

and faith. As more railroad lines were laid in West Texas the population grew, as did the Methodist presence, which at one point topped one hundred thousand.

The migration from West Texas during the Dust Bowl years, however, led to a decline in conference membership starting in 1932. With this decline came difficulties. Early in its history, the conference had chronic problems administering its large territory, with the founding and demise of Methodist colleges, and with denominational infighting. In the second half of the twentieth century, social issues became a source of friction within the conference. Disagreements over whether to participate in the civil rights movement, the ordination of women, and homosexuality dominated annual conference meetings. One of the main theological controversies was where northwest Texas ministers should receive their theological education. The first option was Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, which some leaders believed was not “a place to get a theological degree” (p. 179). The second was the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, which was believed to be more of a ministerial training school. In spite of these persistent problems, the Northwest Conference continued to supply ministers to its churches and serve the needs of its members. Murrah concludes with a description of the conference’s attempts to recover from its decline in membership.

Despite excessive detail and a bit of redundancy when discussing some of the major figures in the conference, Murrah has written an excellent history. The book is well documented and has an excellent index and three helpful appendixes. Although this book has an academic tone, it will be enjoyed by anyone interested in learning about the Northwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Murrah has done a fine job, and I highly recommend this book.

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*The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman. Volume 1: My People Need Me, June 1918–March 1936.* Edited by Walter Earl Fluker and others. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, c. 2009. Pp. [cviii], 377. \$59.95, ISBN 978-1-57003-804-4.)

The Reverend Howard Washington Thurman (1899–1981) is probably one of the most influential yet overlooked American religious thinkers of the twentieth century. This edited volume seeks to rectify this oversight in grand fashion. Best known for his classic text *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York, 1949), Thurman was a prominent pastor, prolific author, profound Christian mystic, pioneering civil rights leader, and provocative public theologian. Culling materials from the vast resources of Howard Washington Thurman’s papers and other relevant archival collections, the editors have meticulously compiled a collection of previously unpublished letters, essays, and other documents spanning from his undergraduate studies at Morehouse College in 1919 to his encounter with Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi while conducting a study trip to India in 1936. This first volume clearly outlines Thurman’s formative years: his formal education, his family life, his leadership in the burgeoning student movement, his years as a professor of philosophy and religion, and his

service as dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University. Notably, the editors include personal as well as professional correspondence in order to provide a detailed, intimate glimpse of Thurman.

A key feature of this volume is the way it shows the synergy of religion and education as twin engines of personal transformation for Thurman that, in turn, inspired him to envision broader prospects for societal change within the context of not only the Deep South but also the United States as a whole. The editors illustrate how Thurman's interactions with the likes of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, A. Philip Randolph, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Mahatma Gandhi (to name only a few) greatly enriched the trajectory and texture of his own growth and development as an estimable voice for spiritual faith and social justice in his own right. From this perspective, the volume's pages do much to reveal the genesis of Thurman's genius.

This volume will serve as an indispensable resource for examining the evolution of one of the true visionaries of the civil rights movement as he came into possession of his own uniquely prophetic voice and vision. In the volume's preface, senior editor Walter Earl Fluker perfectly encapsulates the enduring legacy of Thurman's theological insights by noting "the quiet cadence and lofty idealism of Thurman's interpretation of the religious experience—always pointing inwardly and, yet, challenging the human spirit to soar higher into itself and the world of nature, people, and ideas" (p. xiii). By analyzing the broad array of his writings provided in this exhaustive collection, it is easy to see how Thurman served as a seminal influence on the leadership of the postwar African American freedom struggle, most especially Martin Luther King Jr. Moreover, as senior advisory editor Luther E. Smith Jr. notes, critical research and reflective reading based only on Thurman's published works "are insufficient for tracking Thurman's thinking" since there is a considerable gap between his first published articles in 1922 and his first published book in 1944 (p. xviii). Filling that void admirably, this volume is a particularly worthwhile asset for students and scholars who need to access these wonderfully fruitful primary sources in order to develop a greater understanding of not only Thurman's life and career but also the increasingly robust and complex narrative of race, region, and religion during the twentieth century.

As the first of a multivolume series on Thurman's writings, *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman, Volume 1: My People Need Me, June 1918–March 1936* is an excellent testament to a luminary figure whose deeply personal take on African American faith and culture contributed to the transformation of American intellectual and religious history. The editors have constructed a masterful compilation that is ideally suited to the needs of the serious academic researcher yet accessible enough for the casual general reader. The documents are neatly organized in chronological order with an extensive table of contents for greater ease of navigation for such a comprehensive text. Moreover, the editors contextualize the documents with a substantial preface and introductory biographical overview as well as a concise yet thorough annotated timeline of Thurman's life. Taken as a whole, Fluker and his fellow editors have crafted an impressive volume that promises to be an invaluable resource for years to come.

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