



Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present

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One hundred sermons that display the victorious, although sometimes painful, historical and spiritual pilgrimage of black people in America.

A groundbreaking anthology, *Preaching with Sacred Fire* is a unique and powerful work. It captures the stunning diversity of the cultural and historical legacy of African American preaching more than three hundred years in the making. Each sermon, as editors Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas reveal, is a work of art and a lesson in unmatched rhetoric. The journey through this anthology—which includes selections from Jarena Lee, Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Gardner C. Taylor, Vashti McKenzie, and many others—offers a rare view of the unheralded role of the African American preacher in American history.

The collection provides new insights into the underpinnings of the black fight for emancipation and the rise and growth of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Sermons from the first decade of the twenty-first century point toward the future of African American preaching. Biographies of the preachers put their work in the cultural and homiletic context of their periods.

The preachers of these sermons are men and women from a range of faiths, ancestries, and educational backgrounds. They draw on a vast and luminous landscape of poetic language, using metaphor, rhythm, and imagery to communicate with their congregations. What they all have in common is hope, resilience, and sacred fire. “Even during the most difficult and oppressive times,” Simmons and Thomas write in the preface, “the delivery, creativity, charisma, expressivity, fervor, forcefulness, passion, persuasiveness, poise, power, rhetoric, spirit, style, and vision of black preaching gave and gives hope to a community under siege.”

This magnificent work beautifully renders the complexity, spiritual richness, and strength of African American life.

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