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The October 1971 issue of the Harvard Theological Review is dedicated to the theme

THEOLOGY AND THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

The Editors have asked the Rev. Herbert O. Edwards, Lecturer on the Black Church at Harvard Divinity School, to serve as Guest Editor for this issue. In so doing we express our conviction that the experience and the perspective of Black theologians are indispensable for the wholeness of theology, church, and society. It is our hope that this specialized issue will help to open our pages for further contributions in the regular format of our Review.

K.S.

INTRODUCTION

A number of changes have occurred in the past twenty years in terms of the understanding of the theological task. Many questions have been raised in reference to the apparent "ivory-tower" stance adopted by theologians in regard to crucial political, economic, and social concerns. The increasing self-consciousness on the part of millions of persons whom theologians have tended to ignore, or, worse, to assume to be beyond the borders of God's concern, has called for new assessments of the responsibilities of theologians in their tacit and overt support of systems which are less than just.

Although the articles in this issue differ, as one would expect, in important points in regard to "Theology and the Black Consciousness," there are very real, if less apparent, unifying threads that are suggestive of similar concerns:

1. There has been sufficient historical data for White theologians to use to include the Christian and non-Christian religious experiences of Black people in their studies.
2. White theologians were affected in their theological analyses by the power-relationships obtaining between White and Black in all parts of the world.
3. Black and Afro-American (and African Christian) responses to White racism and White theological unconcern are likely to be as diversified and distinctive as have been the various responses of White theologians to the presence of "Black Christians."
4. The responses of Black Theology to White western oppression are full of implications for the theologian's self-understanding of his task and for the way in which the major theological doctrines have been interpreted in the past. Probably as much as anything else the challenge of Black Theology, with its critique of White Theology and its necessary ongoing self-criticism, raises to the fore as never before the question of the social significance of the theological task.

HERBERT O. EDWARDS