

Joris Van Eijnatten, ed. *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Boston: Brill, 2009. 413 pages. \$160.00

This is the fourth book in Brill's series called *A New History of the Sermon*. Of the nine contributors to this volume, three come from universities in the United States, two from Germany, two from the Netherlands, one from Finland, and one from France.

The research approach distinguishes this volume from other works. Rather than examining eighteenth century preaching along chronological, geographic, or confessional lines, the editors choose a thematic approach. The authors identify general themes that influenced sermons during this century, ostensibly without regard for the continent or the country from which they were preached (however, the primary geographical landscape includes Central and North Western Europe and secondarily the Nordic, Southern Europe, and North America). The book divides into three broad categories developed through the nine chapters. First, the "Foundation" by which a sermon was judged, including theological and theoretical foundations, is addressed. "Transformation," the second category, involves the current ideologies of the day. The authors single out three ideologies – Neo-Classicism, Pietism, and the Enlightenment – which reflect the eighteenth century practice of preaching. The third category, "Communication," explores three basic dimensions: the way the sermon reflected daily life, the primacy of delivery in persuading listeners, and how the sermon gratified audience needs.

The goal of this volume, its attempt to take a thematic approach, is arguably inconsistently achieved. For example, the book opens with a chapter by O. C. Edwards who surveys the different kinds of sermons in the eighteenth century and the literature that influenced them. Edwards provides a broad orientation and a generic overview to the collection as a whole. While Edwards' overall organizational schema is based on the "genre" (or more appropriately the occasion) of sermon preached, those units are immediately divided into the geographical or confessional groups rather than themes.

The authors also encounter problems when they attempt to cover more material than their limited medium allows. Some approach their subject using broad brush strokes and thus limit what they can contribute. The chapters that are the most successful at the thematic approach are those that keep the focus narrow. In a chapter representing the theme of Transformation, Jonathan Strom explores the transformation in preaching that occurred as a result of the Pietist and Revivalist movements. The hallmarks of Pietism's reform of preaching included "an emphasis on *Erbauung* and speaking from the heart, the importance of the preacher's character, a distaste for rhetorical formalism, and criticism of excessive learnedness in [sic] pulpit that distracts from the greatest rule of preaching—the salvation of one's parishioners" (182). Revivalist preaching displayed certain parallels to Pietistic preaching with an emphasis on the personality of the preacher, itinerate preaching, open-air preaching, and dramatic delivery (207). Because Strom keeps the focus of his work narrow, he produces rich insights into the influence Pietism and Revivalists had on preaching all through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth.

What this volume asks the reader to believe is that in some sense there is a shared culture that transcends geography and confession and allows scholars to talk about cross-cultural features of the sermon. While there is value in doing this, there are also limits. One cannot expect preaching in Puritan New England to be substantively comparable to preaching in Catholic Italy. Under the theme of Foundation, Alexander Bitzel's chapter on "The Theology of the Sermon in the Eighteenth Century," offers an overview of the theology that undergirded the

sermon. Bitzel begins his examination in the sixteenth century with the Reformation theology of the sermon and the Counter Reformation's response to that theology as manifest in the work of the Council of Trent. After this initial examination, much of the chapter consists of an analysis of the way the two dominant paradigms of the eighteenth century – Pietism and the Enlightenment – influenced the theology of preaching for Protestant churches. Ultimately, Bitzel concludes that the distinctiveness of Catholic and Protestant preaching was greatly reduced as the eighteenth century progressed. While Bitzel's work does justice to the editor's thematic approach, he regularly diverts from exploring the broad theological themes to discussing famous preachers who may or may not have conformed to one degree or another to the trends being discussed.

Herman Roodenburg's investigation of pulpit delivery is a good counter-example of how preaching may be profitably discussed outside confessional and geographical bounds. His main source for investigating this is body of manuals on pulpit oratory and the occasional notes of an eye witness account (313). The view held during the fifteenth century that delivery was only of secondary value changed during the sixteenth century. New interest in the fifth canon of rhetoric, *pronuntiatio*, took shape. The headwaters of this change begin to unfold with Peter Ramus (1515-1572) who restructured classical rhetoric, excising all the disciplines except *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio*. This set in motion the emphasis on delivery that would develop over the next couple of centuries and prepared the way for the exclusive focus on *pronuntiatio* in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. During these two centuries *pronuntiatio* was rule based. The last half of the eighteenth century, however, broke free from the rules and gained a newfound appreciation for unpolished delivery. With James Fordyce (1720-1796), the momentum shifted to internalizing rules, which taught that pulpit performance is to be grafted upon genuine feeling. If emotions were genuine or truly felt, they would naturally and automatically manifest themselves in the preacher's delivery (326).

Despite some deficiencies and the abundance of typographical errors, this book has much heuristic value for future research and serves as an important resource for opening one's eyes to the world of eighteenth century preaching and realizing that many of the issues they struggled with are ones we continue to grapple with today.

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