive God's revelation is to become black with God by joining God in the work of liberation.</p> <p>Even some blacks will find this view of God hard to handle. Having been enslaved by the God of white racism so long, they will have difficulty believing that God is identified with their struggle for freedom. Becoming one of God's disciples means rejecting whiteness and accepting themselves as they are in all their physical blackness. This is what the Christian view of God means for blacks.</p>
70	<p>Black theology cannot accept a view of God which does not represent God as being for oppressed blacks and thus against white oppressors. Living in a world of white oppressors, blacks have no time for a neutral God. The brutalities are too great and the pain too severe, and this means we must know where God is and what God is doing in the revolution. There is no use for a God who loves white oppressors the same as oppressed blacks. We have had too much of white love, the love that tells blacks to turn the other cheek and go the second mile. What we need is the divine love; as expressed in black power, which is the power of blacks to destroy their oppressors, here and now, by any means at their disposal. Unless God is participating in this holy activity, we must reject God's love.</p>
72	<p>Black theology will accept only a love of God which participates in the destruction of the white oppressor. With Fanon black theology takes literally Jesus' statement, "the last will be first, and the first last:" Black power "is the putting into practice of this sentence.""</p>
73	<p>Righteousness is that side of God's love which expresses itself through black liberation. God makes black what humans have made white. Righteousness is that aspect of God's love which prevents it from being equated with sentimentality. Love is a refusal to accept whiteness. To love is to make a decision against white racism. Because love means that God meets our needs, God's love for white oppressors could only mean wrath-that is, a destruction of their whiteness and a creation of blackness.</p>
74	<p>If God, not whiteness, is the ground of my being, then God is the only source for reference regarding how I should behave in the world. Complete obedience is owed only to God, and every alien loyalty must be rejected. Therefore, as a black person living in a white world that defines human existence according to white inhumanity, I cannot relax</p>

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	<p>and pretend that all is well with black humanity. Rather it is incumbent upon me by the freedom granted by the creator to deny whiteness and affirm blackness as the essence of God.</p> <p>That is why it is necessary to speak of the black revolution rather than reformation. The idea of reformation suggests that there is still something "good" in the system itself, which needs only to be cleaned up a bit. This is a false perception of reality. The system is based on whiteness, and what is necessary is a replacement of whiteness with blackness. God as creator means that oppressed humanity is free to revolutionize society, assured that acts of liberation are the work of God.</p>
82	<p>We know who God is, not because we can move beyond our finiteness but because the transcendent God has become immanent in our history, transforming human events into divine events of liberation. It is the <i>divine</i> involvement in historical events of liberation that makes theology God-centered; but because God participates in the historical liberation of humanity, we can speak of God only in relationship to human history. In this sense, theology is anthropology.</p>
94	<p>This is not intended as a put-down of white young persons who are moving against their elders for one of the first times in American history; and I must say that they do appear to be quite human at times. The positive value of these "unusual" manifestations is their seeming recognition that there is something wrong with carrying on a war in Vietnam and with oppression generally-contrary to the long-standing assumptions of this society. The beginning of freedom is the perception that oppressors are the evil ones, and that we must do something about it.</p>
97	<p>Is it possible to change communities? To change communities involves a change of <i>being</i>. It is a radical movement, a radical reorientation of one's existence in the world. Christianity calls this experience conversion.</p> <p>Certainly if whites expect to be able to say anything relevant to the self-determination of the black community, it will be necessary for them to destroy their whiteness by becoming members of an oppressed community. Whites will be free only when they become new persons-when their white being has passed away and they are created anew in black being. When this happens, they are no longer white but free, and thus capable of making decisions about the destiny of the black community.</p>
101	<p><i>5 Freedom and Blackness.</i> What does freedom mean when we relate it to contemporary America? Because blackness is at once the symbol of oppression and of the certainty of liberation, freedom means an affirmation of blackness. To be free is to be black-that is, identified with the victims of humiliation in human society and a participant in the liberation of oppressed humanity. The free person in America is the one who does not tolerate whiteness but fights against it, knowing that it is the source of human misery. The free person is the black person living in an alien world but refusing to behave according to its expectations.</p> <p>Being free in America means accepting blackness as the only possible way of existing in the world. It means defining one's identity by the marks of oppression. It means rejecting white proposals for peace and reconciliation, saying, "All we know is, we must have justice, not next week but this minute"</p> <p>Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, and Denmark Vesey are examples of free persons. They realized that freedom and death were inseparable. The mythic value of their existence for</p>

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	<p>the black community is incalculable, because they represent the personification of the possibility of <i>being</i> in the midst of <i>nonbeing-the</i> ability to be black in the presence of whiteness. Through them we know that freedom is what happens to blacks when they decide that whitey has gone too far and that it is incumbent upon them as the victims of humiliation to do something about the encroachment of whiteness. Freedom is the black movement of a people getting ready to liberate itself, knowing that it cannot <i>be</i> unless its oppressors <i>cease to be</i>.</p>
107	<p>Most whites, some despite involvement in protests, do believe in "freedom in democracy," and they fight to make the ideals of the Constitution an empirical reality for all. It seems that they believe that, if we just work hard enough at it, this country can be what it ought to be. But it never dawns on these do-gooders that what is wrong with America is not its failure to make the Constitution a reality for all, but rather its belief that persons can affirm whiteness and humanity at the same time. This country was founded for whites and everything that has happened in it has emerged from the white perspective. The Constitution is white, the Emancipation Proclamation is white, the government is white, business is white, the unions are white. What we need is the destruction of whiteness, which is the source of human misery in the world.</p>
121	<p>The blackness of Christ clarifies the definition of him as the <i>Incarinate One</i>. In him God becomes oppressed humanity and thus reveals that the achievement of full humanity is consistent with divine being. The human being was not created to be a slave, and the appearance of God in Christ gives us the possibility of freedom. By becoming a black person, God discloses that blackness is not what the world says it is. Blackness is a manifestation of the being of God in that it reveals that neither divinity nor humanity reside in white definitions but in liberation from captivity.</p> <p>The black Christ is he who threatens the structure of evil as seen in white society, rebelling against it, thereby becoming the embodiment of what the black community knows that it must become. Because he has become black as we are, we now know what black empowerment is. It is blacks determining the way they are going to behave in the world. It is refusing to allow white society to place strictures on black existence as if their having guns mean that blacks are supposed to cool it.</p> <p>Black empowerment is the black community in defiance, knowing that he who has become one of them is far more important than threats from white officials. The black Christ is he who nourishes the rebellious impulse in blacks so that at the appointed time the black community can respond collectively to the white community as a corporate "bad nigger," lashing out at the enemy of humankind.</p>
123	<p>The importance of the concept of the black Christ is that it expresses the <i>concreteness</i> of Jesus' continued presence today. If we do not translate the first-century titles into symbols that are relevant today, then we run the danger that Bultmann is so concerned about: Jesus becomes merely a figure of past history. To make Jesus just a figure of yesterday is to deny the real importance of the preaching of the early church. He is not dead but resurrected and is alive in the world today. Like yesterday, he has taken upon himself the misery of his people, becoming for them what is needed for their liberation. To be a disciple of the black Christ is to become black with him. Looting, burning, or the destruction of white property are not primary concerns. Such matters can only be decided by the oppressed themselves who are seeking to develop their images of the black Christ.</p>

	<p>What is primary is that blacks must refuse to let whites define what is appropriate for the black community. Just as white slaveholders in the nineteenth century said that questioning slavery was an invasion of their property rights, so today they use the same line of reasoning in reference to black self-determination. But Nat Turner had no scruples on this issue; and blacks today are beginning to see themselves in a new image. We believe in the manifestation of the black Christ, and our encounter with him defines our values. This means that blacks are <i>free</i> to do what they have to in order to affirm their humanity.</p>
124	<p>The Kingdom of God and the Black Christ - The appearance of Jesus as the black Christ also means that the black revolution is God's kingdom becoming a reality in America. According to the New Testament, the kingdom is a historical event. It is what happens to persons when their being is confronted with the reality of God's historical liberation of the oppressed. To see the kingdom is to see a happening, and we are thus placed in a situation of decision—we say either yes or no to the liberation struggle.</p> <p>The kingdom is not an attainment of material security, nor is it mystical communion with the divine. It has to do with the <i>quality</i> of ones, existence in which a person realizes that <i>persons</i> are more important than property. When blacks behave as if the values of this world have no significance, it means that they perceive the irruption of God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is a <i>black</i> happening. It is black persons saying no to whiteness, forming caucuses and advancing into white confrontation. It is a beautiful thing to see blacks shaking loose the chains of white approval, and it can only mean that they know that there is a way of living that does not involve the destruction of their personhood. This is the kingdom of God.</p>
125	<p>The kingdom is what God does and repentance arises solely as a response to God's liberation.</p> <p>The event of the kingdom today is the liberation struggle in the black community. It is where persons are suffering and dying for want of human dignity. It is thus incumbent upon all to see the event for what it is—God's kingdom. This is what conversion means. Blacks are being converted because they see in the events around them the coming of the Lord, and will not be scared into closing their eyes to it. Black identity is too important; it is like the pearl of great value, which a person buys only by selling all that he or she has (Matthew 13:44-46).</p> <p>Of course, whites can say that they fail to see the significance of this black phenomenon. But loss of sight is characteristic of the appearance of the kingdom. Not everyone recognizes the person from Nazareth as the incarnate One who came to liberate the human race. Who could possibly imagine that the Holy One of Israel would condescend to the level of a carpenter? Only those with eyes of faith could see that in that person God was confronting the reality of the human condition. There is no other sign save the words and deeds of Jesus himself. If an encounter with him does not convince persons that God is present, then they will never know, except in that awful moment when perfect awareness is fatally bound up with irreversible judgment.</p>
126	<p>That is why Jesus compared the kingdom with a mustard seed and with yeast in dough. Both show a small, apparently insignificant beginning but a radical, revolutionary ending. The seed grows to a large tree, and the bread can feed many hungry persons. So</p>

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	<p>it is with the kingdom; because of its small beginning, some viewers do not readily perceive what is actually happening.</p> <p>The black revolution is a continuation of that small kingdom. Whites do not recognize what is happening, and they are thus unable to deal with it. For most whites in power, the black community is a nuisance-something to be considered only when the natives get restless. But what white America fails to realize is the explosive nature of the kingdom. Although its beginning is small, it will have far-reaching effects not only on the black community but on the white community as well. Now is the time to make decisions about loyalties, because soon it will be too late. Shall we or shall we not join the black revolutionary kingdom?</p>
127	<p>Unfortunately, the post-Civil War black church fell into the white trick of interpreting salvation in terms similar to those of white oppressors. Salvation became white: an objective act of Christ in which God "washes" away our sins in order to prepare us for a new life in heaven. The resurgence of the black church in civil rights and the creation of a black theology represent an attempt of the black community to see salvation in the light of its own earthly liberation.</p> <p>The interpretation of salvation as liberation from bondage is certainly consistent with the biblical view:</p>
128	<p>Today the oppressed are the inhabitants of black ghettos, Amerindian reservations, Hispanic barrios, and other places where whiteness has created misery. To participate in God's salvation is to cooperate with the black Christ as he liberates his people from bondage. Salvation, then, primarily has to do with earthly reality and the injustice inflicted on those who are helpless and poor. To see the salvation of God is to see this people rise up against its oppressors, demanding that justice become a reality now, not tomorrow. It is the oppressed serving warning that they "ain't gonna take no more of this bullshit, but a new day is coming and it ain't going to be like today." The new day is the presence of the black Christ as expressed in the liberation of the black community.</p>
130	<p>Because the church is the community that participates in Jesus Christ's liberating work in history, it can never endorse "law and order" that causes suffering. To do so is to say yes to structures of oppression. Because the church has received the gospel-hint and has accepted what that means for human existence, the church must be a revolutionary community, breaking laws that destroy persons. It believes (with Reinhold Niebuhr) that "comfortable classes may continue to dream of an automatic progress in society. They do not suffer enough from social injustice to recognize its peril in the life of society."</p>
135	<p>Because the work of God is not a superimposed activity but a part of one's existence as a person, pious frauds are caught in a trap. They are rejected because they failed to see that being good is not a societal trait or an extra activity, but a human activity. They are excluded because they used their neighbor as an enhancement of their own religious piety. Had they known that blacks were Jesus, they would have been prepared to relieve their suffering. But that is just the point: there is no way to know in the abstract who is Jesus and who is not. It is not an intellectual question at all. Knowledge of Jesus Christ comes as one participates in human liberation.</p>

From “Black Theology and Black Power” by James H. Cone (1969)

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY (printed 2008)

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xii	<p>God's reality is not bound by one manifestation of the divine in Jesus but can be found wherever people are being empowered to fight for freedom. Life-giving power for the poor and the oppressed is the primary criterion that we must use to judge the adequacy of our theology, not abstract concepts. As Malcolm X put it: "I believe in a religion that believes in freedom. Any time I have to accept a religion that won't let me fight a battle for my people, I say to hell with that religion."</p> <p>Another weakness of <i>Black Theology and Black Power</i> was my failure to link the African-American struggle for liberation in the United States with similar struggles in the Third World. If I had listened more carefully to Malcolm X and Martin King, I might have avoided that error. Both made it unquestionably clear, especially in their speeches against the U.S. government's involvement in the Congo and Vietnam, that there can be no freedom for African-Americans from racism in this country unless it is tied to the liberation of Third World nations from U.S. imperialism.</p>
xiv	<p>Martin and Malcolm began to search for the human, democratic side of socialism. What was clear to both of them, and clear to me now, is that we need to develop a struggle for freedom that moves beyond race to include all oppressed peoples of the world. As Malcolm X told a Columbia University audience a few days before his assassination; "It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of black against white or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter."</p>
3	<p>If in this process of speaking for myself, I should happen to touch the souls of black brothers (including black men in white skins), so much the better. I believe that all aspiring black intellectuals share the task that LeRoi Jones has described for the black artist in America: "To aid in the destruction of America as he knows it:"</p>
6	<p>The same is true of the words "Black Power:" To what "object" does it point? What does it mean when used by its advocates? It means <i>complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary</i>. The methods may include selective buying, boycotting, marching, or even rebellion.</p>
12	<p>One of the most serious charges leveled against the advocates of Black Power is that they are <i>black racists</i>. Many well-intentioned persons have insisted that there must be another approach, one which will not cause so much hostility, not to mention rebellion. Therefore appeal is made to the patience of black people to keep their "cool" and not get too carried away by their feelings. These men argue that if any progress is to be made, it will be through a careful, rational approach to the subject. These people are deeply offended when black people refuse to listen and place such white liberals in the same category as the most adamant segregationists.</p>
13	<p>It is interesting that most people do understand why Jews can hate Germans. Why can they not understand why black people, who have been deliberately and systematically dehumanized or murdered by the structure of this society, hate white people? The general failure of Americans to make this connection suggests that the primary difficulty is their inability to see black men as men.</p>

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	<p>When Black Power advocates refuse to listen to their would-be liberators, they are charged with creating hatred among black people, thus making significant personal relationship between blacks and whites impossible. It should be obvious that the hate which black people feel toward whites is not due to the creation of the term "Black Power." Rather, it is a result of the deliberate and systematic ordering of society on the basis of racism, making black alienation not only possible but inevitable. For over three hundred years black people have been enslaved by the tentacles of American white power, tentacles that worm their way into the guts of their being and "invade the gray cells of their cortex." For three hundred years they have cried, waited, voted, marched, picketed, and boycotted, but whites still refuse to recognize their humanity. In light of this, attributing black anger to the call for Black Power is ridiculous, if not obscene. "To be a Negro in this country," says James Baldwin, "and to be relatively conscious is to be in rage almost all the time."</p>
15	<p>And James Baldwin was certainly expressing the spirit of black hatred when he said: The brutality with which Negroes are treated in this country simply cannot be overstated; however unwilling white men may be to hear it. In the beginning-and neither can this be overstated-a Negro just cannot believe that white people are treating him as they do; he does not know what he has done to merit it. And when he realizes that the treatment accorded him has nothing to do with anything he has done, that the attempt of white people to destroy him-for that is what it is-is utterly gratuitous, it is not hard for him to think of white people as devils.</p>
15	<p>But the charge of black racism cannot be reconciled with the facts. While it is true that blacks do hate whites, black hatred is not racism.</p>
17	<p>The white man, in the very asking of the question, assumes that he has something <i>which</i> blacks want or should want, as if being close to white people enhances the humanity of blacks. This question -- What about integration? -- completely ignores the beastly behavior of the "devil white man" (Malcolm X's designation). Black people cannot accept relationship on this basis.</p>
21	<p>The real menace in white intellectual arrogance is the dangerous assumption that the structure that enslaves is the structure that will also decide when and how this slavery is to be abolished. The sociological and psychological reports, made by most white scholars, assume that they know more about my frustration, my despair, my hatred for white society than I do. They want to supply the prescriptions to my problems, refusing to recognize that for over three hundred years blacks have listened to them and their reports and we are still degraded. The time has come for white Americans to be silent and listen to black people. Why must the white man assume that he has the intellectual ability or the moral sensitivity to know what blacks feel or to ease the pain, to smooth the hurt, to eradicate the resentment? Since he knows that he raped our women, dehumanized our men, and made it inevitable that black children should hate their blackness, he ought to understand why blacks must cease listening to him in order to be free.</p>
21	<p>White people should not even expect blacks to love them, and to ask for it merely adds insult to injury. "For the white man," writes Malcolm X, "to ask the black man if he hates him is just like the rapist asking the raped ... `Do you hate me?'" The white man is in no moral position to accuse anyone else of hate." Whatever blacks feel toward whites or</p>

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	whatever their response to white racism, it cannot be submitted to the judgments of white society.
23	<p><i>How Does Black Power Relate to White Guilt?</i></p> <p>When white do-gooders are confronted with the style of Black Power, realizing that black people really place them in the same category with the George Wallaces, they react defensively, saying, "It's not my fault" or "I am not responsible." Sometimes they continue by suggesting that their town (because of their unselfish involvement in civil rights) is better or less racist than others.</p> <p>...</p> <p>There are no meaningful "in betweens" relevant to the fact itself. And it should be said that racism is so embedded in the heart of American society that few, if any, whites can free themselves from it.</p>
24	<p>Second, all white men are responsible for white oppression. It is much too easy to say, "Racism is not my fault," or "I am not responsible for the country's inhumanity to the black man." <i>The American white man has always had an easy conscience.</i> But insofar as white do-gooders tolerate and sponsor racism in their educational institutions, their political, economic, and social structures, their churches, and in every other aspect of American life, they are directly responsible for racism. "It is a cold, hard fact that the many flagrant forms of racial injustice North and South could not exist without their [whites'] acquiescence," ⁴⁷ and for that, they are responsible. If whites are honest in their analysis of the moral state of this society, they know that all are responsible. Racism is possible because whites are indifferent to suffering and patient with cruelty.</p>
25	<p>White America's attempt to free itself of responsibility for the black man's inhuman condition is nothing but a protective device to ease her guilt. Whites have to convince themselves that they are not responsible. That is why social scientists prefer to remain detached in their investigations of racial injustice. It is less painful to be uninvolved.</p> <p>White Americans do not dare to know that blacks are beaten at will by policemen as a means of protecting the latter's ego superiority as well as that of the larger white middle class. For to know is to be responsible. To know is to understand why blacks loot and riot at what seems slight provocation. Therefore, they must have reports to explain the disenchantment of blacks with white democracy, so they can be surprised. They must believe that blacks are in poverty because they are lazy or because they are inferior. Yes, they must believe that everything is basically all right. Black Power punctures those fragile lies, declaring to white America the pitiless indictment of Francis Jeanson: "If you succeed in keeping yourself unsullied, it is because others dirty themselves in your place. You hire thugs, and, balancing the accounts, it is you who are the real criminals: for without you, without your blind indifference, such men could never carry out deeds that damn you as much as they shame those men."</p>
26	<p><i>Black Power and the White Liberal</i></p> <p>In time of war, men want to know who the enemy is. Who is for me and who is against me? That is the question. The asserting of black freedom in America has always meant war. When blacks retreat and accept their dehumanized place in white society, the conflict ceases. But when blacks rise up in freedom, whites show their racism.</p>
27	The liberal, then, is one who sees "both sides" of the issue and shies away from

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	<p>"extremism" in any form. He wants to change the heart of the racist without ceasing to be his friend; he wants progress without conflict. Therefore, when he sees blacks engaging in civil disobedience and demanding "Freedom Now," he is disturbed. Black people know who the enemy is, and they are forcing the liberal to take sides. But the liberal wants to be a friend, that is, enjoy the rights and privileges pertaining to whiteness and also work for the "Negro." He wants change without risk, victory without blood.</p> <p>The liberal white man is a strange creature; he verbalizes the right things. He intellectualizes on the racial problem beautifully. He roundly denounces racists, conservatives, and the moderately liberal. Sometimes, in rare moments and behind closed doors, he will even defend Rap Brown or Stokely Carmichael. Or he may go so far as to make the statement: "I will let my daughter marry one," and this is supposed to be the absolute evidence that he is raceless.</p> <p>But he is still white to the very core of his being. What he fails to realize is that there is no place for him in this war of survival. Blacks do not want his patronizing, condescending words of sympathy. They do not need his concern, his "love;" his money.</p>
40	<p>If we make this message contemporaneous with our own life situation, what does Christ's defeat of Satan mean for us? There is no need here to get bogged down with quaint personifications of Satan. Men are controlled by evil powers that would make them slaves. The demonic forces of racism are real for the black man. Theologically, Malcolm X was not far wrong when he called the white man "the devil." The white structure of this American society, personified in every racist, must be at least part of what the New Testament meant by the demonic forces. According to the New Testament, these powers can get hold of a man's total being and can control his life to such a degree that he is incapable of distinguishing himself from the alien power. This seems to be what has happened to white racism in America. It is a part of the spirit of the age, the ethos of the culture, so embedded in the social, economic, and political structure that white society is incapable of knowing its destructive nature. There is only one response: Fight it.</p> <p>Moreover, it seems to me that it is quite obvious who is actually engaged in the task of liberating black people from the power of white racism, even at the expense of their lives. They are men who stand unafraid of the structures of white racism. They are men who risk their lives for the inner freedom of others. They are men who embody the spirit of Black Power. And if Christ is present today actively risking all for the freedom of man, he must be acting through the most radical elements of Black Power.</p>
55	<p>If the riots are the black man's courage to say Yes to himself as a creature of God, and if in affirming self he affirms Yes to the neighbor, then violence may be the black man's expression, sometimes the only possible expression, of Christian love to the white oppressor.</p>
61	<p>Black Power, then, is God's new way of acting in America. It is his way of saying to blacks that they are human beings; he is saying to whites: "Get used to it!" Whites, as well as some blacks, will find the encounter of Black Power a terrible experience. Like the people of Jesus' day, they will find it hard to believe that God would stoop so low as to reveal himself in and through black people and especially the</p>

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	<p>"undesirable elements." If he has to make himself known through blacks, why not choose the "good Negroes"? But, that is just the point: God encounters men at that level of experience which challenges their being. The real test of whether whites can communicate with blacks as human beings is not what they reply to Ralph Bunche but how they respond to Rap Brown.</p>
67	<p>It is important to remember that the preaching of the Word presents a crisis situation. The hearing of the news of freedom through the preaching of the Word always invites the hearer to take one of two sides: He must either side with the old rulers or the new one. "He that is not far me is against me:" There is no neutral position in a war. Even in silence, one is automatically identified as being on the side of the oppressor. There is no place in this war of liberation for nice white people who want to avoid taking sides and remain friends with both the racists and the Negro. To hear the Word is to decide: Are you with us or against us?</p>
73	<p>If there is any contemporary meaning of the Antichrist (or "the principalities and powers"), the white church seems to be a manifestation of it. It is the enemy of Christ. It was the white "Christian" church which took the lead in establishing slavery as an institution and segregation as a pattern in society by sanctioning all-white congregations. As Frank Loescher pointed out, its very existence as an institution is a symbol of the "philosophy of white supremacy."</p>
88	<p>There is a need for a theology of revolution, a theology which radically encounters the problems of the disinherited black people in America in particular and the oppressed people of color throughout the world in general.</p>
89	<p><i>The black revolution is the work of Christ.</i></p>
113	<p>It (the black church) is revolutionary in that it seeks to meet the needs of the neighbor amid crumbling structures of society. It is revolutionary because love may mean joining a violent rebellion.</p>
116	<p>Just as the black revolution means the death of America as it has been, so it requires the death of the Church in its familiar patterns.</p>
118	<p>Because Black Theology has as its starting point the black condition, this does not mean that it denies the absolute revelation of God in Christ. Rather, it means that Black Theology firmly believes that God's revelation in Christ can be made supreme only by affirming Christ as he is alive in black people today. Black Theology is Christian theology precisely because it has the black predicament as its point of departure. It calls upon black people to affirm God because he has affirmed us.</p>
121	<p>Black Theology must say: "If the doctrine is compatible with or enhances the drive for black freedom, then it is the gospel of Jesus Christ. If the doctrine is against or indifferent to the essence of blackness as expressed in Black Power, then it is the work of the Antichrist." It is as simple as that.</p>
123	<p>If eschatology means that one believes that God is totally uninvolved in the suffering of men because he is preparing them for another world, then Black Theology is not eschatological. Black Theology is an earthly theology! It is not concerned with the "last things" but with the "white thing." Black Theology like Black Power believes that the self-determination of black people must be emphasized at all costs, recognizing that there is only one question about reality for blacks: What must we do about white racism?</p>

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	<p>There is no room in this perspective for an eschatology dealing with a "reward" in heaven. Black Theology has hope for this life. The appeal to the next life is a lack of hope. Such an appeal implies that absurdity has won and that one is left merely with an unrealistic gesture toward the future. Heavenly hope becomes a Platonic grasp for another reality because one cannot live meaningfully amid the suffering of this world.</p>
125	<p>This is the key to Black Theology. It refuses to embrace any concept of God which makes black suffering the will of God. Black people should not accept slavery, lynching, or any form of injustice as tending to good. It is not permissible to appeal to the idea that God's will is inscrutable or that the righteous sufferer will be rewarded in heaven. If God has made the world in which black people must suffer, and if he is a God who rules, guides, and sanctifies the world, then he is a murderer. To be the God of black people, he must be against the oppression of black people.</p> <p>The idea of heaven is irrelevant for Black Theology. The Christian cannot waste time contemplating the next world (if there is a next). Radical obedience to Christ means that reward cannot be the motive for action. It is a denial of faith to insist on the relevance of reward.</p>
127	<p>To carve out a Black Theology based on black oppression will of necessity mean the creation of new values independent of and alien to the values of white society. The values must be independent because they must arise from the needs of black people. They will be alien because white American "Christian" values are based on racism.</p>
131	<p>Black Theology advocates a religious system of values based on the experiences of the oppressed because it believes white values must either be revolutionized or eliminated. Such a value-system means, of course, an end to the influence of white seminaries with their middle-class white ideas about God, Christ, and the Church. This does not necessarily mean burning of their buildings with Molotov cocktails. What is meant is a removal of the oppressive ideas from the black community which the seminaries perpetuate. We must replace them with black consciousness-that is, with Nathaniel Paul, Daniel Payne, Nat Turner (not Styron's), Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, and Malcolm X.</p>
135	<p>Because Black Theology is biblical theology seeking to create new value-perspectives for the oppressed, it is revolutionary theology. It is a theology which confronts white society as the racist Antichrist, communicating to the oppressor that nothing will be spared in the fight for freedom. It is this attitude which distinguishes it from white American theology and identifies it with the religionists of the Third World.</p>
136	<p>The revolution which Black Theology advocates should not be confused with some popular uses of the word. When Billy Graham can speak of a need for a revolution, we clearly require a tighter definition of the term. Revolution is not merely a "change of heart" but a radical black encounter with the structure of white racism, with the full intention of destroying its menacing power. I mean confronting white racists and saying: "If it's a fight you want, I am prepared to oblige you." This is what the black revolution means.</p> <p>It is important not to confuse protest with revolution. "Revolution is more than protest. Protest merely calls attention to injustice....</p> <p>In contrast, "revolution sees every particular wrong as one more instance in a pattern</p>

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	<p>which is itself beyond rectification. Revolution aims at the substitution of a new system for one adjudged to be corrupt, rather than corrective adjustments within the existing system. . . . The power of revolution is coercive." The pre-Civil War black preachers were revolutionary in that they believed that the system itself was evil and consequently urged slaves to rebel against it.</p>
137	<p>The revolutionary attitude of Black Theology stems not only from the need of black people to defend themselves in the presence of white oppression, but also from its identity with biblical theology. Like biblical theology, it affirms the absolute sovereignty of God over his creation. This means that ultimate allegiance belongs only to God. Therefore, black people must be taught not to be disturbed about revolution or civil disobedience if the law violates God's purpose for man. The Christian man is obligated by a freedom grounded in the Creator to break all laws which contradict human dignity. Through disobedience to the state, he affirms his allegiance to God as Creator and his willingness to behave as if he believes it. Civil disobedience is a duty in a racist society. That is why Carnilo Torres said, "Revolutionary action is a Christian, a priestly struggle."</p>
143	<p>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. There have occasionally been revolutions -massive redistributions of power-without warfare. It is passionately to be hoped that this can be one of them. The decision lies with white America and not least with white Americans who speak the name of Christ.</p>
150	<p>For white people, God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ means that God has made black people a beautiful people; and if they are going to be in relationship with God, they must enter by means of their black brothers, who are a manifestation of God's presence on earth. The assumption that one can know God without knowing blackness is the basic heresy of the white churches. They want God without blackness, Christ without obedience, love without death. What they fail to realize is that in America, God's revelation on earth has always been black, red, or some other shocking shade, but never white. Whiteness, as revealed in the history of America, is the expression of what is wrong with man. It is a symbol of man's depravity. God cannot be white, even though white churches have portrayed him as white. When we look at what whiteness has done to the minds of men in this country, we can see clearly what the New Testament meant when it spoke of the principalities and powers. To speak of Satan and his powers becomes not just a way of speaking but a fact of reality. When we can see a people who are being controlled by an ideology of whiteness, then we know what reconciliation must mean. The coming of Christ means a denial of what we thought we were. It means destroying the white devil in us. Reconciliation to God means that white people are prepared to deny themselves (whiteness), take up the cross (blackness) and follow Christ (black ghetto).</p> <p>To be sure, this is not easy. But whoever said the gospel of Christ was easy? Obedience always means going where we otherwise would not go; being what we would not be; doing what we would not do. Reconciliation means that Christ has freed us for this. In a white racist society, Christian obedience can only mean being obedient to blackness, its glorification and exaltation.</p>

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151	Therefore, God's Word of reconciliation means that we can only be justified by becoming black. Reconciliation makes us all black. Through this radical change, we become identified totally with the suffering of the black masses. It is this fact that makes all white churches anti-Christian in their essence. To be Christian is to be one of those whom God has chosen. God has chosen black people!
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