

David J. Randolph. *The Renewal of Preaching in the Twenty-First Century: The Next Homiletic, with commentary by Robert Stephen Reid*. Second Edition. Eugene, OR: Cascades Books, 2009. 142 pages. \$18.00.

David Randolph is president and professor of theology at Olivet University in San Francisco. He has served in various local pastorates throughout his life. His long-term teaching and preaching career enables him to offer a unique and insightful perspective to the field of homiletics. This current volume is a revision of his 1969 edition. In the first volume, Randolph laid out the parameters for a New Homiletic. In this volume, using the same framework, Randolph moves forward to describe the “Next Homiletic.” The Next Homiletic, he maintains, combines “Deep Faith and High Tech to deepen devotion to God and widen service to humanity” (xi, 107). The Next Homiletic is distinct from the earlier movement in that it has a broader theological base, wider range of references, and engages 21st century issues (12). It is both digital and dialogical. Randolph believes the emphasis on the visual component of communication for the current generation provides an exciting challenge and opportunity for the next wave in homiletics.

As in the original volume, Randolph remains disturbed that because of books like John Broadus’ classic (*On The Preparation And Delivery Of Sermons*), homiletics is viewed as only a branch of rhetoric and is severed from the discipline of theology. He wants to reunite homiletics with theology, a theme he advocates all through these pages (14, 16, 43, 116, etc.).

In the current volume Randolph continues to place emphasis on what the sermon *does* more than what the sermon *is*. Preaching is not the packaging of a product but the evocation of an event (15). Later he reframes this to say that a “sermon should not be *on* a text but *from* a text” (57). What the sermon *does* is what this book explores and is summed up in the following key words which serve as the framework for the volume: content, concern, connection, confirmation, construction, composition, communication, concretion, and transformation. After devoting eight chapters to these qualities, he gives a succinct summary of them at the end (106-107). With these qualities and purposes in mind, the book moves through the process of the preparation and presentation of the sermon with the ultimate goal of transformation.

One of the central components addressed in his second edition is an acknowledgment of the power of the visual in communicating the Gospel. Randolph explores the tremendous opportunity the electronic and digital age (the New Media as he calls it) has to offer preaching. He offers helpful resources to use as well as suggests ways to incorporate the New Media into the sermon event. Randolph does not want to replace the verbal with visual but he does want to expand the verbal to include the visual (59).

In a cross-country trip Randolph took, he found that the difference between thriving churches and burned out churches was “screens.” The screens came in all shapes and sizes and were located at various places throughout the church facilities. The screens were used for projection and for connecting the pastor to the people. Randolph concludes, “. . . these screens were sacramental: the outer and visible signs of inner and spiritual passion to communicate the message” (9). Later he states, “Churches having only verbal worship and preaching may as well use Latin, for the exclusively verbal mode no longer communicates with the vast majority of the population” (54). Though in my opinion these are overstatements, still the important role digital communication must play in contemporary is well taken.

Tom Long correctly argues that preaching is most susceptible to trends (*Preaching From Memory To Hope*, xiii-xv). Media and New Media forms will continue to come and go. This is

not to say that preachers should ignore them – not at all. However, current trends in preaching, including new media forms, need to be kept in perspective. Randolph himself does caution against idolizing the New Media (8).

At the conclusion of the book Robert Reid includes an extremely helpful commentary that pulls together the similarities and differences between the 1969 edition and the current volume. Reid engages in a helpful comparison of Randolph with Fred Craddock, both of whom initiated the New Homiletic movement. Reid observes that Randolph is the architect and Craddock the builder of the New Homiletic, Randolph identifying the salient features and Craddock filling them out.

This is a most helpful volume that energizes and invigorates the conversation about the future direction of preaching. Randolph continues to lead the way in charting new territory for homiletics.

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