

THE MYTH OF REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING

Nonviolence and the Impact of Violent Atonement Theories on Marginalized Communities in Their Work of Survival, Resistance & Liberation. (1 of 2)

Gustavo Gutierrez—“Black, Hispanic, and Amerindian theologies in the United States, theologies arising in the complex contexts of Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific, and the especially fruitful thinking of those who have adopted the feminist perspective—all these have meant that for the first time in many centuries theology is being done outside the customary European and North American centers. The result in the so-called First World has been a new kind of dialogue between traditional thinking and new thinking . . . These considerations should not make us forget, however, that we are not dealing here solely with an intellectual pursuit. Behind liberation theology are Christian communities, religious groups, and peoples, who are becoming increasingly conscious that the oppression and neglect from which they suffer are incompatible with their faith in Jesus Christ (or, speaking more generally, with their religious faith). (A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition)

Jacquelyn Grant—“Theology as developed in Europe and America is limited when it approaches the majority of human beings.” (White Women’s Christ and Black Women’s Jesus)

Jacquelyn Grant—“Liberation theologies including Christian feminists, charge that the experience out of which Christian theology has emerged is not universal experience but the experience of the dominant culture . . . liberationists therefore, propose that theology must emerge out of particular experiences of the oppressed people of God.” (White Women’s Christ and Black Women’s Jesus)

James H. Cone—“Few, if any, of the early Church Fathers grounded their christological arguments in the concrete history of Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, little is said about the significance of his ministry to the poor as a definition of his person. The Nicene Fathers showed little interest in the christological significance of Jesus’ deeds for the humiliated, because most of the discussion took place in the social context of the Church’s position as the favored religion of the Roman State., God of the Oppressed (p. 107)

James H. Cone—“What is most ironic is that the white lynchers of blacks in America were not regarded as criminals; like Jesus, blacks were the criminals and insurrectionists. The lynchers were the “good citizens” who often did not even bother to hide their identities. They claimed to be acting as citizens and Christians as they crucified blacks in the same manner as the Romans lynched Jesus . . . White theologians in the past century have written thousands of books about Jesus’ cross without remarking on the analogy between the crucifixion of Jesus and the lynching of black people.” (A Black Theology of Liberation, p. 158-159).

James H. Cone—“The cross helped me to deal with the brutal legacy of the lynching tree, and the lynching tree helped me to understand the tragic meaning of the cross.” (The Cross and the Lynching Tree, Introduction)

Isaiah 53:8—Unjustly condemned, he was led away. (New Living Translation)

James H. Cone—“The cross places God in the midst of crucified people, in the midst of people who are hung, shot, burned, and tortured.” (The Cross and the Lynching Tree, p. 26)

James H. Cone—“I believe that the cross placed alongside the lynching tree can help us to see Jesus in America in a new light, and thereby empower people who claim to follow him to take a stand against **white supremacy** and **every kind of injustice**.” (The Cross and the Lynching Tree, Introduction)

James H. Cone—“The cross places God in the midst of crucified people, in the midst of people who are hung, shot, burned, and tortured.” (The Cross and the Lynching Tree, p. 26)

Gospel of Mark & The Reason for Jesus’ Death

Brown and Parker, For God So Loved the World?—“Women are acculturated to accept abuse. We come to believe that it is our place to suffer . . . Christianity has been a primary—in many women’s lives the primary—force in shaping our acceptance of abuse. The central image of Christ on the cross as the savior of the world communicates the message that suffering is redemptive.” (Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse, p. 1-2)

Elizabeth Bettenhausen—“Christian theology has long imposed upon women a norm of imitative self-sacrifice based on the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Powerlessness is equated with faithfulness. When the cross is also interpreted as the salvific work of

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Brown and Parker—“Suffering is never redemptive, and suffering cannot be redeemed. The cross is a sign of tragedy. God’s grief is revealed there and everywhere and every time life is thwarted by violence.

Elizabeth Bettenhausen—“Several years ago I asked a group of seminarians to choose New Testament stories about Jesus and rewrite them imagining that Jesus had been female. The following recreation of the passion story of Luke 22.54-65 was one woman’s knowing by heart.

“They arrested the Christ woman and led her away to the Council for questioning. Some of her followers straggled along to find out what was to become of her. There were seven women and two men followers. (The men followers were there mainly to keep watch over their sisters.) Someone from among the crowd asked a question of a man follower, ‘Haven’t I seen you with this woman? Who is she, and what is your relationship with her?’ He replied defensively, ‘She is a prostitute, she has had many men. I have seen her with many!’ The men who were guarding the Christ [woman] slapped her around and made fun of her. They told her to use magic powers to stop them. They blindfolded her and each them in turn raped her and afterward jeered, ‘Now, prophetess, who was in you? Which one of us? Tell us that!’ Thy continued to insult her. (Kandice Joyce)

After this story was read aloud, a silence surrounded the class and made us shiver. Ever since, I have wondered would women ever imagine forming a religion around the rape of a woman? Would we ever conjure gang-rape as a salvific event for other women? What sort of god would such an event reveal?” (Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse, p. xi-xii, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown & Carole R. Bohn)

an all-powerful paternal deity, women’s well being is as secure as that of a child cowering before an abusive father.” (Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse, p. xii; edited by Joanne Carlson Brown & Carole R. Bohn)

Mary Daly—“The qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are also those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc. Since these are the qualities idealized in Jesus ‘who died for our sins,’ his functioning as a model reinforces the scapegoat syndrome for women.” (Beyond God the Father, p. 77)

Brown and Parker, For God So Loved the World?—“The problem with this theology is that it asks people to suffer for the sake of helping evildoers see their evil ways. It puts concern for the evildoers ahead of concern for the victim of evil. It makes victims the servants of the evildoers’ salvation.” (Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse, p. 20.)

Delores S. Williams—“African-American Christian women can, through their religion and its leaders, be led passively to accept their own oppression and suffering – if the women are taught that suffering is redemptive.” (Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, p. 161)

Brown and Parker, For God So Loved the World?—“The believer whose thoughts and feelings have been shaped by a tradition that teaches or ritualizes in liturgy the Christos Victor view may interpret her or his suffering in this light. In response to suffering it will be said, Be patient, something good will come of this.(Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown & Carole R. Bohn)

Joan Carlson Brown & Rebecca Parker—“It is not the acceptance of suffering that gives life; it is commitment to life that gives life. The question, moreover, is not Am I willing to suffer? but Do I desire fully to live? This distinction is subtle and, to some, specious, but in the end it makes a great difference in how people interpret and respond to suffering.” (Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse, p.18, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown & Carole R. Bohn)

Brown and Parker, For God So Loved the World?—Jesus did not choose the cross. He chose to live a life in opposition to unjust, oppressive cultures.... Jesus chose integrity and faithfulness, refusing to change course because of threat. (Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse; edited by Joanne Carlson Brown & Carole R. Bohn)

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Brown and Parker, For God So Loved the World?—“Such a theology has devastating effects on human life. The reality is that victimization never leads to triumph. It can lead to extended pain if it is not refused or fought. It can lead to destruction of the human spirit through the death of a person’s sense of power, worth, dignity. or creativity. It can lead to actual death.



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Delores S. Williams—“After emancipation, the coercion associated with antebellum surrogacy was replaced by social pressures that influenced many black women to continue to fill some surrogacy roles. But there was an important difference between antebellum surrogacy and postbellum surrogacy. The difference was that black women, after emancipation, could exercise the choice of refusing the surrogate role, but social pressures often influenced the choices black women made as they adjusted to life in a free world. Thus postbellum surrogacy can be referred to as voluntary (though pressured) surrogacy. (Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, p. 41).

Delores S. Williams—“In this sense Jesus represents the ultimate surrogate figure; he stands in the place of someone else: sinful humankind. Surrogacy, attached to this divine personage, thus takes on an aura of the sacred. It is therefore fitting and proper for black women to ask whether the image of a surrogate-God has salvific power for black women or whether this image supports and reinforces the exploitation that has accompanied their experience with surrogacy. If black women accept this idea of redemption, can they not also passively accept the exploitation that surrogacy brings?” (Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, p. 127)

Acts 4.33—With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 2.22-24—You crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

Acts 2.32-33—This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Acts 3.12-16—You handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, but God raised from the dead.

Acts 4.10-11— . . . Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

Acts 5.30-32—The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.

Acts 10.36-43—They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day.

Acts 13.35-38—Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead . . . And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus.

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Acts 8.12—But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed **the good news of the kingdom** of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 19.8—Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively **about the kingdom** of God.

Acts 20.25— Now i know that none of you among whom I **have gone about preaching the kingdom** will ever see me again.

Acts 28.23—They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining **about the kingdom** of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus.

Acts 28.30-31—For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He **proclaimed the kingdom** of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance

Mark 1.14-15—After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Luke 9.6—So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news [euangelion] and healing people everywhere.

Delores S. Williams—“Black women are intelligent people living in a technological world where nuclear bombs, defilement of the earth, racism, sexism, dope and economic injustices attest to the presence and power of evil in the world. Perhaps not many people today can believe that evil and sin were overcome by Jesus’ death on the cross; that is, that Jesus took human sin upon himself and therefore saved humankind. Rather, it seems more intelligent and more scriptural to understand that redemption had to do with God, through Jesus, giving humankind new vision to see the resources for positive, abundant relational life. Redemption had to do with God, through the ministerial vision, giving humankind the ethical thought and practice upon which to build positive, productive quality of life. Hence, the kingdom of God theme in the ministerial vision of Jesus does not point to death; it is not something one has to die to reach. Rather, the kingdom of God is a metaphor of hope God gives those attempting to right the relations between self and self, between self and others, between self and God as prescribed in the sermon on the mount, in the golden rule and in the commandment to show love above all else.” (Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, pp. 130-131)

Delores S. Williams—“Humankind is, then, redeemed through Jesus’ ministerial vision of life and not through his death. There is nothing divine in the blood of the cross. God does not intend black women’s surrogacy experience. Neither can Christian faith affirm such an idea. Jesus did not come to be a surrogate. Jesus came for life, to show humans a perfect vision of ministerial relation that humans had very little knowledge of. As Christians, black women cannot forget the cross, but neither can they glorify it. To do so is to glorify suffering and to render their exploitation sacred. To do so is to glorify the sin of defilement. (Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, p. 132)

Jacquelin Grant—“Theology as developed in Europe and America is limited when it approaches the majority of human beings . . . For Black liberation theologians, the primary experience of oppression is the Black experience. For Feminist theologians it is women’s experience and for Latin Americans it is the experience of the poor Latin American. Contextualization means making one’s own experiences the framework for doing theology. The context determines the questions asked of the theologians, as well as the form of the answers given. Liberation theologians reject the imposition of the oppressor’s questions upon the oppressed peoples.” (White Women’s Christ and Black Women’s Jesus, Introduction)

Are Atonement Theories which center in the violent death of Jesus possibly asking the wrong questions?

