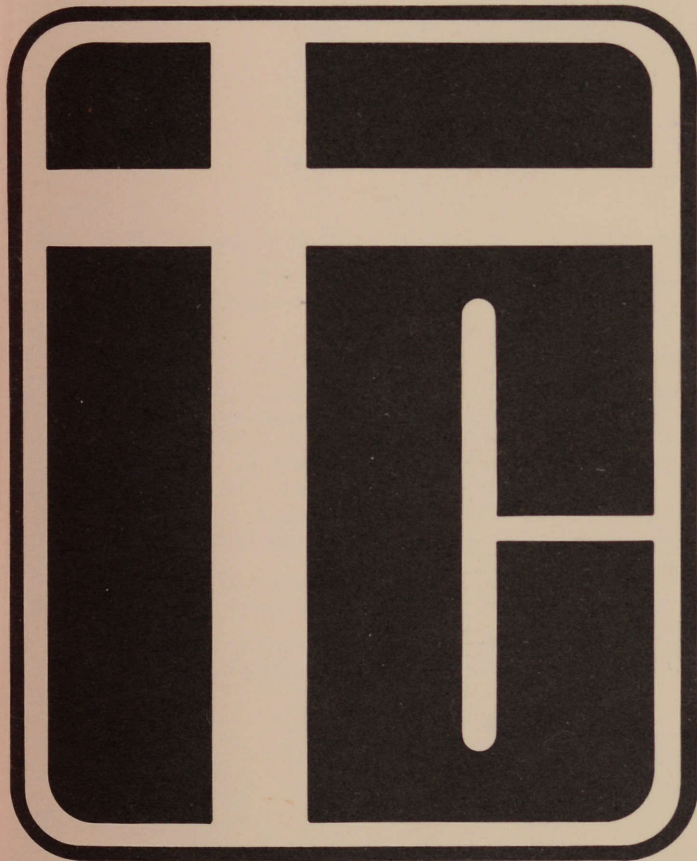


THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER

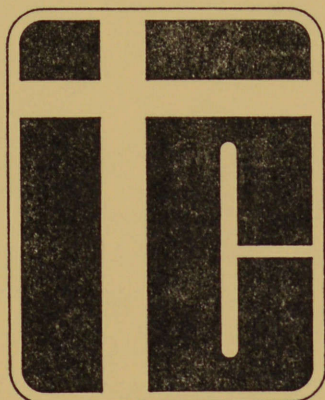
Volume IV

Spring — 1977

Number II



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

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Editorial Comment

This issue of *The Journal of The Interdenominational Theological Center* is devoted to the thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. Various aspects of his thought are critically examined and discussed from several perspectives. We do not attempt to be exhaustive in evaluating King's thought; this study is more of an introduction to his thought. It is hoped, however, that these treatments of King's thought will not only help us to appreciate him more fully as a theologian of extraordinary magnitude but will stimulate other scholars and researchers toward a more thorough exposition and assessment of his thought.

L. Harold DeWolf examines several basic theological aspects of King's thought. The title of King's Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University was "A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the thought of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman." L. Harold DeWolf held the position of Professor of Systematic Theology at Boston University and supervised the writing of King's dissertation. Reflecting on King's student days at Boston University, Harold DeWolf writes "As a doctoral major in theology he was devoted to his studies with rare self-discipline, a veritable scholar's scholar." Throughout his scholarly assessment of King's theological views, Harold DeWolf shows how King continued hard work and study as a scholar of unusual intellectual creativity and maturity. The genius of King was "his remarkably consistent translating of his theology into action. In this process he related his theological beliefs in an authentic and original way to various social theories and movements."

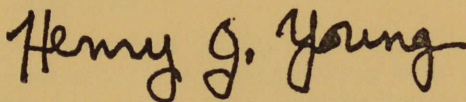
What was the focus of King's theology? Was it toward the perpetuation of the status quo? Anyone who knows anything about the life and thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. would have to say that it was not focused toward the perpetuation of the status quo but rather, it was focused toward the eradication of poverty, oppression, economic exploitation, racism and all sorts of social and moral evils. Harold DeWolf's article refers to the biblical tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr. As we reflect on this, it raises many interesting questions. In his concern for the poor, blacks, whites and poor people generally, how did King use the Bible as a reference? How does the Biblical tradition understand "the poor"? When we refer to "the poor" in contemporary society, does it have the same connotation that it did in the Biblical tradition? How do we transliterate the Biblical tradition of the poor to contemporary society? With a sensitivity to these questions and others, Thomas Hoyt, Jr. very ably begins his article by properly putting King in his Biblical context. He then does a scholarly treatment of "the poor" in the Biblical tradition. After establishing the Biblical tradition of the poor, Thomas Hoyt exposes the reader to the way in which King perceived this tradition in light of contemporary society.

Using the Biblical tradition in the attempt to heal the social and moral ills of society, there are obviously ethical questions involved. Enoch Oglesby and Otis Turner set forth the ethical dimensions of

King's thought. Although his doctorate was in Systematic Theology and in terms of characterization he should be viewed as a theologian, King made many contributions to social ethics. In a scholarly manner, Oglesby and Turner demonstrate some of these contributions.

Not only was King's thought theologically, Biblically, and ethically grounded but, according to Bennie Goodwin, it was grounded in foundations of social education and geared toward social change. He perceives King as a social educator and shows how his thought influenced America toward positive goals. It is my feeling that no one label or category is broad enough to exhaust the height, width, length, and breath of King's life and thought. I think that all of the categories that we ascribe to King whether they are theologian, Biblical scholar, ethicist, social educator, statesman or politician, culminate in the fact that he was a preacher. He emerged from the rich tradition and legacy of the black church. It was the black church that gave birth to King. Calvin Morris speaks of the uniqueness of King as a preacher in his article "Martin Luther King, Jr., Exemplary Preacher."

Scholars throughout America and the world are pursuing various aspects of King's thought and we certainly want to encourage this. Wilson Flemister provides an annotated list of selected dissertations on the life and thought of King. This should be very helpful to scholars and researchers. Minnie H. Clayton has developed a very valuable selected bibliography of both published and unpublished writings by Martin Luther King, Jr. and about him as well. I am sure scholars and researchers will welcome this well developed bibliography.

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

Henry J. Young