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Moving from Shame to Self-worth: Preaching and Pastoral Care

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Witnessing & Testifying pays tribute also to the work of community activist Clara Muhammad, the wife of and co-founder with Elijah Muhammad (Poole) of the movement known popularly as the "Black Muslims." Special tribute is paid to her work in grass-roots education. After vignettes about black women students (chiefly in SNCC) in the movements of the 1960s, the collection closes with analyses of the religious underpinnings of "witnessing and testifying" found among those black women who remain models of reflection and practice for Afro-American women then and now. All told, Rosetta Ross' *Witnessing & Testifying* represents a fine jewel in the necklace of black "womanist" theology, serving the wider community of faith both intellectually and as a profound source of inspiration.

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Moving from Shame to Self-Worth: Preaching and Pastoral Care

Edward Wimberly
Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999
131 pages, \$21.24 Softcover

Edward Wimberly tackles the issue of shame in pastoral ministry. Writing from an Afro-American context, as well as an educator of pastoral counsellors in an academic setting, he believes that the challenge is to foster self-worth in those who live a shame-based life. Wimberly's principal method is to draw on the way that Jesus dealt with shame as outlined in the Biblical record and apply this to contemporary experience. The book is divided into how Jesus dealt with shame (1) in his own life, (2) in the lives of others, and (3) in the parables. He describes how Jesus transformed these shame-based moments into self-worth. Wimberly uses many examples from his own preaching and pastoral care to illustrate how this can be mimicked today.

One of the strengths of this book is its focus on the concrete. While Wimberly draws on various theories of shame and self-worth, he does not leave the discussion there but moves quickly to actual situations. He utilizes theories from family systems, object relations and contemporary Biblical scholarship. This is helpful. Second, the book employs a narrative approach in addressing pastoral situations. His use of narrative uncovers the issues of shame and self-worth. Third, the book is written from a theological perspective rooted in the Scriptures. This is not a psychological perspective with a coat of theology but fundamentally rooted in theology. Fourth, the writing style is easy to follow and the book is not too long. Finally, the book addresses a very important issue, the transformation of shame into self-worth.

One limitation of the book is that the pastoral care and preaching examples all seem to work. Wimberly seems very successful in his ministry in moving shame to self-worth. I wish that it were so easy. I wonder if he has ever not been successful in this area. Was Jesus ever not successful in that area? There are far too many examples in my own ministry when the client's experience of shame remained as the dominant narrative. Where is the theology of the cross in shame? Second, Wimberly emphasizes the pastoral care relationship and preaching as most important in this movement. While I think that these two are helpful, I think that the movement from shame to self-worth takes place not in one relationship but in a variety of relationships. The many relationships in the congregation must be part of this healing. How can a person be healed of shame-based values if the congregation is shame-based? Wimberly fails to emphasize the importance of ecclesiology in this transformation. A congregation where self-worth through Christ is lived as the dominant narrative is a city on the mountain.

I rate the book at 7.5 out of 10.

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