

NT times—for example, Celsus: *Medicine*, §76, and *True Doctrine*, §623; Quintilian: *Declamatio*, §331; and 1 Enoch §§137, 805, 920.

The book includes more than a thousand primary references to Hellenistic texts, arranged in the order of the canonical texts they illuminate. First, in large bold type, the canonical text is given with its corresponding parallels—e.g., Matt 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:15-21. Then, the title of the relevant Hellenistic text is printed in smaller bold type, under which its contents are presented in normal font size. The Hellenistic citation's relevance to the canonical text is then elaborated upon in the annotation, which is cast in a small 10-point font. This decreasing font size in headers and sections displays an orderly format that is both functional and attractive.

My only reservations to this production are (1) its title and (2) its annotated comments. First, some of the so-called "Hellenistic texts" used are beyond third-century C.E. productions: "Inscriptions from Epidauros" (late fourth-century C.E.), Midrash Debarim Rabba (developed from 450 to 800 C.E.), Berekoth 4:1 (600 C.E.), etc. These late works may be too far removed from Hellenistic times to accurately illuminate the NT text. Around 300 C.E. may be deemed a reasonable cut-off point for the selection of sources. Second, while Boring, in his introduction, disclaims any intention that his annotations are definitive (15), the fact remains that the student will still be influenced by Boring's predisposition to pursue his "theological exegesis" (15). This caution is relevant, inasmuch as the Hellenistic texts are not presented in their entirety. There is a certain danger in citing only small segments of a given work. There is the probability that Boring's "theological exegesis" could have been pursued by the dictates of personal influence, "parallelomania," or noncontextual analyses. Apart from these two reservations this commentary is an important exegetical tool for the NT scholar.

Because the message of the NT is rooted in the language, thought patterns, and cultural presuppositions of the time, place, and circumstance in which it was written, noncanonical, primary sources contemporary with that time often offer surprising new insights into Scripture. As Keck puts it, "Even a smell of a primary source is better than a shelf of secondary sources" (11). The richness and versatility of this collection of Hellenistic texts make it an essential for the NT scholar.

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Collier-Thomas, Bettye. *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998. xx + 345 pp. Cloth, \$45.00.

The genius of the African-American preacher is legendary. Long before African-American preachers were officially recognized or sanctioned, their messages of hope and courage inspired the battered African-American community to press on, in spite of the odds. Known for their ability to "tell the story," these African-American preachers wielded empowering influences that were felt well beyond the precincts of their parishes. Unfortunately, students of African-American pastors and preaching have generally tended to view the enterprise as one reserved for males only.

In *Daughters of Thunder*, Bettye Collier-Thomas, an associate professor of history and director of Temple University's Center for African-American History and Culture, seeks to debunk the myth that when it comes to preaching, gender has relevancy. Bemoaning the benign neglect with which African-American women preachers have been treated over the years, she explores, in this well-researched, well-documented study, "the history of African-American preaching women and the issues and struggles they confronted in their efforts to function as ministers and to become ordained" (xv). Her objective is to rescue these women from anonymity and obscurity, and to lift up for observation, if not applause, the fundamentally critical roles they and their preaching played in the African-American's struggle for meaning and empowerment in the United States.

The book is divided into two parts, with chronology being the determining factor. Part One covers the years 1850-1900, while Part Two, which is almost twice as long as Part One, covers 1900-1979. Understandably, the three women covered in Part One are viewed as groundbreakers, while those of the twentieth century are viewed as building on the legacy and heritage of those who paved the way for them. Altogether, study is given to fourteen women whose lives and times span the spectrum from slavery to the turbulent civil-rights era, and whose educational accomplishments, not surprisingly, are as diverse as they themselves are.

A strength of this book is that it investigates the struggles African-American women experienced in attempting to preach. Because they were black and female, these women had to fight the twin evils of racism and sexism. Initially, the black church was stubbornly resistant to the notion of gender equality, and if black women managed to escape their idealized sphere within the home as mothers and homemakers, it was to perform unpaid and often anonymous organizational work within male-dominated structures. Exacerbating matters were the generally held view that the moral authority of black women was contingent on their relationship with black men, and the notion that gender equality was subordinate to racial equality.

Eschewing the argument that women did not belong in the pulpit, these women struggled to overcome their marginality and to achieve a measure of security, protection, respectability, and recognition in the black church. Often they mounted the pulpit in defiance of their husbands, displaying indefatigable courage and resolve in the face of tremendous odds. Ordination did not come quickly or easily to them, but it did ultimately come around the turn of the century.

The thirty-eight sermons analyzed in this book have never been published before, and are offered up, not as homiletical masterpieces to be analyzed for their exegetical integrity and biblical accuracy, but rather as discourses that reflect the political, social, and cultural milieus that served as their context. Collier-Thomas, after all, is neither a theologian nor a homiletician, but a historian who was studying the roles of African-American women in the black church when she began to cultivate an interest in their preaching. Thus, she searches for the broader meanings in these sermons, holding and arguing that they provide clues to the times in which they were preached.

The sermons show that African-American women were thoroughly conversant with the major theological themes of their eras. For example, several of them have to do with Christian perfection and sanctification. Especially after the turn of the century, social issues crop up in many. Not surprisingly, almost from the start the role of women in society is a dominant theme in not a few of

them, and the painful socialization of these women is especially detectable in these particular sermons. Collier-Thomas' analysis of each sermon is incisive and penetrating, and serves as a unifying thread for them.

Daughters of Thunder should be of particular interest to people interested in the history of the black church, as well as in gender and racial issues. Largely neglected by historians whose historiography reflected the male-dominated character of black leadership and intellectual life at the turn of the century, these women believed that they were commissioned by the Spirit. As such, they balked at the racial and sexual stereotypes that sought to prevent them from occupying the sacred desk. Combining scholarship with passion, wisdom, and eloquence, they preached powerful and persuasive sermons in the unique and distinctive African-American tradition.

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Committee on Medical Ethics, Episcopal Diocese of Washington. *Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: Christian Moral Perspectives: The Washington Report*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1997. 80 pp. Paper, \$8.95.

Among the perplexing ethical issues raised by medical care during recent decades is the question of how to help persons die well. The more medicine has taken control of the process of dying, the more pressing this question has become. Should we do everything possible to sustain human life, even if it is marked by great pain and little or no opportunity for personal communication? If suffering is intractable and unbearable, should we, in mercy, take steps to hasten the moment of death? Is there a moral difference between allowing a patient to die by terminating life-sustaining measures and taking deliberate actions intended to end a patient's life?

Faith communities have found it important to address these questions in order to aid their members in careful moral reflection and action. Some years ago, Gerald Larue sought to catalogue religious beliefs regarding hastening the death of the terminally ill. In his *Euthanasia and Religion* (Los Angeles: Hemlock Society, 1985), he reported on the views of over two dozen religious organizations. While most of these groups were opposed to "mercy killing" for terminally ill patients, there was a wide range of views about specific questions.

More recently, the Committee on Medical Ethics of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, DC, has produced a report that takes up the questions of euthanasia and assisted suicide in a highly engaging and readable manner. The report, produced by an eleven-member panel of theologians, ethicists, health-care professionals, lawyers, and lay persons, draws on the Anglican moral tradition to discuss the ethical permissibility of ending a suffering patient's life.

Specifically, this small book focuses on the moral arguments for and against hastening a terminally ill person's death either by assisting suicide or by performing euthanasia. The arguments against euthanasia and assisted suicide are given greater attention, because, as the report notes, they represent the dominant tradition in Christian thought. Thus, drawing on the Anglican method of attending not only to Scripture and reason, but also to tradition, the burden of proof is placed on those who would seek to alter the Christian heritage of opposition to taking innocent human life.