

with a request for an autobiography; he posed as a cultural ambassador intent on describing his black world to an audience living outside of it. *The Big Sea* is valuable as a classic of American autobiography for this reason. This reprint is long overdue.

—Alice A. Deck
University of Illinois

Major J. Jones. *The Color of God: The Concept of God in Afro-American Religious Thought.* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987) 160 pp., \$24.95 paper.

Covering the period from the beginning of slavery in America and up to the present, this important and powerful book demonstrates the necessity for a black theology. Major Jones provides an incisive analysis of each entity of the Godhead—God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and relates it to the oppressed African-American. Drawing on his own impressions and the findings of many other theologians, Major Jones has provided an informed up-to-date basis for black Christianity. This book is an excellent synthesis of the paucity of research on African-American theology. However, the book does not appear to meet one of its fundamental aims—black self-worth.

Jones writes, “Black Theology aims to inspire in Blacks a sense of worth, self-esteem, and ‘at-homeness’ within their own subjective blackness.” But the question arises, how can the average black layman relate to this abstract and theological discourse? Theologically, believing that “God acquired knowledge of human suffering by becoming flesh in the form of Jesus Christ” does not appear to be a source of inspiration for African-Americans; or believing that the “Holy Spirit is God and Christ fused into an external unit to bring oppressed people an internal sense of identity” seems too abstract and ideological to be of much benefit. *The Color of God* needs to incorporate ethnic pride in African-Americans by providing concrete examples. The African’s contributions to the development of Christianity seems an indispensable starting point. For example, the “fathers” of the Christian religion and church were indigenous Africans—Tertullian, St. Augustine and St. Cyperian. It was also Felicitas, Nymphamo and Perpetua, another three indigenous Africans who were the first to become martyrs of Christendom.

Finally, Jones did not mention the three African popes—Victor I, Miltiades and Gelasius I. Victor I was noted for bringing unity in the observance of the Easter festival.

Major Jones implies that Jesus Christ’s suffering is similar to African-

Americans' suffering and that this forms a basis for identification. There are, however, major differences. Christ, being Jewish, had knowledge of his ethnic, cultural history. He also had a spoken and written language. The African-American only had the culture, language and history of the enslaver.

Mention should have been made of African-Americans during slavery, men such as Absalom Jones, the first black ordained Episcopal priest in the United States, and Richard Allen, who was born a slave and later became the originator of the African Methodist Church. By providing vivid examples of Christian Africans and African-Americans and their accomplishments, the author might have achieved one of his aims.

In conclusion, although *The Color of God* is an interesting and well written philosophical, theoretical and theological discourse on the fundamentals of black Christianity and may provide the black theologians with inspirations, it seems to fall short of inspiring self-worth to the average African-American.

—Ivan Ainyette
College of New Rochelle

Ruth Kirk. *Tradition and Change on the Northwest Coast: The Makah, Nuuchahnulth, Southern Kwakiutl, and Nuxalk.* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986) 256 pp., \$19.95 paper.

Much has been written about the traditional social organization, art, and technology of the Northwest Coast Indians whose settlements stretch from the state of Washington, through British Columbia, and into southern Alaska. In this volume, writer-photographer Ruth Kirk summarizes the historic and present-day culture of four native groups in the southern part of this region: the Makah, Southern Kwakiutl, and people who call themselves Nuuchahnulth and Nuxalk. Until recently, the latter two groups were referred to, respectively, as the Nootka and the Bella Coola. Kirk's task, undertaken with the sponsorship of the Royal British Columbia Museum, was to update information in older publications and present it in a popular format for the general public. In addition to utilizing previously published data, Kirk drew upon the expertise of contemporary linguists, ethnologists, archaeologists, and—most importantly—many native elders. Kirk emphasizes that the elders bring a “sense of place and past” to our understanding since these people are a “bridge across time.” Numerous first-person accounts and portraits of living individuals bring an exciting and dynamic dimension to this