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TSF BULLETIN

)VEMBER-DECEMBER 1986
VOL. 10, NO. 2
$4.50

A Publication of
THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

[53] Norris, Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865-1920* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1977). Cf. Ross L. Finney, *Personal Religion and the Social Awakening* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1913), 1-35.

[54] Ruth Fritz Meyer, *The Role of Women in the Church From Bible Times Up To and Including a History of the Lutheran Woman's Missionary League . . .(St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1967).*

[55] Leroy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Detiny* (Washington, D.C.: Seventh-Day Adventist Publishing House, 1971).

[56] Flyer, dated October, 1895, in Bresee Archives, Point Loma Nazarene College, San Diego, California.

[57] Gary S. Smith, *The Seeds of Secularism*, 142-45.

[58] Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 73-4.

The Black Contribution to Evangelicalism

by James Earl Massey

The evangelical faith has meant, and continues to mean, much to Black Americans. At this time when Evangelicalism has re-emerged as a potent presence in American life, I want to discuss what Black Americans have contributed to this mosaic-like spiritual grouping and movement.

It has been difficult to trace those contributions. Almost since the beginning of the black presence, in this land, blacks have been receiving from a biblically-based message, testing and proving the viability of that message, sharing their spiritual experiences, and passing on the evangelical heritage with concern, creativity, and gusto.

I

Foremost among the many conributions blacks have made to evangelicalism is *the development of black evangelical churches.*

In speaking about "black evangelical churches," I am referring to those congregations and denominations which took their rise in history under the evangelical witness and work of alert and intense black preachers. More often than not, these were servants of the Lord who found no full welcome in white churches because of racist barriers against open fellowship.

Black religious separatism was not initially something that evangelical blacks desired. Historian Albert J. Raboteau, assessing the black experience in American Evangelicalism during and after slavery, commented:

> The opportunity for black religious separatism was due to the egalitarian character of evangelical Protestantism; its necessity was due, in part, to the racism of white Evangelicals.[1]

But something more must be said. The separateness forced upon black evangelicals became a vehicle for the full assertion of black independence and black pride. The very fact that blacks became and remained Christian in the face of racist barriers against them was proof that the essence of Christianity was not the white man's creation or property. When black believers designated their groupings as "African Methodist" or "African Baptist," it was their way of affirming themselves while staking their claim in a distinctive system of spiritual life. The existence of black churches allowed blacks a spiritual home, a meaningful social setting, and a political base from which to engage the forces of a racist society.[2]

The majority of black churches across our nation are rooted in the evangelical faith. There are some critics who seek to dispute this fact. Having identified some evident weaknesses within black churches—i.e., a seeming self-preoccupation, a lack of historical perspective regarding the wider Church, and the presence of a strong folk religion culture at work in black belief—some critics have questioned whether an adequate biblical frame of reference still informs and controls black faith.[3]

The truth is that a strong commitment to the gospel message still pervades the majority of black church groups. The black churches still insist on a biblically-based faith, still teach that the revelation of God is in Jesus, and that Scripture is the Word of God for all of life. There is still strong concern among black believers to accent the saviorhood, lordship, and "onliness" of Jesus Christ. The biblical message is still being proclaimed in black pulpits about the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, the expected return of the Lord, and final judgment of history by a just God. These faith tenets I have mentioned are some of the theological factors which mark evangelicalism.[4] Black evangelicals are not deficient in their theology, even though they often differ with white evangelicals over what should be understood as the social implications of the faith.

II

A second contribution blacks have made to evangelicalism is *a musical tradition that encourages self-expression in worship.* It is a tradition that not only honors biblical faith but personal experiences of life as well. This musical tradition allows the whole self to be expressive in the public worship of God.

This tradition of personal expressiveness in worship dates back as early as the slavery era, when black slaves created such Spirituals as "Nobody Knows De Trouble I See," "Steal Away to Jesus," and "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" to name a few,[5] but it became increasingly evident to others through the traditional Gospel music that developed and flourished in the black urban churches. The many compositions of the Rev. Charles Albert Tindley (1851?-1933) fall into this category. Tindley was a famous black United Methodist preacher and song-writer, and his soul-stirring musical works became widely known and used. Tindley's style and focus on personal experience heavily influenced the later development of the sacred Gospel Songs under such composers as Thomas A. Dorsey (b. 1899), the "Father of Gospel Music." This later style was characterized by a piano (or organ) improvising on the melody and harmonics of a song while the singer(s) improvised on the words.[6] Tindley's work also influenced Lucie Campbell (1885-1963). Campbell wrote "I Need Thee Every Hour" and "He'll Understand, and Say 'Well Done!'" Still further development in the Gospel Music tradition took place under Sallie Martin (b. 1896), who wrote "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," and W. Herbert Brewster, Sr. (b. 1899), who wrote "Surely, God Is Able." Martin and Brewster added to the tradition by giving it a stronger flavor from secular rhythms, a less formal use of religious themes, a more entertaining flair, and the use of gospel groups that catered to "Paid Admission" audiences.

While these additional changes in the Gospel Music style after the 1940s still involved words about personal religious

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experience, they had carried the tradition to a point quite removed from the hymn-like style Tindley established in his Jesus-centered songs.

Charles A. Tindley's songs have been incorporated into white denominational hymnals and songbooks. It is not unusual to find white evangelical soloists singing such songs as "Nothing Between," and white choirs doing "Beams of Heaven."[7] Interestingly, both of these songs illustrate the ever-present focus in black Christian worship upon Jesus as religious *subject*, on the one hand, and as religious *object* of faith, on the other, with concern on the part of the singer to be companioned and assisted by him in life's struggles. The refrain in "Beams of Heaven" affirms this:

> *I do not know how long 'twill be, Nor what the future holds for me. But this I know, if Jesus leads me, I shall get home some day.*

Tindley's "Nothing Between" is an affirmational statement of faith and an admonishment to the singer(s) to remain true and faithful to Jesus. The first stanza begins:

> *Nothing between my soul and the Savior, Naught of this world's delusive dream, I have renounced all sinful pleasure, Jesus is mine; there's nothing between.*

and the refrain admonishes:

> *Nothing between my soul and the Savior, So that His blessed face may be seen, Nothing preventing the least of His favor. Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.*

Tindley's song "Stand By Me" is a prayer addressed to Jesus, asking his companionship and assistance as the changing seasons of life make their demands.

Far more could be said about the way black church music encourages self-expression to God and fellow believers. The acknowledged contagion of this expressiveness stands documented in the continuing popularity black singers and gospel choirs enjoy in inter-racial gatherings. But far more important than such popularity, it must be said—and without fear of over-simplifying a now-complex music culture in the wider Church world—that the present sacred concert culture within which The Gaithers, Sandi Patti, and other whites shine like stars owes more than a little to the black musical tradition. This is so at the level of the free vocal style, the lively instrumental accompaniment, and the devotional focus on Jesus. The evangelical world would be musically poorer apart from the rich and engaging musical contribution from Black Americans.

III

A third major contribution Black Americans have made to evangelicalism is *an active witness against racism in the Church* and an insistent call for white believers to become more socially responsible and active.

In 1973, historian Earle E. Cairns wrote:

> Contemporary Evangelicals, who for a time ignored their responsibility as Christians in Society, are becoming increasingly aware that . . .they have a responsiblity to put the principles of Christ into action . . .in the social order in which they live.[8]

Although Cairns did not dwell at length on what had stimulated that awareness, we must remember that he wrote after the Civil Rights Movement had prodded major changes on the social scene during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. To be sure, some change in evangelical social views was stimulated by Carl F.H. Henry's writings in *Christianity Today* and in strategic books such as his *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*.[9] Sherwood Wirt also called attention to several clear issues for response in his *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical*.[10] But we must not overlook the fact that both Henry and Wirt, among others, wrote after much sensitizing about the American social scene had been initiated by socially active black leaders. The "increasing awareness" among evangelicals about social responsibility as Christians was stimulated either directly or indirectly by the clear ethical demands victimized blacks had been calling into attention across the nation.

I am reminded about something that happened in this vein during a world convention of evangelical leaders during the late 1960s. While attending the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, Germany, in November 1966, delegates heard many position papers which treated aspects of the Congress theme: "One Race, One Gospel, One Task." But as the Congress continued across those ten days, we blacks discovered that no attention had been devoted in any of the position papers to the first part of the theme, "One Race," nor had any papers on it been distributed for private reading. The Congress delegates had been drawn together from across the world, literally, and the vast assemblage—representing the largest ecumenical and evangelical gathering of the Church since Pentecost A.D. 33—reflected great diversity of backgrounds, nationalities, geographical locations, and color distinctions, and yet no major statement about the oneness of the human race had been given.

We black American delegates discussed this among ourselves and finally gained an audience with Carl F.H. Henry, the Congress Chairman, to question the evident omission (interestingly, it later came to our attention that some delegates from India, Africa, and South America had also noticed the omission). When we had finished talking with Dr. Henry it was evident that the aspect of the theme had been taken for granted; the planning committee had not assigned anyone to treat it. Dr. Henry apologized on behalf of the planning committee, and he asked us if we would be willing to work at developing a summary statement about "One Race" which would be included in the final report to be distributed to the world press as an outcome of the Congress. A number of us agreed to help develop that statement on race: Jimmy MacDonald, Howard O. Jones, Bob Harrison, Ralph Bell, Louis Johnson, and myself.[11]

We worked into the late hours of the night, but we managed to finish with a clearly focused statement on race. We called attention to the fact that racism hinders efforts to evangelize. We wrote forthrightly about human equality as a biblical principle following the oneness of the human family under God as Creator. We stressed the imperative of agape love in our dealings with all humans, and the need to reject racial and national barriers which forbid full fellowship and cooperative ministry in the Church. As it turned out, the section we helped to prepare about the worldwide problem of racism was un-

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doubtedly the strongest statement evangelicals had ever made on that subject until that time.[12] But given the concern for evangelizing the human race in the present century, we knew that the time had long since passed for making such a clear and forceful statement. We did not offer any distinct strategies for dealing with racism, but our concern at that point was not to prod decision about strategy; it was to give a basic statement that declared our biblical understanding of racism as a social evil, an unjust pattern in society, and a barrier to cooperative evangelism.

It might be helpful to mention a few of the more noted evangelical black leaders who have helped to promote change in race relations within evangelicalism.

> without adequate appreciation of our own social, political, economic, and religious realities, or with insufficient understanding of our capabilities and gifts—to view ourselves as others see us, the first step toward answering the question of who we really are must come from the awareness of the frame of reference we are to locate within in order to know ourselves. In this we do not deny the correctness, within limits, of the view of ourselves others have of us. We cannot see ourselves as others see us. But the point made is that we cannot allow the *determination* of who we are to be placed into, or remain as the case may be, outside ourselves and in the hands of others, no matter who they are.[19]

A strong commitment to the gospel message still pervades the majority of black church groups. The black churches still insist on a biblically-based faith, still teach that the revelation of God is in Jesus, and that Scripture is the Word of God for all of life.

1. Howard O. Jones, associate evangelist with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Asssociation since 1958. To understand the responsible level at which Jones has helped in the struggle, one need only read his book *White Questions to a Black Christian.*[13] The questions Jones treated in that book were those asked him on the "race question" during evangelistic crusades, at Bible conferences, during missionary conventions, college and seminary engagements, and those sent to him in response to his radio ministry. The motive behind the writing was to provide "a bridge of communication between the races." The book gained a wide hearing and went into several editions.

2. Tom Skinner, national evangelist, whose book *Black and Free* chronicled his movement from a street gang leader in Harlem to a converted spokesman for Jesus across the nation and into other parts of the world.[14] When several hundred black evangelical young people were attending the 1970 Inter-Varsity Missionary Convention at Urbana, Illinois, it was Tom Skinner who used his scheduled address there to interpret their militancy and the need for the rest of the Church to understand it in a positive light.

3. William E. Pannell, an activist-interpreter-evangelist, whose book *My Friend, the Enemy* vividly set forth his personal story of how the Civil Rights Movement helped him to understand how his membership in a majority white church group culture obscured the meaning of his black heritage.[15] Pannell is now a Professor of Evangelism and Director of Black Church Studies at Fuller Seminary.

4. John Perkins, whose Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mississippi, and whose books *Let Justice Roll Down*[16] and *With Justice For All*[17] have marked him as a master planner for racial betterment and church witness. Will Norton, Jr.'s cover story on Perkins in the January 1, 1982 issue of *Christianity Today* was aptly done and properly titled: "John Perkins, The Stature of a Servant."[18]

5. William H. Bentley, a Chicago-based minister-theologian who has given steady leadership to the National Black Evangelical Association (founded in Los Angeles in 1963), and has actively sought to promote a distinctly biblical, theological, and social framework of study within which the black perspective can be adequately reflected. During his presidency of the Association, Bentley has stirred the members toward theologizing about social action. In his published history of the NBEA published in 1979, Bentley explained the origins and focus of the organization:

> Because as evangelicals, we have been taught, often

The concern was to understand blackness as a given distinction and God-given distinctive, gaining a proper self-understanding out of which to serve and relate with dignity. "Fellowship and Ministry—these are the poles around the Association resolves."[20]

William H. Bentley's theological leadership among black evangelicals has been recognized by the wider evangelical world, and it was he who accepted the assignment to write the chapter on "Black Believers in the Black Community" for the book *The Evangelicals*, which was edited by David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge.[21] In that chapter, Bentley correctly explained black evangelicalism as a very distinct phenomenon originally rooted in the theology and cultus of the Bible school movement which had trained many of the black evangelicals. The chapter goes on to explain why blacks had dared to differ with white evangelicals over social matters, and why blacks found it necessary to re-define the issues for which white definitions were inadequate. The development of Black Theology is a case in point, and so is the involvement of black evangelical scholarly-pastors who have been active in black caucases mounted to help effect change in denominational systems where blacks have been in the minority position.

IV

This has been a rather limited survey, treating only three areas of major contribution from among several which more space would have allowed to be added. I have reported with some pointedness about the development of black evangelical churches, the continuing effects of the black church music tradition on the Evangelical music scene, and the prodding work of black evangelicals to help white evangelicals become socially responsible. It was necessary to treat this last contribution at some length because at the very time in the mid-1970s when evangelical Christianity was growing faster in America than any other "brand" or religious movement,—a group of more than forty million by 1977,[22] its influence at the social level of American life was not one of strength.

There is more which should be surveyed, i.e., the impact on the evangelical pulpits of the black preaching tradition,[23] insights from black urban churches about ministering in the city, to cite two more. But at this stage I must voice the plea of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews: "For time would fail me to tell . . ."(11:32b).

[1] "The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism: The Meaning of Slavery," in Leonard I.

Sweet, ed., *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), p. 183.

[2] On these benefits, see Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City: Anchor Press, Doubleday, Inc., 1973), esp. Chapter IV, pp. 103-135.

[3] See the early criticisms from James M. Washington, *Black Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). In his *Politics of God*, a later work (1967), Washington altered a few of his initial criticisms of the black churches, and also in his more recent "The Peculiar Peril and Promise of Black Folk Religion," in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, ed. by David E. Harrell, Jr. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1981), pp. 59-69.

[4] See the explication by Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*: Vol. I, God, Authority, and Salvation (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), Chapter II ("The Meaning of Evangelical"), pp. 7-23.

[5] See Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983 Sec. Ed.), esp. pp. 172-177, 197-200.

[6] *Ibid.*, see pp. 451-453.

[7] For the text of these and other Tindley songs, see Ralph H. Jones, *Charles Albert Tindley: Prince of Preachers* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), App. B, hymns. See also *Gospel Pearls* (Nashville: Sunday School Publishing Board, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., 1921), one of the earliest "ecumenical" collections containing black church songs.

[8] Earle E. Cairns, *The Christian in Society* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 162.

[9] Carl F.H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964).

[10] Sherwood Wirt, *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[11] Personal reports about the Congress were published in books written by two of this group. See Bob Harrison, with Jim Montgomery, *When God Was Black* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), pp. 145-146; James Earl Massey, *Concerning Christian Unity* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1979), pp. 121-126.

[12] The full text of the Congress Statement is available in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, Vol. I, Carl F.H. Henry and Stanley Mooneyham, editors (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967), pp. 5-7.

[13] *White Questions to a Black Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975).

[14] *Black and Free* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968).

[15] *My Friend, the Enemy* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1968).

[16] *Let Justice Roll Down* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books).

[17] *With Justice For All* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982).

[18] *Christianity Today*, January 1, 1982, pp. 18-22, with his picture featured on the cover.

[19] William H. Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association: Reflections on the Evolution of a Concept of Ministry* (Chicago: 1979), p. 67.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[21] (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975).

[22] See *Time* Magazine, December 26, 1977, feature story, pp. 52-58.

[23] The three preaching textbooks by black author James Earl Massey have had wide use in evangelical theological seminaries: *The Responsible Pulpit* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1974); *The Sermon in Perspective: A Study of Communication and Charisma* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976); *Designing the Sermon: Order and Movement in Preaching* ("Abingdon Preacher's Library") (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980).

The Authority of the Bible: What Shall We Then Preach?

by Paul J. Achtemeier

Let me begin with a passage of Scripture from Paul, and it concerns preaching. He writes to the Roman Christians: "Now how are people going to call upon one in whom they have not believed? But how are they going to believe in the one of whom they have never heard? But how then are they going to hear unless there is preaching?" (10:14). The importance of preaching is thus established: faith depends on it. But that passage also made clear earlier how preaching is to be shaped: to summon forth faith in Christ as Lord (see v. 9). Thus, preaching must be authoritative if it is to summon people to faith in Christ, and to be authoritative it must let God's own call to faith be heard through its words. What we are to preach, therefore, is the authoritative Word of God.

All that only raises the key and critical problem with which we must deal: where do we find authoritative witness to God's Word, so that we may responsibly conform our preaching to that Word, and so fulfill the mandate Paul put upon preachers? Obviously, to know something about Christ, we must turn to the place where we find witness to Christ, and that is in the Scriptures. Our problem is again solved: to preach authoritatively, we must preach the message of Scripture.

But our solution has raised a new question: how do we know Scripture is authoritative? Again our answer is to be found in the witness of the Bible to Christ. Since Christ is God's Word (John 1:14; note well, Christ, not Scripture, is God's Word), the witness to him will be authoritative because finally what we hear is God's own voice through the Scriptural witness to His Son.

Now another problem: how do we know it is God's voice? In the cacophony of culture, ancient as well as modern, how do we know it is God's voice we find in Scripture, and not the voice of an impostor, or even of Satan himself who, Paul tells us, can pose as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14)? The solution to that problem must come from God himself, whose own Son, sent for the redemption of sinful humanity, is the center of the witness of Scripture. And the God who does not leave himself without witnesses has in fact sent his Spirit, to testify to our spirits what is the true voice of God. This has found its classical theological formulation in the phrase *testimonium internum spiritus sancti;* the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weakness so we may both in our prayer and in our hearing recognize God's own voice.

How do we know that the Spirit that confirms to us that the voice we hear in Scripture is God's voice and actually comes from God? How do we know it is not some deceitful spirit, to whom we should not give heed? After all, we are warned not to believe every spirit we hear, since many are false; rather, we are to test the spirits, to see whether they come from God or from another source (I John 4:1).

What is the test? It is the confession that Jesus, come in the flesh, is our Lord and Savior (I John 4:2; I Cor. 12:3). But that very same Spirit that moves one to that confession is also the Spirit that is given to the Christian community, indeed that constitutes the Christian community through the variety of its gifts (I Cor. 12:4-13). We know we find God's authoritative voice in Scripture therefore when we hear it within the community which confesses Christ as Lord, the community which the Spirit of God has called into existence, which Paul can call the "Body of Christ." It is within the body of Christ, therefore, that we hear the voice of God who speaks through the Word that is his Son.

It is finally the Christian community, created and sustained by God's own Spirit, who determines what in fact constitutes the authoritative speaking and hearing of the Word of God. Such an exegetical and theological conclusion has confirmation of its correctness in the history of the Christian community, since the determination of the boundaries of the canon of Scripture, and hence of the authoritative witness of God's Son, that is to God's Word, is an act of that very community. It was a decision made over several centuries, and within the context of the life and worship of that community. The authoritative canon is therefore based on the collective confession of faith of the Christian community who, having been called into being and sustained by God's own Spirit, has at the prompting of that same Spirit recognized in those Scriptures the true witness to God's own word, namely his Son. The authority of Scripture, therefore, and hence the authority

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