

David Day, Jeff Asterley, Leslie Francis. *A Reader on Preaching: Making Connections*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. 291 pages, \$34.95.

Michael Knowles, ed., *The Folly of Preaching: Models and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 264 pages, \$18.00.

Anyone who has ever taught a course using a reader as a textbook knows how it is often more helpful than a shelf full of books in the library that students are supposed to access, somehow read, and digest in the library in one semester. Two recent books can serve both classroom and study groups well, especially if used in tandem. The *Reader on Preaching*, edited by David Day, Jeff Asterley, and Leslie Francis, represents a significant collection of scholarly essays by noted American and British homileticians. The reader is formally divided into sections treating current preaching trends, the use of scripture in preaching, issues of homiletic structure and communication, the preacher's identity, story parable and imagination in preaching, preaching and worship, the woman as preacher, and essays on effectiveness and preaching. Lots of familiar names are here among the American contributors, several with multiple contributions in different sections: Thomas Long, Walter Brueggemann, Edward Farley, Fred Craddock, Dwight Stevenson, Thomas Troeger, John Killinger, Alvin Rueter, Richard Lischer, David Buttrick, Richard Eslinger, Henry Mitchell, Cheryl Sanders, Virginia Purvis-Smith, Elaine Lawless, and James Nieman. Contributions from British homileticians include essays from David Day and Leslie Francis (two of the reader's editors) as well as Peter Stevenson, Jolyon Mitchell, and John Allyn Melloh. The final two essays in the collection are reports on a quantitative study (among Southern Baptists) and a qualitative study (among Lutherans) of the effectiveness/relevance of preaching.

The essays demonstrate the vitality of inquiry in the field of homiletics, often identifying key areas of difference among the contributors on the role of scripture in contemporary preaching, the degree to which method should shape preaching's purpose, the effect of a quarter century of focusing on the preacher and listeners rather than theology, issues of power and powerlessness in who is permitted to preach, questions about how new media is expanding the ecology of homiletics, and questions about effectiveness that will spark great debate over how sermons should matter. Careful readers will also sense the diversity between the British and American authors' contributions—a diversity that reveals the culturally different ecclesial contexts that called forth these essays as 'appropriate response'.

Reader represents a wonderfully condensed education for making 'homiletic connections', with the burden of the essays published between the decades of the 80s and 90s. The essays simply whet the appetite for group and classroom discussion. They provide a teacher with a wonderful context to point interested students to the books in which these essayists followed this trajectory of reasoning in their scholarly projects. I note briefly two matters that seemed editorially odd. The collection is restricted to journal articles; at one point the editors strongly direct readers to an important critique of Farley's essay on the use of scripture in preaching (included) by Ronald Allen in the Buttrick festschrift, *Preaching as Theological Task* ([WJK, 1996] 176-103). Why not include it? Cost was probably a factor, but the absence of this essay is palpably felt. Similarly, it is difficult to see black and female homileticians included only in sections devoted to their 'issue.' Even though the authors and essays selected are important, the lack of hearing from a black theologian or a female theologian on some other theological issue beyond these frames seems parochial. Where was the essay "The Parameters of

Narrative Preaching” by Lucy Rose in *Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching* (Pilgrim Press, 1990)? Again, the book barrier needed to be crossed.

To experience the difference in this last issue one need only look to the essays and sermons collected in *The Folly of Preaching*. Michael Knowles’ editorial task was to draw together a sampling of the presentations and sermons from the Gladstone Festival of Preaching at McMaster Divinity College. Begun in 1992, the event brings together respected homileticians and preachers to reflect on and enact the continuing relevance of preaching. Where the essays in the *Reader* were all composed for scholarly publication, the dynamic quality of the presentations and sermons in this volume are evocatively captured. Knowles is to be commended for his care in this matter. Here we have multiple addresses by Buttrick and Long (again), but we also ‘hear’ from Charles Adams, Tony Campolo, Edwina Hunter, Martin Marty, John Stott, and Stephen Farris. Sermons by the conference namesake, John Gladstone, and others such as Haddon Robinson, Donna Allen, John Bell, Cleophus LaRue and many others make this volume a feast of diversity’s riches in the greatest tradition of liberality. To this point the primary source we have for this kind of combination between conference lecture and enacted sermons has been the Sermon Seminar and Conference on Preaching series of books edited by David Fleeer and Dave Bland (first ACU Press and now Chalice Press). However, in *The Folly of Preaching* we encounter speakers and preachers identifying central issues in contemporary preaching theory while clearly evoking their unique confessional, gendered, ethnic and theological identities, all while addressing the central issues of preaching’s relevance in theory and practice. These two volumes represent a remarkable mixture of scholarly essay, presentational addresses, and enacted sermons. Though one might imagine issues not raised by either volume, taken together, they still mark out great places to begin the breadth of discussing preaching’s possibilities.

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