



Mixology and Theology

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Week Three: Martini and Jazz Age: 20th Century Black Theology

Mixology: Martini

As with many cocktails, origins of the Martini are disputed. It may have come from San Francisco or Martinez, California in the 1860's. That version likely had sweet vermouth and orange bitters. The dry Martini may have begun in the early 1900's in New York City, using gin, dry vermouth, and orange bitters. Today a Martini typically consists only of gin and dry vermouth, or vodka and vermouth, and garnish. The ratio of gin to vermouth varies widely from 3:1 to 100:1. The recipe below is 5:1, but use a little less vermouth if you like. The choice of gin and vermouth brands can vary the taste.

Martini

2 1/2 oz	gin, or vodka	1/2 oz	dry vermouth
1 or 2	dashes orange bitters (optional)	olive or lemon twist for garnish	

Fill a martini glass with ice and set aside to chill. Fill a cocktail shaker 1/3 with ice. Add gin or vodka, dry vermouth, and orange bitters. Shake for 30 seconds. Discard ice from glass. Strain cocktail into glass. Add lemon twist or olive. *This is a strong cocktail — go easy!*

Martini Mocktail

2 oz	Sprite (or club soda if you want it less sweet)	2 oz	tonic water
1 piece	Lemon peel	1 piece	orange peel
1 pod	Cardamom seeds (removed from pod)	1	sprig fresh Rosemary, about 4 inches
2 dashes	Orange bitters		

Fill a martini glass with ice and set aside to chill. Fill cocktail shaker 1/3 with ice. Add all ingredients. Shake for 30 seconds. Discard ice from glass. Strain cocktail into glass. Remove lemon, orange, and rosemary from shaker and use to garnish drink.

Theology: Jazz Age. 20th Century African-American Theology

History

The 20th century brought significant development of African-American theology. A chief characteristic of this theology is its insistence on focusing on the concrete reality of Black oppression and suffering, often linking it to the cross of Jesus. Until recently, Black theologians have not made many of the classical theological questions about the Trinity or the nature of Christ central to their work. It is a theology that arose in contrast to and in conflict with white academic theology, which was largely focused on more abstract theological concepts flowing from philosophical developments in the West, but largely disconnected from the issues of the day. This was particularly true until the 1930's when some white theologians paid more attention to the rise of fascism and other social concerns.

Since most of the seminaries and divinity schools had faculties of white men almost exclusively, the academy was often insular and dismissive of Black theology as not being "real" theology. Racism among white theologians certainly played a role in the evaluation of Black theology. Black theology arose primarily among Black seminaries, universities, and churches, but has since had a vast influence on theologians and pastors throughout the world, particularly the development of various liberation theologies.

Early 20th Century

The Black church tradition includes a wide variety of traditions and theologies. We're going to focus on one strain that works its way through the 20th century, beginning with two important leaders.

Benjamin Elijah Mays was a Baptist minister and helped lay the foundation for the civil rights movement. After getting a PhD from the University of Chicago, he was a dean at Howard University, and then president of Morehouse College for 3 decades. Mays was a significant mentor for Martin Luther King, Jr. when he attended Morehouse, influencing King's nonviolent resistance philosophy. Mays had met with Gandhi in the 1930's and began to learn and teach about "militant pacifism." Mays gave the eulogy at King's funeral with a speech that has become known as the "No Man Is Ahead of His Time" speech. Here is a quote from it:

If Jesus was called to preach the Gospel to the poor, Martin Luther was called to give dignity to the common man. If a prophet is one who interprets in clear and intelligible language the will of God, Martin Luther King Jr. fits that designation. If a prophet is one who does not seek popular causes to espouse, but rather the causes he thinks are right, Martin Luther qualified on that score. No! He was not ahead of his time. No man is ahead of his time. Every man is within his star, each in his time. Each man must respond to the call of God in his lifetime and not in somebody else's time. Jesus had to respond to the call of God in the first century A.D., and not in the 20th century. He had but one life to live. He couldn't wait.

Howard Thurman was also a key mentor of MLK's and had developed a theology of radical nonviolence. He served as dean of the chapel at Howard University, and at Boston University. His most influential book, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), interpreted Jesus' teachings through the oppressed, and promoted non-violent responses to bring out change. One quote from the book:

It cannot be denied that too often the weight of the Christian movement has been on the side of the strong and the powerful and against the weak and oppressed—this, despite the gospel.

Jesus and the Disinherited was influential on King's formation and work, including the strategies used in the Montgomery bus boycotts.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

King is at the center of African-American theology in the 20th century. However, his legacy has been, ahem, whitewashed to a great degree to make him more palatable to white people. We should consider the work of King that does not affirm the white notions of him and hear how he fits in with the more critical and radical nature of much of Black theology. One important example is his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, where he makes it clear that white moderates are too comfortable and safe and help prolong the journey to freedom. https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

King's later focus on poverty and the war led many to turn away from him. This 1967 speech shows how King saw evil in racism, poverty, and war. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/martin-luther-king-hungry-club-forum/552533/>

James Cone and Black Theology

James Cone is the most important figure in the development of what he himself called Black theology. His extensive lifetime work gave a sustained and powerful vision of Black liberation rooted in the Scriptures, with a corresponding brutally honest assessment of racism, white supremacy, and the white church. His 1969 book *Black Theology and Black Power* ushered in a new era of Black theology with an insistence that "God is black" and Jesus came to liberate the oppressed. Cone was sharply critical of the white church promoting a Gospel of white supremacy, and the white academic theologians unwilling to engage with Black suffering. Cone wrote:

The black theologian must reject any conception of God which stifles black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience, or God is a God of racism. ... The blackness of God means that God has made the oppressed condition God's own condition. This is the essence of the biblical revelation. By electing Israelite slaves as the people of God and by becoming the Oppressed One in Jesus Christ, the human race is made to understand that God is known where human beings experience humiliation and suffering. ... Liberation is not an afterthought, but the very essence of divine activity.

Cone's influence on liberation theology in the 20th century is huge. His insistence that theology must be contextual and rooted in the experience of oppressed people is a powerful re-shaping of the purpose and goal of theology. One of his last books, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, powerfully connects the history of lynching of black bodies with Jesus on the cross.

Womanist Theology

As powerful as Cone's work was, the voices of Black women arose to say that their experience was not being heard or addressed. While Cone addressed the Black experience in general, the unique oppression

of being women and Black was not explored. Feminist theology up to the 1980's had been largely led by white women, and Black women felt excluded. Womanist theology arose in the 1980's taking its name from an Alice Walker poem. It focused on Black women's combined struggles of being Black and women and poor. Jacquelyn Grant's books *Womanist Theology*, and *Black Women's Jesus* helped name the issues. Delores Williams continue the work of Grant. From her 1995 book *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-talk*:

Womanist theology is a prophetic voice concerned about the well-being of the entire African-American community, male and female, adults and children. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm, and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African-American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste.

Other influential voices in Womanist theology include Renita Weems, an Old Testament scholar. In the Lutheran church, Beverly Wallace, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Linda Thomas (professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago) are leading voices today.