

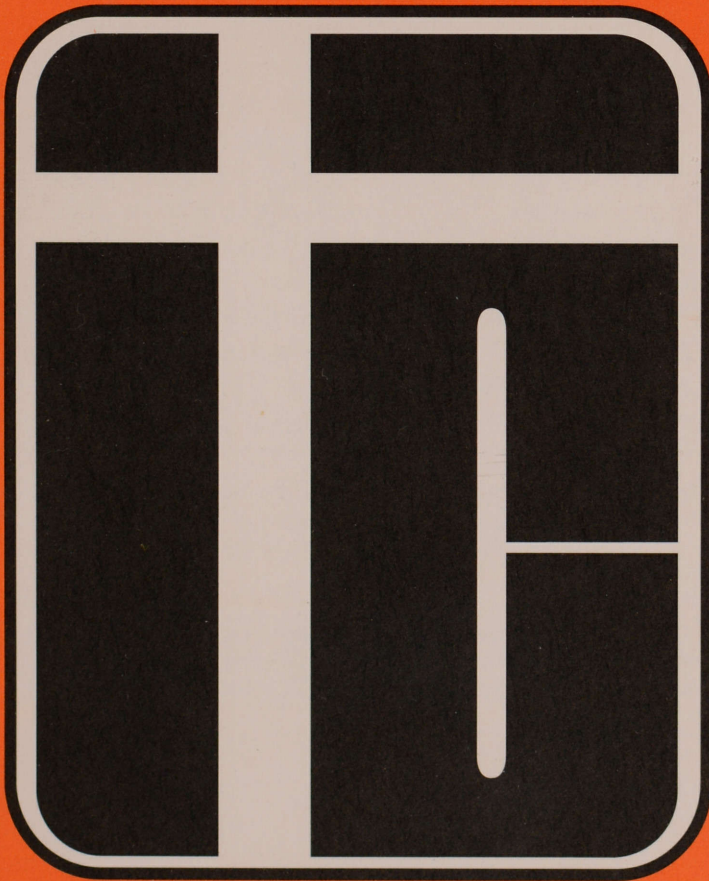
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# THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER

Volume XXII

Fall 1994

Number 1



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**Volume XXII**

**FALL 1994**

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Sandy D. Martin, *Book Review Editor*  
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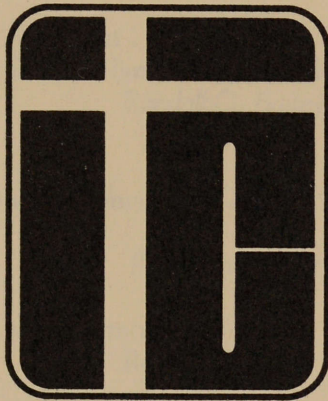
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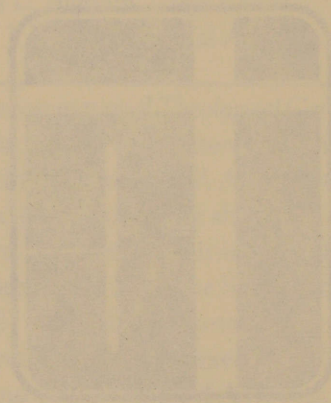
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## Editor's Preface

This issue of the *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* is a special one dedicated to work of Black biblical scholars. All of the articles and essays in this volume were originally presented in the African American Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics Group of the Society of Biblical Literature between 1989 and 1993. They are presented here as a means of documenting some of the work of the Group. We give thanks to Dr. Gayraud Wilmore, former Editor of the *JITC* and the Committee on Academic Publications and Research of ITC who gave permission and guidance to this effort.

The African American Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics Group of the Society of Biblical Literature began as a three year Consultation in 1984 at the Annual Meeting of the Society, which was held in Chicago. The Group was convened by Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., John W Waters, and Vincent L. Wimbush. The program for the first session consisted of two papers by Charles B. Copher and Cain Hope Felder. At the time the project began, the only Black biblical scholars with terminal degrees were men. Currently of the 12 African Americans with the Phd in Hebrew Scripture only two are women. Similarly of the 14 in Early Christian Writings only two are women. While this shows progress since the Group's inception, there is still a long way to go.

After the first three years of the Consultation application was made to the Society for the change of Status from a Consultation to a Group. The application was granted and Hoyt became the first Chair of the Group. He was later succeeded by Renita J. Weems and Randall C. Bailey as co-chairs. Weems was succeeded by Abraham Smith. Throughout the years the group has sponsored sessions at the Annual Meeting of the society on a variety of subjects, such as exploration of biblical texts in which Africans appear, Afrocentric readings of biblical and extra-biblical texts, womanist readings of biblical texts, black homiletical issues in preaching biblical texts, and history of interpretation. On one occasion the Group co-sponsored a session with the Ideological Criticism Group of the Society at the Annual meeting in which Itumeleng Mosala's book, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*

in *South Africa* (Eerdmans, 1989) and Cain Hope Felder's book, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Gender* (Orbis, 1989) were reviewed.

This volume is divided into two parts. The first part is composed of articles on various Afrocentric concerns of biblical scholarship. Some are exegetical, in that they focus on a particular biblical passage. Some are hermeneutical, in that they explore various Afrocentric lenses for understanding Scripture. The second part of the volume is a series of essays reviewing the book *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Cain Hope Felder and in which many of the members of the Group have an article.

Part I is composed of six articles. Randall C. Bailey explores the Priestly narratives in Exodus 7-11. He argues that when isolated these narratives do not speak to plagues, but rather to a contest between, the religious functionaries of Israel (Aaron) and of Egypt (*hartûmmîm*). The purpose of the contest is to show the religion of the Israelites to be greater and more powerful than that of the Egyptians by means of debunking the latter. Koala Jones-Warsaw does a womanist reading of the narrative of the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine in Judges 18-21. She examines the Eurocentric, feminist readings of this text and brings to bear the variables of race and class to augment the reading. Regina Smith examines the enigmatic statement in Amos 9:7, "Aren't you like the Cushites to me, O, Israel." After examining the white supremacist renderings of this as a negative statement, she explores the historical situation of Cush in the 8th C BCE, argues that this is a statement of affirmation, and then offers a new translation.

Abraham Smith explores the unit in Acts 8 involving the Ethiopian official. He explores a literary and rhetorical critical approach to the narrative and argues for patterning within the broader framework of the book of Acts, thereby showing the programmatic nature of the unit for the writer. Ron Liburd examines the new wave of Afrocentric biblical scholarship which proclaims, "We were there!" in terms of African presence in the text. He then argues for additional criteria to be employed beyond that construct and explores the ways in which the doctrine, "the word of God," is a hindrance to liberative hermeneutics. Finally in part I, Osayande Obery Hendricks poetically argues for going be-



yond Eurocentric categories of historical critical investigation and further argues to take seriously contemporary and past Afrocentric popular culture as tools for reading the text critically.

Part II of this volume is dedicated to essays prepared for the first plenary session sponsored by the African American Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics Group. As noted above, the occasion was the publication of the book, *Stony the Road We Trod*. The reviewers come from both the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion. They are a broad group across gender and racial lines. They are also an interdisciplinary group. These essays, which approach a variety of hermeneutical and exegetical issues, are responded to by Thomas Hoyt, Jr. He speaks from both the intention of the Group of scholars who produced the work and to the observations and critiques of the reviewers.

It is our hope that this work will add to the ever burgeoning array of Black biblical scholarship and will advance the questions to another level. As can be seen in the biographical sketches of the writers of each article, most of them are graduate students pursuing degrees in Scripture. Thus, this volume becomes a clarion call that the next generation of Black biblical scholars is no longer on the way. They are here and have chosen their seats and sat down.

Finally thanks must be given to my research assistants, Herbert Marbury, ITC alumnus, and Kevin King, ITC middler, to my daughter, Imani Akilah Bailey, and June Johnson of the JITC staff who assisted me in the work of editing, typing, and fine tuning this volume. Though the pay was small, the thanks and appreciation for the work and putting up with me, are great. I pray for the day both can be of the same magnitude.

Randall C. Bailey  
Atlanta 1994

Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is arranged in approximately 20 horizontal lines, but the characters are too light and blurry to be transcribed accurately.

## List of Contributors

Randall C. Bailey is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew and Chairperson of Area I - Biblical Studies and Languages at ITC. He also serves as the co-chair for the African American Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics Group of the Society of Biblical Literature.

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