

Black Church Strategies for the Twenty-First Century

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Dr. Sid Smith has written that one of the greatest challenges facing the church in the next century is ministering to the black family.¹ No church will be relevant unless it implements an effective program of family ministry. This is especially true of churches serving the black community, so black church development must respond to the needs of the black family. In his *The Strengths of Black Families*,² Robert Hill points out five bulwarks of the African-American family: strong kinship bonds, strong work orientation, adaptability of family roles, strong achievement orientation, and strong religious orientation. These strengths have enabled the black community to survive in a society scarred by racism and social pathology. The black experience has necessitated the development of specialized behavior for survival. This paper deals most extensively with the last of those strengths.

When one analyzes the multi-dimensional role the black or African-American church plays in society, no simple definitions or conclusions emerge. Much of the scholarship generated concerning the black church has tended to over-simplify or misinterpret this last institution outside of the family that remains influential in all arenas of African-American life. One finds an expression of the black Christian religious heritage in practically every community in this country, regardless of its population or location. Thus, the African-American church must take a leading role in creating solutions for African-Americans in the twenty-first century.

The Black Church and Liberation

The black church has always provided the moral and ethical leadership for the African-American community. The black church modeled empowerment before the term was used in its present context. It was (and is) the black church that provided hope for the hopeless, faith for the faithless, joy and celebration in the midst of much pain and degradation. Major J. Jones, speaking of the black church as liberator and in an attempt to adequately understand the dynamic role which it has traditionally played in the black community's liberation struggle, states that

Not to understand fully that role in the liberation struggle is to fail to understand why the black man was able to survive slavery and the subsequent years which followed. It should also be pointed out that any attempt to separate the black man's religion from his liberation struggle is to fail to see that the black church cannot be understood merely in terms of programs or structures.³

Indeed, Mays and Nicholson were right when they concluded that

There is in the genius of the "soul" of the Negro church something that gives it life and vitality that makes it stand out significantly above its buildings, creeds, rituals and doctrines, something that makes it a unique institution.⁴

Jones further asserts that it was because of the church that black people did not accept the slavery-era white interpretation of Christianity, in which control and sub-

jection were the dominating reasons for evangelizing the slaves. Religion was meant to be a means of further enslavement of the body and spirit of the black person. Through the religious teachings a slave received the society attempted to convince the black person that

Whites derived their right to rule over blacks from God. To question this right was to question the will of God and to incur divine wrath. Catechisms for the instruction of slaves in the Christian religion often contained such instruction as:

Q. Who gave you a master and a mistress?

A. God gave them to me.

Q. Who says that you must obey them?

A. God says that I must.⁵

It must be noted that the black churchman rejected such teachings very early, and instead fixed on the liberation themes of the Bible. Contrary to the slave masters' intent, religious teachings created a greater desire for freedom within the mind of the slave.

Jones continues to be absolutely accurate in his consideration of the reality of this early religious experience of African-Americans when he suggests that the black church has been very much a church of this world, and that it has always spoken to the issues of the times. Critics of the black church have unjustly accused it of exclusively preaching an other-worldly, escape-from-reality message. Yet those who really understand the nature of the African-American church realize that its message of hope, freedom and liberation is just as applicable to a person's present earthly experience as it is to his or her future heavenly destiny. Jesus taught the church to pray for His kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. The black

church understood that this was not simply a post-rapture experience, for the same Jesus proclaimed "the Kingdom of God is at hand."

The early black church survived and even thrived as an "invisible institution" during slavery despite the pressures of a society opposed to its existence. Though it may not have impacted the larger community, the church was a strong leader in the quest for black empowerment and independence. In addition, the black church undoubtedly provided the primary outlet for the expression of freedom for its people. This compelling desire for freedom and liberation was one of the primary reasons the church grew so rapidly and was accepted so universally. The African-American community generally rejected its captors' brand of the gospel and by the power of the Holy Spirit came to understand that "with God on our side, nobody going to turn me around." The black church has often been described as a "Jesus church" because of the strong identification it holds with Jesus as one defending the oppressed.

Some scholars contend that the post-Civil War black church lost its zeal for freedom, especially during Reconstruction and the immediate post-Reconstruction era. Others see a much different picture. They see the black church becoming more holistic, broadening its menu of issues and gradually addressing all areas of life, not just spiritual matters. The Scriptures present humankind as a body, a soul and a spirit. The black church began to understand its role as one addressing all aspects of human existence. This self-identity is magnified today as the church aggressively preaches economic, educational, social and cultural empowerment, yet this in no way restricts or retards the tradi-

tional message of spiritual liberation that most in the black church believe is essential to experience full empowerment in the other areas of one's existence.

Jones is again correct when he states that

The black man's religion enabled him to survive the brutalities and oppression that a white racist society inflicted upon him. In spite of it all, it enabled black men to affirm themselves as members of the Kingdom of God while living in a culture which looked upon them as creatures less than humans. To miss this point is to misread the role of the black church in the liberation struggle.⁶

The black church was destined to come forth as a powerful instrument of liberation and freedom. Wilmore assessed the situation by stating that

During the eighteenth century there were more black and white Christians worshipping in the same congregations, proportionate to their numbers as baptized Christians, than there are today. This should not, however, be taken to imply that prior to the Civil War American churches were racially integrated. Blacks enjoyed no real freedom or equality of ecclesiastical status in either the North or the South. It never occurred to white Christians that the equality that was denied to their brothers and sisters in civil society should at least be made available to them within the church.⁷

Olin P. Moyd explains the implications of the black religious experience by highlighting its redemptive aspects. In fact, Moyd believes that "redemption is the root and core motif in Black theology."⁸ For Moyd, redemption has the "double meaning of liberation and confederation." He asserts that in Black theology "liberation means deliverance from human-caused states and circumstances of

oppression as well as salvation from sin and guilt." While confederation means the formation of a group who live in a covenant relationship with one another and with their Redeemer, in the Scriptures redemption never means redemption from sin alone. It always means "deliverance from some visible and tangible menace which might or might not be regarded as a consequence of the sin of the people."

Moyd further concludes that "neither the Black theologians nor the Euro-American and Latin American 'liberation' theologians have used redemption as a point of departure." While liberation is one dimension of redemption, it is limited in that it points primarily to the exodus out of Egypt or out of black oppression. It then neglects another important dimension, which has to do with coming into Canaan, or the forming of a community among the people of God. Moyd argues that

The major catastrophe which immediately afflicted the four million blacks when the Emancipation Proclamation became effective on January 1, 1863, arose out of the fact that only one aspect of redemption became operative. While they were liberated out of the hands of their oppressors, there were no adequate provisions for their going into or forming their own communities.⁹

The Black Church, Freedom and Community

Later the black church became the pacesetter or model for the community by becoming an integral piece to the black extended family fabric. It has been the only institution in the African-American community that has said, at least in theory, "whosoever will, let them come." Practically all other legitimate benevolent, social, entrepreneurial and mutual aid movements trace their foundations to the

black church. The freedom and liberation African-Americans experience are directly linked to their ability and willingness to stand together as community. The black church is the best illustration of this togetherness. Even denominational barriers collapse when there is a need for the community of faith to rally together for justice, freedom and liberation.

No theologian has contributed more to the discourse surrounding freedom and liberation relative to the black church than James H. Cone. Although quite controversial and often not in harmony with many mainstream black church theologians, Cone's work has helped enlighten and inform theologians of all persuasions. In his later work, Cone has come to recognize the need to be more specifically inclusive in discussing an adequate theology for African-Americans. In the second edition of *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone emphasizes four themes as particularly pertinent for the black church: "sexism, the exploitation of the Third World, classism, and an inordinate methodological dependence upon the neo-orthodox theology of Karl Barth and other European theologians."¹⁰

As a pacesetter for freedom and liberation, the black church must particularly address the issue of sexism. No individual, male or female, is truly free or liberated until all people are free or liberated. Cone (and others) are absolutely correct in attacking a mentality in the black church that hinders greater progress toward ultimate liberation "on this side of the Promised Land." Cone writes that

Contrary to what many black men say (especially preachers), sexism is not merely a problem for white women. Rather it is a problem of the human condition. It destroys the family and society and makes it im-

possible for persons to create a society defined according to God's intention for humanity. Any black male theologian or preacher who ignores sexism as a central problem in our society and church (as important as racism because they are interconnected), is just as guilty of distorting the Gospel as is a white theologian (or preacher) who does the same with racism. If we black male theologians do not take seriously the need to incorporate into our theology a critique of our sexist practices in the black community, then we have no right to complain when white theologians snub black theology.¹¹

He argues that liberation is the content of theology. Legitimate Christian theology has to be a theology of liberation. Thus, Cone says that Christian theology is

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. This means that its sole reason for existence is to put into ordered speech the meaning of God's activity in the world, so that the community of the oppressed will recognize that its inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the Gospel but is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹²

Theodore Walker, Jr. treats liberation under the category of freedom as empowerment in his analysis of the black nationalistic movement. He writes that "conceptually, the idea that the freedom and empowerment of our people rightly includes the development of a separate and independently empowered black nation is very little removed from our church by tradition of black separatist movements leading to the establishment of independent black churches and denominations."¹³ Walker's insights speak to the

continuing need for the black church to work together for freedom and liberation at all times, not simply in explosive crisis situations. The church must come to recognize that the crisis does not end with a rally, a fight, a death or a protest. There is a war going on, motivated by the forces of evil that want to keep people in bondage. The whole body of Christ must accept, support, and have faith in its God-ordained role as an instrument of liberation for all.

Concern for the economic condition of black people is a present reality for both the church and its leadership. The economic challenges to black churches are unprecedented. J. Deotis Roberts believes that "pastors and congregations will need to choose their own projects for action after deciding the greatest economic needs in their locale. Also, large efforts, both city-wide and state-wide, would be needed in order to effect changes that move beyond pacification to liberation for black people in the economic sphere." Roberts goes on to say that "black churches should support sanctions against businesses that earn large sums of money from black people but practice racial discrimination in various ways."¹⁴ Cornel West writes that "black theologians all agree that black liberation has something to do with ameliorating the socioeconomic conditions of black people. But it is not clear what this amelioration amounts to."¹⁵

Perhaps Lincoln and Mamiya have discovered the key to understanding the dilemma the black church faces as God's instrument of freedom and liberation. They analyze the black church in terms of a "dialectical model." This view sees the church as an institution that is involved in a constant series of dialectical tensions. The dialectic holds polar opposites in ten-

sion, constantly shifting between the polarities in historical time. Space will not permit a full discussion of these, but the list itself speaks of the magnitude of the discussion. They chart six main pairs of dialectically related polar opposites:

- 1) The dialectic between priestly and prophetic functions.
- 2) The dialectic between other-worldly versus this-worldly.
- 3) The dialectic between universalism and particularism.
- 4) The dialectic between the communal and the privatistic.
- 5) The dialectic between the charismatic versus bureaucratic.
- 6) The dialectic between resistance versus accommodation.¹⁶

Clearly, these constantly changing tensions are indicative of the complexity in the ever-changing role the African-American church plays in society.

Other notions of freedom have been offered. Cain Hope Felder expounds on the meaning of freedom by stating that "freedom is one of those abstract words that everyone seems to use rather blithely, as if its meaning were self-evident. Few ever try defining it with any precision."¹⁷ He continues, "The Black church has always had a certain preoccupation with the idea of freedom and a clear yearning to see its members free from discrimination based on race and class, which for most Blacks are overlapping realities."¹⁸

In regard to the black church and Christian freedom, James H. Harris writes that

Christian freedom is somehow perceived as unrelated to freedom in a sociopolitical context. Whites have been able to institutionalize racism by dichotomizing everything, namely, church versus state, religion versus politics, and freedom "in Christ" versus freedom in the par-

ticularity of one's social existence. However, let me affirm forthrightly that Christian freedom is not a mysterious state of spiritual bliss grounded in a personal experience of Christ that can be isolated and privatized as many evangelicals would have us believe. Any personal experience with Christ is also an experience with truth that releases us from bondage. This is not simply a bondage of personal sin but bondage in general - spiritual, social, political and economic.¹⁹

Carl Ellis, in *Beyond Liberation: The Gospel in the Black American Experience*, concluded that

Many of us have achieved a great degree of liberation than our people have ever had, but are we truly liberated? . . . the closer a people get to liberation, the more their own ungodliness and God's judgment will show. This point is often overlooked by advocates of liberation. Liberation alone is not enough. Liberation is insufficient if it is not accompanied by a quest for godliness in every area of life. Liberation alone will lead to self-oppression because a liberated ungodliness will always do its thing, and that thing is sure to bring death (Romans 6:23).²⁰

Only the church has the power to bring forth the godliness that must accompany freedom and liberation. The African-American community will never realize ultimate freedom and liberation if it does not stay committed to Jesus Christ and His church.

The Black Church of the Future

In the year 2000 and beyond, the church must challenge its community to attain godliness alongside a continuing quest for freedom and liberation. How will the church of the future challenge its members towards those ends? What will the church, and the black church in particu-

lar, be like in the coming years? What challenges will it face, and what impact will it have in the world?

In his *Christianity in the 21st Century*, Robert Wuthnow reflects on these provocative questions as he seeks to identify the changes in American society that churches must address if they are to remain vital in the future. Wuthnow foresees challenges developing in the areas of institution, ethics, doctrine, politics and culture. In each of these five areas people of faith have strong reasons to enter the next century with confidence in the relevance of their religious institutions.²¹

Within all of these areas, the family is at the center of all developments. Walker states that the home or family is the basic unit of all of society. The family is to society what the atom is to the universe. It is the cornerstone on which everything is built. Any society that allows the family unit to collapse eventually will collapse itself.²² According to Dick Iverson, when God created and ordained the family He did not do so without purpose or design. God established family as a context in which persons would realize the eternal purposes of divine image and dominion for which they were created.²³

As a result of the devastating conditions becoming more evident in the black community, the black church is being challenged to expand its involvement in all aspects of black family life. The black church of the twenty-first century needs to be informed and innovative in empowering families through a wide variety of means, such as economic growth, community networking, grant writing, entrepreneurship, political astuteness, educational support, and various support group ministries.

Tamar Lewin reports that black churches, dismayed by the disintegration

of so many inner city families, have started programs and ministries that help reduce teenage pregnancy, keep children in school, provide adolescent boys and girls with role models and find adoptive homes for black infants and children.²⁴ Many churches have been forced to overcome their traditional reluctance to grapple with issues such as sexuality, contraception, and substance abuse.

By becoming involved in these issues, the church positions itself as a continual voice for godly standards in the community. This vision must extend beyond the church staff members to every member of the congregation. Lyle Schaller has discovered that the larger the congregation the more likely the continuity, creativity, and vision of the church rests in the staff instead of in the volunteer leadership.²⁵ By contrast, in the typical small congregation, these characteristics are typified by the congregation rather than by the paid staff. Regardless of size, the African-American church seems to reflect a "small church" mentality because the black church is still largely single staffed or at least very under-staffed. This dilemma also helps to explain the institutional fragility of the very large Sunday morning church built around the personality and preaching of the senior pastor. Too frequently these congregations in the black community are so overly dependent on the senior pastor that leadership transitions are filled with turmoil.

The large Protestant churches of the 1950's were built largely around the ecclesiastical trinity of that day: inspiring preaching, a superb choir, and an attractive Sunday School. For all practical purposes, these were Sunday morning churches. That mixture often was enriched by Sunday afternoon and/or evening services and the personable, and sometimes

controversial, long-tenured senior minister who also often earned a role as a respected community leader. In the African-American community the Sunday afternoon and evening service served as a social outlet because of the limited options in the broader community.

Today's large Protestant churches are built around worship, memorable preaching, an extensive music ministry, and a diversified education program. The schedule is filled with a variety of other events, classes, programs and groups. These are the seven-day-a-week churches that are emerging as the successors to the big Sunday morning churches of the 1950's. The mixture of characteristics that are a part of the culture of these program churches often are enriched by a senior minister who is an initiating leader and who has brought together a collection of energetic, creative, daring, imaginative, productive, committed, venturesome and personable individuals to serve as the program staff.²⁶

For the African-American church specifically, this often means a total restructuring of teaching relative to appropriate Christian stewardship. Christian stewardship needs to be approached more holistically, emphasizing appropriate management of time, talents, spiritual gifts, and treasures. Funds must be redirected to educational and social ministries that teach a biblical understanding of stewardship and enlist all the members as ministers of God rather than have those funds going to a select few clergy who do all the work of ministry. Decision making must be shared with a broader collection of church leaders, although a strong senior pastor remains a frequent expectation.

Several scholars agree that the emergence of the seven-day-a-week church as

the successor to the big Sunday morning churches of the 1950's is one of the most significant trends of this century. The African-American church that develops into the seven-day-a-week congregation will be the norm in the twenty-first century.

Challenges for the Black Church in the Twenty-First Century

At least five serious challenges await African-American churches in the next century. Diversity is the first matter that must be addressed. In the years ahead, diversity and the possibilities for individual choice that it presents will be even greater than today. African-American churches, Latino churches, Asian churches, mega-churches and completely new denominations will all be part of the religious landscape. A recent example in the African-American community is the Full Gospel Baptist Church movement, as well as the emergence of Full Gospel or charismatic congregations within all mainline denominational bodies. The question of diversity cuts across all denominational, ethnic and doctrinal boundaries. Afrocentric-focused congregations are making an impact in large urban centers, but are facing much opposition from churches that insist on using their particular definition of Christocentrism as an excuse to ignore sensitive cultural issues.

A second set of challenges rest in the ethical dimension of faith. Ethical challenges can immediately be translated into all sorts of specific questions: what to think about birth control, what view of abortion to hold, how Christians should comport themselves in the workplace, what the best curriculum would be for instructing young people how to think ethically, and so on. The black church con-

tinues to be an ethically conservative institution, although it seeks to be socially relevant and progressive in ministry.

Doctrinal matters constitute a third set of issues. Some might prefer to call this issue a problem of belief. To cast it in those terms, however, is to capitulate to the privatized, subjective orientation that has been so roundly criticized in recent decades. The debate among Christian denominations is often intense but is heightened even further when other religious groups such as the Muslims are brought into the mix. The African-American church faces the challenge of an appropriate involvement with groups which deny the deity of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. The controversy and split among African-American Christians relative to the 1995 Million Man March illustrates the complexity of the debate. The twenty-first century will undoubtedly bring many more such challenges as more religious diversity is tolerated in the black community, especially among the young.

The largely white conservative religious right has become a powerful force in American politics. The historic black church has traditionally been characterized as a conservative institution. A major challenge for the black church is how far apart these two groups remain and how much further apart they continue to grow. In fact, to term the black church "conservative" is to speak of something vastly different than what evangelical white conservative Christians mean by "conservative." It is fair to say that the black church is a Bible church with high regard for the truthfulness of the Scripture. Where the black church often remains in conflict with other evangelical Christians is in the area of contemporary interpretations that are so often culturally determined.

The issue of women in ministry will con-

tinue to be a major battleground into the twenty-first century, although women are rapidly being accepted in ministry roles. The black church is struggling primarily with terminology since women have always played a vital role in the church's work. Many congregations in the black community are functionally 75-85% female. This fact alone will generate greater decision-making by the female population of the congregation. In the black church, however, men continue to dominate the positions of senior pastor and deacon, but virtually all other positions are open to gifted and involved women.

A fourth set of distinct challenges arises when the public role of Christianity is considered. These might be called political challenges because they emerge primarily from the efforts by people of faith to influence governmental policies. The black church without question was the major force in the Civil Rights Movement. The black clergyman was thrust into leadership in the movement primarily because of the freedom and security of a position not controlled by forces outside the African-American community. It is this fact that will continue to keep the black church in the forefront of empowerment for the community well into the twenty-first century. The need for well-equipped and trained clergymen intensifies with a much more complex and diverse society.

A fifth set of challenges that warrants special attention concerns the personal lives of believers themselves. Despite the frequent accusations that Americans are greedy, shallow and self-centered, much evidence suggests that for the most part people want to be good. They want to do what is right, they want to contribute positively toward the good of the world, they want to raise their children to lead happy

and productive lives. Ideals about caring for others, about responsibilities toward one's family and one's community, and about ethics and personal morality reflect the fact that American society is still very much a product of its religious past. It is in this sphere that there is much harmony between the values of the black extended family and the black church. The support and care of the family is African and African-American, as well as most compatible to the Christian faith.

No group in society has historically generated the kind of support the black church has for the disenfranchised. The black church was the first school in its community. The black church has been the primary carrier of black folk culture. The black church, in addition to the black family, has been the pacesetter for values that are positive and affirming. It was the black church that preached not only spiritual liberation but total liberation. With the recent retreat from affirmative action advancements, the twenty-first century will need to have an even better informed populace. No institution in the black community has the global impact of the black church. No institution can address as fully the plight of people of color as can the black church. The black church in the twenty-first century will continue to be more than a place to come to worship.

Those congregations and denominations, however, who choose to remain historic and traditional and do not make the appropriate changes will continue to decline and ultimately die. The twenty-first century will escort in a "buyer's market." Those churches and denominations that strive to change and make the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of the day will grow and prosper. Those who refuse will literally die on the vine.

Leaders for the African-American Church in the Next Century

Some are asking if the twenty-first century will bring any significant changes in the American society. In his recent work *Diversity in America*, Vincent N. Parrillo writes,

American society is far from eliminating racism as a serious social problem, and Black Americans, still disproportionately represented among the nation's poor, have all the attendant problems of that sad reality.... Black America is really two societies: one poor and the other non-poor. Thanks to civil rights legislation and other social reforms, remarkable gains have been made, especially in education and occupational representation. Nevertheless, a disturbing gap remains between Black Americans and White Americans."²⁷

These facts will undoubtedly account for the necessity of a vital church focusing on the needs of African-Americans. Although an increasing number of African-Americans will choose to align with historically white denominational groups such as Southern and American Baptists, the historic black denominational bodies will remain intact. United Methodists are pacesetters, with African-American clergypersons recently assigned to selected non-black congregations, and vice versa. Their success will need to be assessed after sufficient time to evaluate the experiment. In a growing number of nondenominational congregations, co-pastors of different ethnic origins have proven to be successful in growing congregations with a culturally diverse membership. Whether this trend will

be reflected in Baptist circles is uncertain as of yet.

Many agree with C. Eric Lincoln's view that as the mission of the black church continues to broaden its perspective to cover the whole spectrum of humanitarian needs within and beyond its membership it will of course require increasingly sophisticated leadership skills at the top. It will find them in the bright young men and women now in the seminaries and in the increasing number of second-career men and women who are entering Christian service after successful careers in business or other professions.²⁸

Walker and Smith suggest that as African-American congregations continue to unite with the Southern Baptist Convention, and as many ethnic churches begin as dually aligned congregations, an increasing number of African-Americans will enroll in SBC-sponsored seminaries and other similar seminaries. The question that needs to be seriously addressed is how adequately these predominantly white institutions are preparing ministers to serve in their ethnic congregations and communities. Adequate curriculum offerings, as well as sufficient faculty and educational resources that can provide the specificity required to be successful clergypersons in diverse communities will be necessary.²⁹

J. Deotis Roberts stresses that black studies programs in seminaries should not be for blacks only. To the contrary, he concludes these courses and programs are just as important (perhaps even more so) for non-black students. It is similarly true for non-blacks from abroad who are recent

immigrants to the United States.³⁰

In a random investigation of selected seminaries and institutions offering Black Church and African-American or Black Studies programs, I found that there is no consistent pattern of course offerings addressing the black church. At best, institutions have these courses listed in their school catalogs but do not have the instructional staff to regularly offer the courses. Many institutions only offer courses designed specifically for the black church when occasional visiting scholars come to the institution. Most of these classes are offered in off-campus or summer terms. A few are offered by local clergy who teach in a part-time adjunctive capacity. These adjunct professors have little faculty and curriculum input, impact, or visibility. They often are not viewed by the students, faculty, and administration as "real" professors.

The black church of the twenty-first century will require and demand the best trained clergy it has ever had. As a seven-day-a-week, full-service endeavor, church leaders possessing skills beyond preaching will increasingly be of utmost importance. At best, white seminaries have provided some training for pastors, to a lesser degree for those in Christian education, but little training in other areas of ministry such as church music or Christian social ministry.

This lack of training for church musicians may have serious ramifications for the black church. Rick Warren has stated that he believes the issues surrounding music and worship will occupy the church for the next decade.³¹ If so, the black church faces a great dilemma because perhaps the least-trained leaders serve in the area of church music. Though music and worship questions in black churches are not neces-

sarily the same as in white churches, the two share the same problems.

Finally, black denominational bodies need to assume greater responsibility for the training of its own clergy. The reality, however, is that the resources for theological education are being stretched very thin. The theological seminaries of the twenty-first century should offer an educational experience which affords ministers from various denominational, ethnic, and cultural origins the opportunity to be exposed to new ideas of how to do ministry and to encounter individuals from varied backgrounds.

If theological education is to be life-changing, it first must be education, rather than indoctrination. The ethical and moral responsibility for seminaries and institutions of higher education committed to theological preparation is to provide an environment of learning that adequately prepares leaders to help churches create solutions for the next century's problems.

In a nation where 13% of the population is African-American and more than 15 million African-Americans identify themselves as Baptist, the black church and the black Baptist church in particular need to be leaders in creating solutions if America is to remain strong. To achieve this goal, Black Church Studies programs must be designed to prepare superior leaders. Ethnicly-sensitive materials ought to be incorporated in all seminary course offerings. Ongoing dialogue by theologians of various backgrounds and serious research in black church and ethnic studies will also be essential. Doctoral programs preparing specialists in black church ministry ought to be instituted in addition to master's degree programs. Only when black church studies are taken seriously at every level from the local

church through the Ph.D. will the moral responsibility of the seminar-ies be met.

ENDNOTES

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³ Major J. Jones, *The Color of God: The Concept of God in Afro-American Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1987).

⁴ Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969).

⁵ Major J. Jones, *Christian Ethics for Black Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974) 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-43.

⁷ Gayrand S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

⁸ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1979).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 2nd ed. (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1986).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xviii.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4-6.

¹³ Theodore Walker, Jr., *Empower the Power* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1991) 20-23.

¹⁴ J. Deotis Roberts, *The Prophethood of Black Believers* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 100-102.

¹⁵ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993) 3.

¹⁶ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham,

NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1990) 10-16.

¹⁷ Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling of Biblical Waters*, (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1989) 103-104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁹ James H. Harris, *Pastoral Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 20, 21.

²⁰ Carl F. Ellis, Jr., *Beyond Liberation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983) 174, 175.

²¹ Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

²² T. Vaughn Walker, "Ministering to the Black Family," *Human Services and Social Change: An African-American Church Perspective* (Cleveland, Ohio: Inner City Renewal Society, 1992) 65.

²³ Dick Iverson, *Restoring the Family-Principles of Family Life* (Portland, Oregon: Bible Temple Publication, 1979).

²⁴ Walker, 66.

²⁵ Lyle E. Schaller, *The Seven-Day-A-Week Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992) 11-13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁷ Vincent N. Parillo, *Diversity in America* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996) 146, 147, 179, 180.

²⁸ J. Deotis Roberts, "And We Are Not Saved: A Black Theologian Looks At Theological Education," *Religious Education*, 87/3 (Summer 1992) 358, 359.

²⁹ T. Vaughn Walker and Robert Smith, Jr., "Christian Ministry in the African American Church: A Challenge for Seminarians and Seminaries," *Preparing for Christian Ministry - An Evangelical Approach* (Wheaton, Illinois: BridgePoint, 1996) 319-329.

³⁰ Roberts, "And We Are Not Saved," 359.

³¹ Rick Warren, "Purpose Driven

Church Seminar," (April 18, 1996) Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee.