

Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit, eds. *Performance in Preaching: Bringing the Sermon to Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 255 pages + DVD. \$24.99.

*Performance in Preaching* is a collection of essays in the spirit of Charles Bartow's intent to bring performance studies into conversation with homiletics. Throughout the book, authors navigate the tensions between art and technical competence and between God's activity and human participation. While the authors advocate loyalty to God's role and human giftedness as the breath of life essential for preaching, the book primarily addresses the actions, habits, and practices necessary for preachers to develop their skills. As the essays progress through the volume, less attention is paid to protecting God's sovereignty in the preaching process and more emphasis is given to the concrete technical aspects of performance. Preachers must discipline their voices, gestures, and minds in order to maintain proper stewardship of God's gift and call to preach.

The divorce between invention and arrangement from style, delivery, and memory has long plagued rhetorical studies. Alyce McKenzie notes that the New Homiletic did not address the "crucial issue: the inseparability of delivery from form and content" (54). Charles Bartow influenced the homiletical discussion by tackling the issue of performance. McKenzie summarizes his work stating, "Bartow's approach to preaching as an oral-aural event advances three key convictions for the New Homiletic: preaching and worship are dialogical; the emotional investment of the preacher in both preparation and delivery is crucial to the preaching moment; and the imagination has a far more profound role in preaching than merely providing stories and images to illustrate each of our three points" (58). His work subsequently influences the various chapters as they tap into the current literature in performance studies, for example of speech act, genre, flow, musicking, creativity, and ritual, to name a few.

Essayists include Marguerite Shuster who describes the theological distinction and relationship between God's activity and human performance. Paul Scott Wilson articulates his understanding of temporal studies and the "now" in performance. Alyce M. McKenzie delves into how genre studies guide us in understanding the intersection between God's role and ours. John M. Rottman explores the role and limitations of speech-act theory. Mary Donovan Turner uses the lens of Miriam's song in Exodus 15 to capture an OT perspective. Ronald J. Allen engages the oral nature of the NT literature to explore performance. Todd Farley brings to bear his expertise in the use of the body in performance studies. Richard F. Ward invites us to examine the use of the preacher's voice. Jana Childers digs deeper into the well of the creative process necessary for preaching. Clayton J. Schmit associates the art of music with the oral performance of preaching. William C. Turner Jr. describes the musicality of African American preaching. And finally, Charles L. Bartow pushes the conversation further down the road by exposing the reader to the vast bibliography of performance studies and worship. The comprehensive footnoting guides readers to the interdisciplinary research necessary to explore the topics further. While some of the essays rehearse familiar territory, for the most part, the chapters engage literature that is not readily available in the homiletical literature.

Supplementing the book is an extensive index not often found in a collection of essays. Likewise, a bibliography categorized around various sub-disciplines offers a comprehensive delineation of the field of performance studies. Additionally, a DVD provides various additional resources. Part I supplies additional mini-lectures and exercises by some of the authors of the essays. Warm up exercises are provided for vocal, physical, and facial performance. Mini-lectures cover topics like the discovery of voice, the mechanics of oral interpretation, and

embodied performance. Part 2 contains preaching samples, examples of principles and exercises in practice, and interviews with the participants in the project. The DVD presentations would enrich any homiletics classroom.

Two students recently asked me if they could use their internship hours to address perceived performance issues in their preaching. My reading list included many of the authors in this volume. However, when it came to offering them practical help, I directed these students to the theatre department across campus. Such interdisciplinary collaboration is helpful, yet many seminaries do not have that resource. *Performance in Preaching* fills a lacuna in the literature that supplies concrete steps necessary for student growth. For teachers like me who have little training in the arts, it provides a resource that will complement my classes.

Tim Sensing  
Abilene Christian University  
Abilene, TX