



# The Traditions of the Black Church and the Preacher

*Dr Nevalon Mitchell*

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This book is an attempt to analyze the historic roles of the black church and the black preacher in light of liberation theology of radical social involvement. The first chapter, "The Black Church and the Black Preacher: African Roots, underscores the various ways in which African religious traditions shaped and informed the style and ethos of the black church, and the authority and artistic creativity of the black preacher. Only fleeting attention has been given the black preacher in this regard. Some attention is devoted in this chapter to how the image of Africa, as reflected in the early black church and the black preacher, contributed to a liberation theology that would find a strong intellectual character centuries later. Chapter two covers the different images of the black church and the black preacher during slavery. It is called, "Spiritual and Artistic Forms: The Black Church and the Black Preacher During Slavery." Emphasis is placed on how the black church translated its liberation theology into practical reality through its roles as the "Old Israel" and the "All-Comprehending Institution." The Church's involvement in Abolitionists activity, the Underground Railroad, and other movements against slavery and racism is regarded as an early expression of liberation theology. The preacher's significance as a symbol of hope, a leader in the spiritual destiny of the folk, an agent of protest, and a fashioner and exemplar of culture is also interpreted within this context. Chapter three begins with the immediate postbellum period and extends to the present, with a special focus on the implications of black church activism and black preaching for contemporary liberation theology. The argument is that the church and preachers in the slave songs, sermons, tales, and other sources. This chapter is entitled, "Beyond Slavery: The Black Church and the Black Preacher Since Slavery." The next chapter discusses black women in the ministry of the black church. It treats this as the most significant challenge confronting the black church with its strong tradition of a male-dominated leadership. The growing assertiveness of black women in the black church, and the extent to which gender issues are currently shaping black theology, is the central thrust of this chapter. It is called, "Extending the Tradition: Black Women and Ministry in the Black Church." This fourth chapter underscores the need for African-Americans to rethink the traditions of the black church and the black preacher in light of issues that are currently being raised in the works of Delores Williams, Jacquelyn Grant, Marcia Riggs, and other womanist theologians. The fifth chapter is entitled, "Blazing New Paths: Challenges Confronting the Black Church and Its Leadership in the Future." Here the stress is on the need for new and more vital ministries and missions to address drug addiction, Aids, poverty, illiteracy, and other problems that are still negatively affecting the quality of life in the African-American community.

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