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The heart of Black preaching

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remains a witness to the potential value in interfaith dialogue at the personal level, and reveals some interesting parallels between the Christian Gospel and the Buddhist Dharma. Thirdly, it is a powerful apology for activism amongst religious persons who are committed to their ideals and wish to see them realized in the world around us. As the title of the book suggests, the “raft,” whether it be our faith-tradition or our lives in general, is not the “shore” – it is not the ultimate destination of unity in love and peace.

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The Heart of Black Preaching

Cleophus J. LaRue

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000

250 pages, \$22.50 Softcover

LaRue excavates what could be termed as a homiletic hermeneutic distinctive to black preaching. As such, the author argues that a confluence of several essential dynamics shape black preaching. They include: the sovereignty and power of God, direct attention to the history and culture of African Americans, and competence in addressing Scripture to contemporary black life. A critical facet of this preaching hermeneutic is a biblical hermeneutic which reveals that God acts within human history on behalf of the marginalized and powerless. LaRue underscores that this biblical hermeneutic is shaped, in turn, by black cultural dynamics of interpretation functioning at the level of sacred story.

LaRue identifies five realms which comprise this cultural hermeneutic. He calls these areas “domains of experience.” The first domain is personal piety, which emanates historically from nineteenth-century American revivalism. Personal piety focuses on religious devotion and personal discipline often associated with an emphasis on personal salvation. Second, the “care of souls” depicts the domain of experience concerned with traditional aspects of pastoral care and counseling: healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Next, the third domain aims at social justice. However, in addition to issues regarding race, this domain includes various concerns as gender, age, economic class, and social reform. Fourth, LaRue characterizes the domain “corporate concerns” for the particular interests and experiences common to black life and its culture. Especially important here is his emphasis on those things that are best “spoken to blacks by other blacks.” And lastly, the “maintenance of the institutional

church" completes the list of domains of experience. Whether committed to sustenance or admonition, this domain reflects a concern for the continuing life of the church. All in all, these domains of experience capture what LaRue argues are the paradigmatic beliefs and concerns reflected in black preaching.

The domains of experience are integral to LaRue's method of homiletic analysis for black preaching. Along with this facet of his biblical hermeneutic for black preaching, LaRue includes the scriptural genre or literary form of the text, the demonstration of God's power, and the use of extended metaphors. Approximately half of this project is committed to two chapters analyzing nineteenth-century and contemporary sermons, respectively. LaRue structures these analyses on David Buttrick's notion of the "moves" in sermon development. While Buttrick's system of "sets" appears to be more appropriate for LaRue's application, his analyses successfully examine the distinctive role of each element of this biblical hermeneutic within black preaching.

At times, LaRue's analyses spend more time than is necessary in recapitulation of each sermon, which collectively already constitute a lengthy appendix and a third of the text. Still LaRue is careful to frame the purpose of his method. He emphasizes that this project does not expound any particular homiletic method. He traces, instead, the basic dynamics of black preaching and its engagement with a strong biblical tradition and African American life. And indeed, this book offers an important critique of black preaching and homiletic development.

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Hear the Just Word & Live It

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.

New York: Paulist Press, 2000

78 pages, \$9.50 Softcover

This short book is written by a well known American Jesuit who has some six decades of passionate and vocal involvement with social justice issues. Burghardt is Senior Research Fellow at Woodstock Theological Center in Washington D.C. and co-director of Preaching the Just Word, a centre for homiletics and social justice. He has published several volumes of homilies.

In this brief book Burghardt encourages the reader to hear cries for justice from the Bible, Jesus, the church, and the world. In chapter 1, we are given a brief