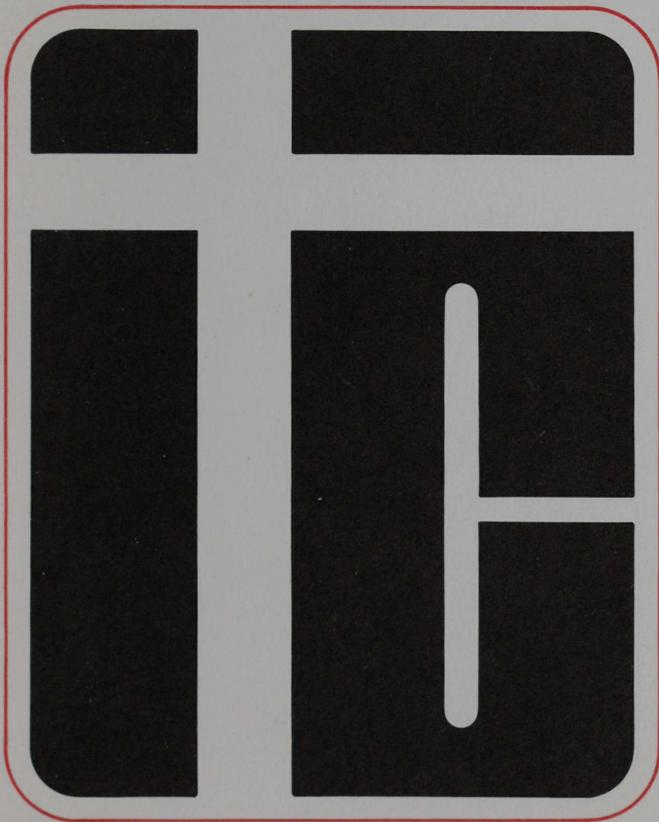


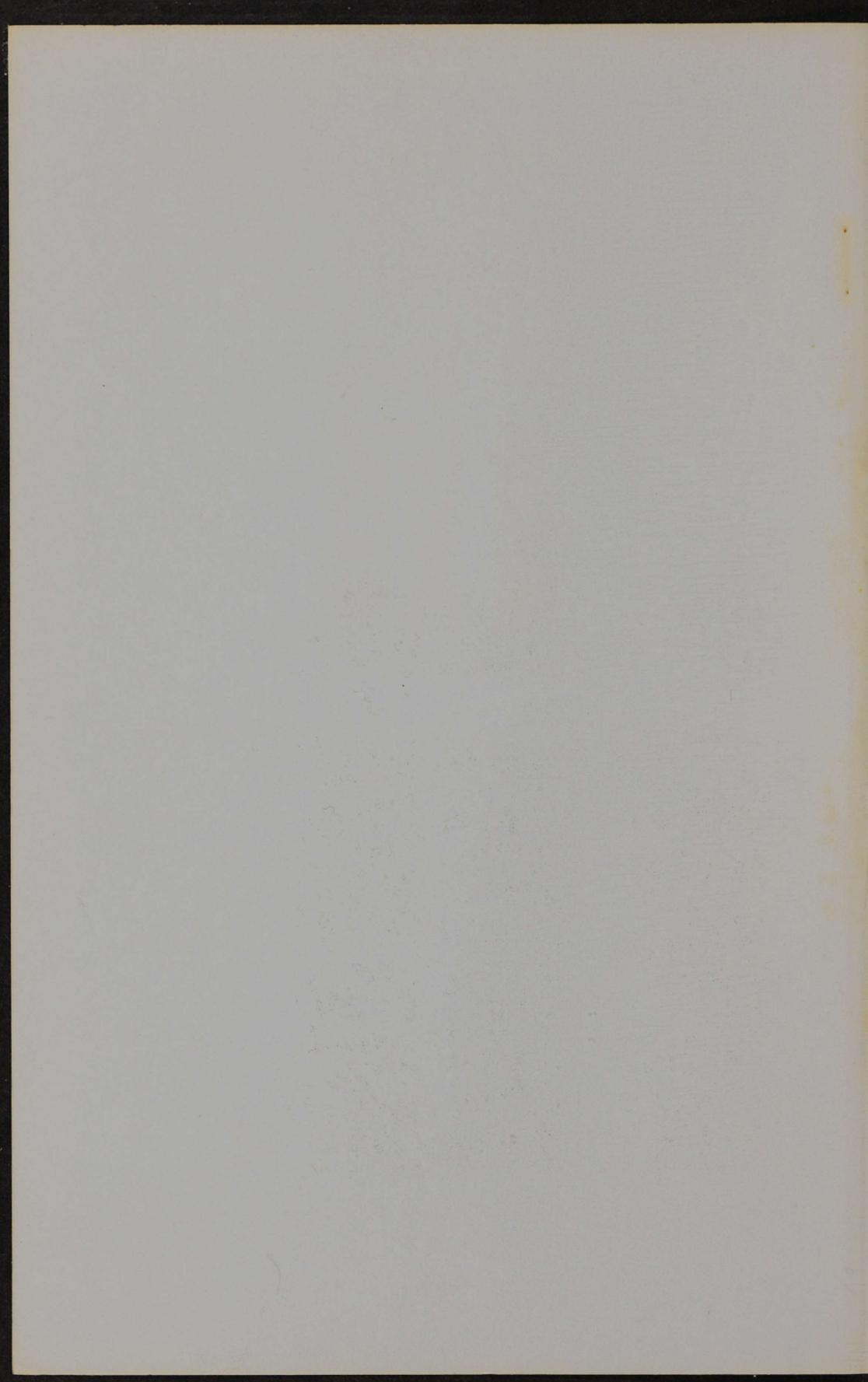
# THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER

Volume III

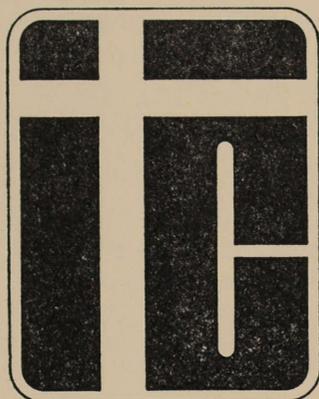
Fall—1975

Number 1





# THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER



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The Journal of The Interdenominational Theological Center is published semi-annually by The Interdenominational Theological Center, 671 Beckwith St., S. W., Atlanta, Georgia 30314. It is published in the interest of the alumni and the constituent seminaries of The Interdenominational Theological Center (Gammon Theological Seminary, Absalom Jones Episcopal Institute, Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary, Morehouse School of Religion, Phillips School of Theology, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary and Turner Theological Seminary).

The Journal of The Interdenominational Theological Center is indexed in The Index of Religious Periodical Literature and Religious and Theological Abstracts.

Manuscripts and related correspondence should be addressed to the editor, The Interdenominational Theological Journal, 671 Beckwith St., S.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30314.

		Subscription Rates	
Individuals		Single Copy	
One Year	\$ 5.00		
Two Years	10.00	\$ 2.50	
Three Years	15.00		
		Institutions	
		One Year	\$ 6.00
		Two Years	12.00
		Three Years	18.00

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## Editorial Comment

We are pleased to begin this issue of the Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center with Harry V. Richardson's article "Early Black Methodist Preachers" which is a part of a chapter from his forthcoming book scheduled for publication in the Spring of 1976 in the C. Eric Lincoln Series in Black Religion. In Richardson's treatment of "Early Black Methodist Preachers" he shows that many prominent black preachers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had their start in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He shows that although such preachers as Richard Allen and Absalom Jones left the Methodist Church and joined other denominations, they began their ministries in the Methodist Church. Richard Allen, for example, Richardson points out was a minister in the Methodist Church for 36 years before starting the African Methodist Episcopal Church. And, of course, Absalom Jones left the Methodist Church and became the rector of the African Episcopal Church of Saint Thomas in Philadelphia.

These are but a few of the many facts that Henry V. Richardson discusses so thoroughly in "Early Black Preachers". Along with the historical significance of these black preachers, a contribution that Richardson's forthcoming volume will make is that it will focus on an area that many historians, sociologists, anthropologist, and religionists have neglected.

Charles B. Copher in "Blacks and Jews In Historical Interaction: The Biblical/African Experience" makes a very important contribution to Biblical scholarship in establishing points of contact between blacks and Jews during the Biblical period; in fact, Copher argues that there was Black-Jewish interactions during the entire course of Biblical history. The data used by Copher to substantiate this thesis are the Bible, supplemented by archeological data, the works of Josephus, extra Biblical Jewish literature, Babylonian talmud and Midrashim Biblical interpretation and legends. In his examination of the literature Copher uncovers many anti-black elements that flow through the data. Thus, we cannot overly emphasize the importance of Copher's research and findings to Biblical scholarship and to the historical roots of the black experience.

Continuing to uncover significant historical facts about early black preachers, Josephus R. Coan makes a valuable contribution in his discussion of Daniel Coker. Josephus points out that Daniel Coker was elected the first Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church but declined and Richard Allen was then elected Bishop. Although Daniel Coker never actually served as the first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, he distinguished himself as the first Bishop elected; along with this distinction Josephus R. Coan discusses Daniel Coker's achievements and contributions in education and mission. In the city of Baltimore Daniel Coker emerged as an outstanding figure in both educational and religious circles. And, along with the many contributions Daniel Coker made as an overseas missionary to West Africa, Josephus R. Coan points out that Coker was among the first blackamericans to write on the anti-slavery question.

Unlike Daniel Coker, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, David Walker was not a preacher; but his writings are undergirded with profound theological insights. John Diamond in "A Theological Interpretation of David Walker's Appeal" discusses Walker's Theological presuppositions in light of the problem of theodicy. Why does God permit blackamericans to suffer? How can blackamericans reconcile the apparent paradox between their suffering and God's justice? If God is all powerful and good then why does he permit blackamericans to suffer? If God is unable to eliminate black suffering then He is not omnipotent. If He is able to eliminate black suffering and chooses not to then He is not all good. This is the dilemma of theodicy that John Diamond shows David Walker's attempt to answer. The *Walker Appeal*, published in 1829, was one of the most revolutionary anti-slavery documents ever to have been published during the pre civil war period. It had a great impact on both slaves and slaveholders and it shows that Walker as early as 1829 anticipated the Civil War as a necessary evil for the emancipation of the slaves.

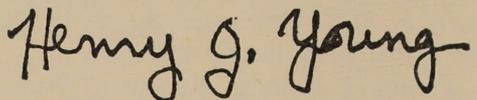
Enoch H. Oglesby discusses "The Theoretical Task of the Black Ethicist" in light of the problem of racism in America; in this discussion Oglesby raises some provocative and interesting questions and issues. He begins by establishing a working definition of racism. Racism is not some abstract phenomenon removed from culture and human interaction; but rather, it is interlocked with the social, cultural, educational, religious, political and economic institutional structures of the American society. Because racism is ingrained within the cultural ethas of America, Oglesby contends that it cannot be understood apart from the way white and blackamericans interact in society. Some of the penetrating questions raised by Oglesby are what are the viable options for black liberation? How may we know and evaluate these options? And, what are the social conditions that push blackamericans to certain types of ethical responses? Oglesby then moved toward constructing a methodological frame by which the task of the black ethicist can be understood.

Henry H. Mitchell in "Some Preliminary Reflections on Authority in Black Religion" attempts to move toward establishing a criterion for determining legitimacy and credibility in black religion. What constitutes the basis of authority in black religion? Do black religionists have to get approval from white religionists before their work become legitimate and credible? And or, does the authority, legitimacy and credibility of black religion emerge from the black religious experience itself? Henry H. Mitchell, in a very creative way, takes us into a search for answers to some of these perplexing questions.

We turn our attention now to the two leading exponents of black theology. James Cone of Union Theological Seminary in New York first introduced black theology to twentieth Century America in his epoch making *Black Theology and Black Power*. Since this volume James Cone has published, *The Spirituals and the Blues, A Black Theology of Liberation* and *God of the Oppressed*. James Cone has led in the populari-

zation of black theology both in America and overseas. J. Deotis Roberts, Jr. emerged as a leading spokesman in black theology. With the publication of his volume on *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* and his most recent volume entitled *A Black Political Theology*.

James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts, Jr. represent different theological perspectives. Each is critical of the other in a constructive manner in that each is challenging the other for more clarity. We are fortunate to have in this issue James Cone's critique of J. Deotis Roberts' recent publication *A Black Political Theology* and J. Deotis Roberts' critique of James Cone's recent publication *God of the Oppressed*. With this kind of internal creative constructive dialogue and controversy black theologians inevitably will be able to realize their task, purpose, direction and accountability in light of the inexhaustible possibilities that lie at the heart of the black religious experience itself.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry J. Young". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Henry J. Young