

**The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching.** By Kenyatta R. Gilbert. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011. Pages, x + 170. Paper, \$20.00.

*Reviewed by timone a davis, D. Min. Chicago, Illinois*

In *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*, Kenyatta R. Gilbert calls for the voice of the African American preacher to be enlivened in such a way as to revitalize African American peoples and communities. Primarily a text for those persons who are preachers or seek to be preachers in African American churches, Gilbert's text can be applied to any ethnic church that seeks to proclaim and preach the Word in a manner that mobilizes people to labor in the vineyard of God.

The author states quite plainly that Black preaching is in a crisis-state, as it no longer functions to be a catalyst for Black people toward the nurture and well-being of the community. A brief look at the history of the Black preacher and his role in Black life helps the reader better understand Gilbert's

context. Gilbert states early in the text that African American preaching needs to reclaim its ability to move people into the action of Luke 4:16-21, which he uses as the guiding scripture for the entire book. He contends that communities cannot be revitalized without doing the work Jesus speaks of in Luke 4:16-21. It is the preacher who will usher in this change.

In order for the preacher to do this, s/he needs to reclaim the use of what Gilbert calls *trivocal* preaching. Trivocal preaching calls for the preacher to take up the voices of prophet, priest, and sage. Gilbert contends that when preachers incorporate these three voices in their sermons, preachers find their own voice. In finding their own voice, preachers are better able to assist the community.

The introduction to this text is not to be glossed over. Though it is lengthy, Gilbert does an excellent job at giving the reader the background necessary to understand the context and content of the book. In chapter one, Gilbert discusses what he sees is the current state of African American preaching. Having already spoken of the role the Black preacher played in the Black community, Gilbert then calls the reader's attention to Black homiletics and what constitutes Black preaching. In chapter two Gilbert takes on the historical journey that gave rise to the Black preacher and Black churches. After reading this section, I was left with the question, "Where is the significant role played by Black women in Black preaching during this time?" In chapter three Gilbert returns to unpack trivocal preaching deepening the reader's understanding of holistic preaching. His discussion of the trivocal preaching paradigm includes African American preaching as practical theology. In chapter four he lays out a clear, concise guide to becoming a trivocal preacher. Veteran preachers and those new to preaching will appreciate this chapter in that it not only includes techniques, it also includes

sample sermons. The appendix is a concise, easier-to-follow version of this chapter. Chapter five continues to offer samples of trivocal preaching by looking at the texts of Black preachers and identifying the voice—prophet, priest, or sage—in each. Chapter six introduced new distinctions about the preacher that would have served the reader better if incorporated into the text earlier, perhaps in chapter two when the author diligently lays out the role of the Black preacher in the various eras.

*The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching* reminds the reader that preaching is beyond performance and self-glorification. Rather, preaching is the mainstay of Black life lived in community where good news is preached, people are set free from bondages, the blind see, and oppression is eradicated.

### ***Introducing Catholic Social Thought.***

By J. Milburn Thompson. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010. Pages, xii + 228. Paper, \$22.00.

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Thompson's new volume is intended as a basic text on Catholic social teaching for college students. While its scope is wide and it goes beyond papal encyclicals and other key Vatican documents in its analysis, the material is presented in a very readable and understandable fashion, a real plus for student-oriented volume.

Inevitably, however, some superficiality occurs in spots. An example is the treatment of the patristic period where one of the most pernicious social teachings in Christian history developed, i.e., the "against the Jews" tradition that gave birth to antisemitism and legitimated other forms of racism is never