

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Edited by James M. Washington. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
676 pp. \$22.50 cloth.

Union Theological Seminary professor James M. Washington has performed a valuable service by bringing together in this volume a sizeable number of previously published, but oftentimes obscure and hard to obtain, magazine articles and public speeches by the late Martin Luther King, Jr. As such, *A Testament of Hope* will be a useful and important resource tool for any scholar or citizen interested in becoming better acquainted with the substance of King's religious and political beliefs.

The virtues of this volume, however, serve also to highlight some of its perhaps inevitable weaknesses. King scholars increasingly are coming to realize that King's religious faith and roots in the black church are the two most central elements in King's life history, and that far and away the most valuable sources for appreciating and understanding those elements are King's sermons, rather than magazine articles and civil rights rally speeches. Unfortunately, however, only a small number of the scores of King sermons, for which texts or audiotapes exist, have been published. Only a handful of scholars has thoroughly studied the extensive archive of sermon transcripts, available only at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta.

A Testament of Hope includes a few of King's most famous and widely-heralded sermons, such as "The Drum Major Instinct" (4 February 1968), but does not contain any of the immensely valuable unpublished ones, which are especially numerous and helpful for the last three years of King's life, 1965-1968. Literary property concerns on the part of Mrs. Coretta Scott King and the King estate appear to have blocked Professor Washington from including any of these unpublished sermons, and their absence is most unfortunate. Although many of the reprinted magazine pieces, especially those from journals such as *The Christian Century*, give an excellent picture of much of King's thinking in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the much smaller number of such pieces from the post-1965 years fail to convey fully either the emotional richness or growing political radicalism that are evident in the unpublished King sermons from those later years.

Professor Washington's useful annotations of the volume's selections make clear that he is fully aware that aides, editorial advisers and hired ghostwriters oftentimes either drafted or substantially revised many of King's major book and magazine articles. While such editorial assistance is common in the published writings of virtually all major public figures of the last half-century, King's sermons in this context carry yet further special value. Delivered both extemporaneously and from a superb memory, they represent a far purer trove than does work which advisers prepared or edited with an eye toward generally northern (and largely white) audiences.

While *A Testament of Hope* includes several valuable and hard-to-find news media interview transcripts with King, it also devotes more than 230

of its pages to simply reprinting excerpts from King's widely published books, volumes that ought to (and can) be examined in full. Nonetheless, in an era when serious scholarly study of King's texts and homiletics is only now getting underway—this reviewer particularly recommends Keith D. Miller's absolutely superb but little-noted article in the March 1986 issue of *College English—A Testament of Hope* is a valuable and useful resource.

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The Tree of Liberty: A Documentary History of Rebellion and Political Crime in America. Edited by Nicholas N. Kittrie and Eldon D. Wedlock, Jr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. 714 pp. \$39.50.

Nicholas Kittrie and Eldon Wedlock, Jr., co-editors of this volume, note at the outset that *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* confines its definition of a political criminal to one "involv[ed] or charged . . . with acts against the government or a political system." They broaden the dictionary's constrictive definition by adding a passive conceptualization to their treatment of political crime. The passive type of criminal political conduct is "manifested in refusals to offer service demanded by the state (conscientious objection, draft resistance, failing to swear allegiance)." More intriguing for the reader, albeit more embarrassing for the American democratic system, is the third type of political offense that has consisted of mere membership in a group labeled as a potential threat by the government (e.g., Native Americans, blacks, women, and Japanese-Americans).

Departing from traditional accounts of American history and politics, which emphasized the unifying elements in America's pluralistic society, Kittrie and Wedlock, both professors of law, argue that the ongoing expressions of political discord have ultimately produced a greater awareness, indeed expansion, of civil rights and liberties within the heterogeneous American society and body politic. By drawing on an astounding array of political, historical, legal, social, economic, and religious sources, the massive tome documents an identifiable pattern of challenge to the political system and response from the American regime.

Like a standard American history text, the book is divided into chronologically organized chapters devoted to the major phases of the country's development. The last two of the one dozen chapters, however, depart from the chronology with a treatment of "Contemporary Political Conflicts and Domestic Security" and an especially timely examination of "International Terrorism and Human Rights."