Race, Theology and Religion

Martin Luther King, Jr., ‘Letter from a Birmingham City Jail’
https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

Biblical Studies

Nyasha Junior, Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible (Oxford, 2019).


R.S. Sugirtharajah, The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations (Cambridge, 2005).


Karin Neutel, A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul’s Declaration ‘Neither Jew nor Greek, Neither Slave nor Free, nor Male and Female’ in the Context of First Century Thought (T&T Clark, 2015).


Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse (SBL, 2016).

Christian Theology


A powerful analysis and is much more explicit about engaging with classical sources than was the case with Cone.


A classic of Black Theology, originally from 1970. Cone was one of the foremost, radical thinkers of Black Theology in the USA. This book is an application of liberation theology to the situation of those oppressed by racial discrimination.


Robert Beckford, *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998).

A British Black theology, written by a Jamaican Pentecostal. Beckford aimed to overcome the spiritualisation and pacification of theology in the Carribbean ‘neocolony’ of Great Britain, which meant to contextualise the gospel in the experience of racism among the post-Windrush generation.


Vincent Lloyd and Andrew Prevot (eds.), *Anti-Blackness and Christian Ethics* (Orbis, 2017).


An impassioned plea by the then President of the Society of Pentecostal Studies to rediscover the liberating and political nature of Pentecostal beliefs and practice in the area of race relations, gender equality, and sexual equality. Alexander is a foremost researcher in these areas with regard to American Pentecostalism, I highly recommend her history of African-American Pentecostalism: *Black Fire* (2011).

**Church History**


Ian MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (St Martin’s Press, 1988).

A somewhat dated, but still useful introduction into the problem of race in American Pentecostalism (and by extension the origin of the movement). It provides a good overview over how a movement that was way ahead of its time in believing that the Holy Spirit had ‘washed away the colour line’ nonetheless ended up in segregation itself.


Anderson presents a vivid account of early Pentecostal missionaries and their various struggles and failures to adapt to local cultures. At the same time, he also shows how Pentecostalism became a catalyst for the contextualisation of Christianity where taken on (and taken over) by local evangelists.

Lindsay Kaplan, *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

**Hinduism**


*Islam*

Michael Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers on Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India* (Cambridge, 2009).

The following four works look at African-American Islam


The following four works examine Islamophobia and the racialization of religion


*Judaism*


**Philosophy of Religion**


An Yountae and Eleanor Craig (ed.), *In the Image of Man: Race, Coloniality, and Philosophy of Religion* (Duke, forthcoming).


Analyzes the influence of Kierkegaard’s thought on Cornel West. Argues that Kierkegaard’s writings presented West with a model for philosophy as religious culture criticism and provided him with concepts to theorize black experience as modern experience.


Discusses the challenges in appropriating Kierkegaard’s thought (the seemingly missing concepts of collective sin and social justice; the idea of the contemporaneity with Christ hindering the “blackness” of Jesus to come forth; the kenotic understanding of faith idealizing suffering and being offensive particularly to black women).

**World Christianities, Colonialism and Christian Mission**

This study area is the most important contribution of World Christianity to understanding race relations today. Missions and ‘Christian civilising’ were a corner stone of colonialism, and there is no decolonising race without a thorough reckoning with this era of World Christianity.

The standard textbook to understanding the intricate history of Christian missions, colonialism, and race. Focusing on non-conformist missionaries in South Africa, the books allow a deep insight into the colonial construction of difference and race. Perhaps even read it alongside an original source the books draw from – it is always sobering to read 19th century views of Africa in the original. For this I’d recommend Robert Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*. London: John Snow, 1842. (available on archive.org)


This book chapter offers a quick overview over the complicated history of anti-slavery, colonialism, and race. I also recommend the whole collection as well as Hanciles’ *Euthanasia of a Mission* (2002).


A helpful introduction into the challenges we still face when reconstructing African Christian history centred on African agency and not overly reliant on colonial sources.

**Theory with Relevance to Theology**


Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994).

Bhabha is especially well-known for his notions of hybridity and mimicry. I especially recommend chapter 6, ‘Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817’. It is a delightful analysis of what happens when the Bible leaves missionary hands.


This book has changed how I think about history and historiography, and it provides a great insight into how we can construct history against the dominant colonial archive: provincialise the dominant historical narrative and highlight what it struggles to encompass.

Kathryn Yusoff: *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

Excavates the fundamental links between slavery and the industrial processes that geologists claim will be found in future earth sediments; discusses the racial implications of the history of geology as a discipline.