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From the Editor's Desk

Cyprian Davis O.S.B.
St. Meinrad Archabbey

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From the Editor's Desk

Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., Editor-in-Chief
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

The Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium, Volume One, is a continuation of something that began almost thirty years ago. In Baltimore at the Motherhouse of the Oblate Sisters of Providence on Gunn Road was held the first meeting of African American theologians, historians, psychologists, liturgists, and other scholars. We had assembled to discuss our place as African American scholars and theologians in our Catholic Church. We were faced with two questions: Can one be a serious black Catholic theologian and can one be at the same time authentically black? As black Catholics, we were faced with a double dilemma. We were not always taken seriously by black Protestant theologians; and many Catholic theologians would not take seriously our theological status or our scholarship. As a result, we found ourselves on the margins. We were, in fact, young scholars—some younger and others older—stepping into a potential minefield, confident, however, that the black experience and the Catholic Faith and Tradition had much to say to each other and much to offer one another.

In 1980, the proceedings of the first meeting of the BCTS in 1978 was published under the title *Theology: A Portrait in Black*.¹ Many of the contributors have passed on; some have retired. But many have remained active, and new scholars have been drawn to our organization.

¹ The volume was published by the Capuchin Press in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The BCTS was reactivated in 1991, and our organization has met virtually every year since then. A few members had been part of the original meeting in Baltimore. The membership, to be sure, had grown and developed, made up now of doctorates and doctoral candidates.

From the beginning, it was clear that many of the papers delivered at our annual meetings needed to be conserved and disseminated among other scholars. Still, three decades after our original meeting in 1978, we are still often perceived as marginal scholars, not belonging fully to the world of black theologians or to that of Catholic theologians. Slowly, however, that perception is beginning to change as we work together to have our voices heard.

Our five articles in this first issue reveal the breadth of our interests and scholarship, everything from an in-depth treatment of marriage customs and missionary pastoral practices in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Zimbabwe (the first installment is given in this newsletter) to an important article revealing the current issue of universal access to health care and the Catholic teaching on social justice and present-day economics. The question of how black faculty make their way through institutions of higher learning recounts the experiences of four professors in three different universities. In the same vein, we are given a look at the experience of black Catholics who lived and worshipped in an overwhelmingly white parish. Finally, this collection of articles is introduced by an address delivered to the BCTS in Atlanta on the hundredth anniversary of W.E.B. DuBois's famous work, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903). Without planning it, each of the articles presented in this collection touch on the question of the "color line" and "double consciousness" as Du Bois presented it over a century ago.