

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87986-6 - The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology

Edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
BLACK THEOLOGY

This volume discusses normative theological categories from a black perspective, and argues that there is no major Christian doctrine on which black theology has not commented. Part I explores introductory questions such as: what have been the historical and social factors fostering a black theology, and what are some of the internal factors key to its growth? Part II examines major doctrines which have been important for black theology in terms of clarifying key intellectual foci common to the study of religion. The final part discusses black theology as a world-wide development constituted by interdisciplinary approaches. The volume has an important role in bringing Christian thought into confrontation with one of the central challenges of modernity, namely the problem of race and racism. This *Companion* puts theological themes in conversation with issues of ethnicity, gender, social analysis, politics, and class, and is ideal for undergraduate and graduate students.

Dwight N. Hopkins is Professor of Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School. He has published several books, which include *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (2005), *Heart and Head: Black Theology Past, Present, and Future* (2002), and *Global Voices for Gender Justice* (2001, co-editor with Ramathate Dolamo and Ana Maria Tepedino).

Edward P. Antonio is the Harvey H. Potthoff Associate Professor of Theology and Social Theory, and Associate Dean of Diversities at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado. He is editor of *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology* (2006).

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first text, *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969), to his widely read *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare?* (1991) to his latest work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (2011), Cone has continued to teach systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, and write and lecture globally.

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and *Brown: An Afro-Latino Journey* (2006), *We Belong to Mother Earth: Dineh Elder and Hataali Jones Benally Speaks* (2011), and *Global Indigenous Peoples Performing Arts Festival* (2011).

Mokgethi Motlhabi is one of the founders of black theology in South Africa; he published the first book on black theology in South Africa – *Essays on Black Theology* (1972). Some of his other works include *The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid: A Social-Ethical Analysis* (1984); *Challenge to Apartheid: Toward a Morally Defensible Strategy* (1988); *Toward a New South Africa: Issues and Objects in the ANC/Government Negotiation for a Non-Racial Democratic Society* (1992); and *African Theology/Black Theology in South Africa: Looking Back, Moving On* (2008).

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editor of *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology* (2003); and co-editor with Dwight N. Hopkins of *Walk Together Children: Black and Womanist Theologies, Church and Theological Education* (2010).

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Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. is the Emeritus Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois, and has degrees from Howard University, the University of Chicago Divinity School, and the United Theological Seminary. He is the author of *What Makes You So Strong!* (1993); *Africans Who Shaped Our Faith* (1995); *Good News: Sermons of Hope for Today's Families* (1995); *When Black Men Stand Up for God* (1997); and *A Sankofa Moment: The History of Trinity United Church of Christ* (2010).

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Preface

The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology aims to fill a void in the intellectual study of black religious experiences in different parts of the world. Nowhere is there a volume that critically analyzes black theology of liberation in its varied manifestations and deepens normative theological categories from a black perspective. The two volumes on black theology (1993) edited by James Cone and Gayraud Wilmore consist of a collection of topical, primary documents from 1966 to 1992. In fact, their two volumes are titled a *documentary history* of black theology. And the aim of various introductions to black theology of liberation was not to present a systematic exposition of the key doctrines of black theology as a discipline. Nor was their mission to delve into forms of black theology indigenous to other countries. Hence the uniqueness of the present volume.

Indeed, this *Cambridge Companion* entails three parts. Part I explores the overall introductory matters about black theology. What have been the historical and social factors fostering a black theology? What are some of the internal nuances key to black theology's growth? And what other disciplines have impacted the doing of black theology? Part II examines some of the major themes or doctrines that have been important for black theology in terms of clarifying key intellectual foci common to the general study of religion. And Part III presents global expressions of black theology. As an established body of knowledge and practice, black theology has grown in conversation with similar contexts and related disciplines. Black theology is a global phenomenon in dialogue with interlocutors who have developed the discipline in their own contexts, based on their own warrants. By presenting black theology in relation to its global settings, this text situates black theology as a world-wide development constituted by interdisciplinary approaches.

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This *Companion* will meet the needs of both undergraduate and graduate courses. It goes well with classes centered on: religious studies, comparative models of theology, black studies, women's studies, systematic and constructive theologies, comparative religions, the study of interdisciplinary models, and international studies.

We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of several people who helped with various aspects of this book. Rachel Harding played a crucial role in helping us make initial contact with Walter Passos in Brazil and Sergio Varela at the Cambridge University Press office in Brazil helped us maintain the contact. Gary W. Bunch translated the essay by Passos from Portuguese into English. My former research assistant at Iliff, Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, prepared the index. Two other Iliff doctoral students helped with the book. Néstor A. Gómez-Morales translated the essay on black theology in Cuba by Raúl Suárez Ramos from Spanish into English and Jason Wesley Alvis helped with the initial editing of some of the chapters.

Dwight N. Hopkins would like to thank his former research assistant and doctoral student, Karl W. Lampley, who graduated in 2012. We also want to thank Kate Brett, Laura Morris and Anna Lowe of Cambridge University Press for their expert help and guidance as we worked on the book. Edward Antonio is grateful for the encouragement and assistance of his wife, Gladys. The contributors to this book are located in different parts of the world. Without their timely responsiveness and their commitment to the book, coordinating the project would have been very hard and the global portrait of black theology that the book presents would certainly have been significantly attenuated. We are grateful to all the contributors.

Finally, we give profound thanks to John W. de Gruchy (Cape Town, South Africa) who first had a conversation with Dwight in 1999 about the possibility of doing a companion volume on black theology. John also introduced Dwight to editors at Cambridge University Press.