

Ella Pearson Mitchell and Valerie Bridgeman Davis, eds. *Those Preaching Women: A Multicultural Collection*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2008. 168 pages. \$16.00.

Ella Pearson Mitchell and Valerie Bridgeman Davis present the fifth edited volume of *Those Preaching Women* in *Those Preaching Women: A Multicultural Collection*. *Those Preaching Women*, edited by Ella Pearson Mitchell, is a well known anthology of sermons, written exclusively by women. The series has made its mark among academics, practitioners, and laity as a collection of sermons by black women from various backgrounds, traditions, and professions – bringing otherwise marginal voices and invisible bodies to the forefront of conversations. Through their sermons, these women have shared the realities of their everyday experiences, called for justice in these experiences, and brought consolation and a community of belonging to those in pulpits and pews.

*A Multicultural Collection* continues and expands the tradition of the four previous books in the series. It is the first book to include contributions beyond those of black women, and has the greatest number of contributors, including thirty-three sermons. The women contributing to this volume come from the multiple racial-ethnic backgrounds present in the United States. The sermons illustrate the plurality in women’s experiences, while simultaneously underscoring solidarity through proclamation. This book demonstrates the final metamorphosis of exegesis to sermon, as skill intersects with the cares, concerns, and realities of our world today. The contributors tackle head-on issues relating to their lives as women and being human, while striving for authentic relationship with God and others.

The collection is divided into two sections: sermons written from Old Testament passages and sermons written from New Testament passages. The sermons have been edited from being written for speaking and the ear, to being written for reading and the eyes. On average, they range between three and five pages each. There are tools provided to help the reader along the way. Endnotes are included for finding additional resources on specific topics, references for exegetical insights, and notes that are helpful in understanding the contemporary issues, which may not have been necessary for the context in which the sermons were preached. There is additional information provided about the date and location of each sermon’s delivery. Mitchell and Bridgeman Davis also include brief biographical sketches of each contributor at the end of the anthology, specifying their context, vocation, and interests. These editorial decisions make the book easily accessible for a variety of readers.

The preachers are among many firsts in their denominational, professional, and institutional affiliations, such as Holly Haile Davis, the first Native American female ordained minister of word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church USA. They are multi-vocational across several fields, such as Carla Jean-McNeil Jackson, a practicing attorney and minister. These women traverse the gaps between academy and church, as both academics and practitioners, who are passionate about and committed to the individuals both within and outside of these institutions.

The sermons in this anthology are just as diverse in form, structure, and content as their writers. They are readings of, for, and against traditional readings of the biblical texts – offering alternative readings, interpretations, and applications for everyday life. Daisy Machado calls individuals into practices of patience and faith as active verbs, in order to “Awaken to God’s Dreams” of justice, hospitality, liberation, and healing. Machado uses the story of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis chapter 21. Melva Samson leads her entry with a provocative title “Hell No!” as she recounts the story of Queen Vashti, urging women to reclaim their voices, power,

and bodies. Gennifer Benjamin Brooks in “A Theology of Acceptance” brings a challenge to hazardous groupthink which equates difference with deficiency, as she draws upon Peter’s vision in Acts chapter 11. Lilala Ritsema Bukema, utilizes table fellowship, from Luke 14, as an image to discuss power relations and a theology of hospitality, “At the Table.” Emily C. Hassler, through imaginative narration, becomes a first person eye witness by the name of “Shimoni” to the parable of the poor widow in Mark12:38-44. These sermons express variety in creative ingenious with precision.

With this anthology, Mitchell and Bridgeman Davis bring together themes of justice, healing, visions of God, and visions for humanity, in their diverse forms as they span across the racial-ethnic backgrounds of *these* preaching women. Mitchell describes this multicultural volume as coming from the urging and persistence of colleagues, students, and women who had long been influenced by *Those Preaching Women* (xxi-xxii). These preaching women have become the same mentors for others as the mentors they found in the four previous volumes. Mitchell has made great contributions to the academy, the lives of men and women, and the church that will continue her life and legacy. This publication, with its diversity in voices and sermons, attests to Ella Mitchell as not just the dean of black women preachers but the dean of women preachers, bearing witness on her work as a labor of conviction and love.

Lisa L. Thompson  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN