

Cleophus J. LaRue and Luiz C. Nascimento. *The Future Shape of Christian Proclamation: What the Global South Can Teach Us About Preaching*. Eugene: Cascade, 2020. 253 pages. \$29.

The editors begin this collection of essays with this opening statement: “Christianity is turning brown and moving south” (1). They rightly maintain that as it does, preaching is going to be one of those practices affected by that movement. The book contains eleven essays, all from individuals who in one way or another are deeply connected to the global South as professors of homiletics and theology.

Catherine Williams, who teaches preachers on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, expresses well the challenge to Westerners in her essay. She writes, “North American religious life often suffers from a silo effect...boundaries keep the people of God from the rich cross-pollination that can fertilize and multiply our efforts at spreading God’s good news” (131). These essays affirm that there are a myriad of ways to communicate the Gospel.

This volume demonstrates the diversity of preaching in the Southern Hemisphere and challenges this silo mentality that seems to dominate in Western culture. One size does not fit all. The contributors offer ways of broadening one’s homiletic perspective. They do not write off homiletic theory produced by Western cultures. They acknowledge how the global South has benefited and been heavily influenced by the homiletic theory of that culture. Yet, they advocate customizing it to new contexts in the South. Eliseco Pere-Alvarez pleads for the South to honor their own homiletic authorities and reminds them to pray, “Lead us not into imitation” (33).

This book introduces homileticians to a rich cross-cultural experience. It explores preaching within a number of different countries, including Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, India, Nigeria, Singapore, Indonesia, and Fiji.

In his opening essay, Pere-Alvarez envisions the world map being flipped upside down with the Southern Hemisphere on “top” of the map and the Northern Hemisphere on the “bottom.” He calls this “flipping over the tortilla” (13). His basic appeal is to recognize the South as being on equal footing with the North because the South has much to offer the practice of preaching and the theories of homiletics. Among its offerings is the methodological framework out of which it works. Whereas Western thought polarizes knowledge and experience, thinking and doing, theory and action, countries of the South do not. Whereas the Western world polarizes speculative theology from practical theology (e.g., the PhD versus the DMin), the two are one and the same for those in the South (16). Thus, the way to know Christ is not just through theology but through discipleship that incorporates both theology and practice. Flipping the tortilla “fries thinking and doing in the same skillet” (16). Flipping the tortilla also means flipping the Wesleyan Quadrilateral that prioritizes scripture over experience. Southern homiletics prioritizes experiences and, in addition, uses plural nouns: experiences, hermeneutics, traditions, and reasons (24). The emphasis is on interpreting “life with the help of the Bible” (66). Flipping the tortilla also challenges the preacher in the face of oppression and injustices to deliver a message and not a massage (26). Northern homiletics endorses acculturation, whereas Southern homiletics opts for enculturation “or treating all cultures as co-equals, since all of them are vehicles of God’s grace and, at the same time, all of them are tainted by sin” (28). Southern homiletics is fundamentally communal. Northern homiletics is fundamentally individual.

The essay by Carlos Emilio Ham, “How Are They to Hear without a Preacher?” comes from a Cuban Protestant perspective and shows how preaching in Cuba is dependent on many mainline homileticians and theologians, such as Tom Long, Leonora Tisdale, Richard Hays and

James Sanders. Ham combines these Western mainline perspectives with Latin American and Caribbean theologians of liberation (70–91).

Carol Tomlin's essay, "The Hermeneutics of African Caribbean Homiletics," discovers the roots of their preaching tradition in African American homiletics as described by Cleophus LaRue. In addition, she affirms Fred Craddock's model of fusing form and content together, and espouses his inductive method of preaching. Deductive is more normative, but she wants to see more Jamaican preachers use the inductive. She takes issue, however, with Craddock's view of deductive preaching, arguing on the basis of LaRue's description of African American preaching that deductive sermons in Black preaching are dynamic and not static (97). She also believes that following the lectionary can stifle preaching. She writes, "African Caribbean clergy... maintain that the Holy Spirit should be at liberty to change the direction of the sermon completely, including the topic theme, or actual content, which sometimes happens minutes before the actual delivery of a sermon" (99). She believes that episodic-type preaching has been a staple form. However, more recently preaching has emphasized spontaneity and improvisation (100).

All through these essays there is a cry for global South preachers to understand and value the context, traditions, and the rich culture into which they preach. Readers, in addition, will find a lot of emphasis on the role and the power of the Holy Spirit in preaching and in the teaching of homiletics. These essayists, however, do not describe global South preaching through rose-colored glasses. They acknowledge weaknesses and express concern over syncretistic preaching, prosperity gospel, sloppy hermeneutics, overdependence on the Holy Spirit, and preachers who continue to preach from a colonial perspective, just to mention a few.

The book does have some minor limitations. For one, it is not clearly organized. No chapter numerations are included in the table of contents nor in the body of the volume, except in the introduction by the editors. The second "essay" is not an essay but a sermon preached by the author who wrote the first essay, and seems out of place. For another, how and why these contributors were chosen is not answered. The editors say these individuals are not necessarily representative of global South preaching. Nor are they inclusive. So why these contributors? Also, very little is said about the practice of confession, self-disclosure, or the role of ethos. Rather, the focus is primarily on sermon form, context of the listeners, experience, and the theology behind the sermon.

Overall this volume is a welcome addition to assisting Western homiletics out of our silo mentality. More exposure to the preaching of different cultures needs to be pursued.

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