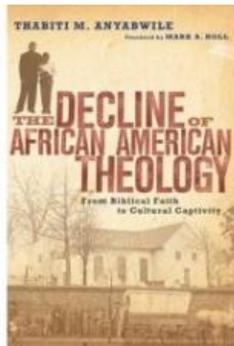


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What Happened to African-American Theology?

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The history of African-American theology raises one key question — What happened? Thabiti M. Anyabwile, now senior pastor of the First Baptist Church, Grand Cayman Islands, answers this question in *The Decline of African American Theology: From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* [InterVarsity Press]. Anyabwile traces a road from biblical orthodoxy to theological liberalism in the mainstream of African-American theology.

Here are two paragraphs that tell the story very well, and in a very moving way:

Rather than denounce the Bible as fraudulent along with its white adherents, the slaves recognized that learning to read the Bible and to possess its contents for themselves was real spiritual power, whose potency was made all the more alluring by efforts to prohibit its access. So, slaves vowed to learn to read before they died so that they could read the Bible. They took advantage of every clandestine opportunity to secure lessons from favorable masters or their children, often risking legally sanctioned retribution, severe beatings and death.

By the end of slavery's reign in America, African American doctrines of revelation were beginning to widen and make room for sources of revelation other than the Scriptures, including God continuing to reveal himself through supernatural means and interventions. This expansion of the doctrine of revelation would weaken the centrality of the Scriptures in the practice and thought of African American Christianity.

The Decline of African American Theology is a really important book — and for all evangelical Christians.

Readers will also want to know of Thabiti Anyabwile's other book, *The Faithful Preacher: Recapturing the Vision of Three Pioneering African-American Pastors* [Crossway].

Thabiti Anyabwile was my guest on Monday's edition of *The Albert Mohler Program* [listen [here](#)].

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