

Robert Stephen Reid, ed. *Slow of Speech and Unclean Lips: Contemporary Images of Preaching Identity*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010. 196 pages. \$24.00

The title of this work is a conflation of two Old Testament descriptions of Moses' and Isaiah's speech issues. While it should not be considered representative of the tone of any critiques in this work, it is a reminder that the identity of the preacher, in all its humanness, affects how the goodness of God is proclaimed. This book of collected essays speaks to a long-standing reality in public proclamation and speaking and that is *ethos*. The term is used in this review in its ancient meaning, as referring to the individual persona of the speaker, rather than the contemporary use of the term as a commentary on corporate, societal trends. The origin of these essays stems from the presentations of the Rhetoric Working Group at the 2007 meeting of the Academy of Homiletics.

Ethos is a debated and perennial companion to any discussions on preaching. St. Paul's training in rhetoric occasionally referred obliquely to the issue of ethos. "Not I but Christ in me...." he states modestly. And yet, true to the complex reality of ethos, the speaker is always a portrait in contradictions and paradoxes: Paul does not hesitate to enumerate his front-and-center presence by boldly listing his significant efforts on behalf of the listeners for the sake of the Gospel.

Through the theme of ethos, or what the writers describe as agency, Reid's collection of essays exams varied interpretations of the preacher; according to the essays titles: messenger of hope, lover, God's mystery steward, ridiculous person; fisher; host and guest; [one being] out of your mind and as one entrusted. Those who preach or teach preaching will find that these eight essays offer options for sorting out the self-definitions, the identity of the preacher.

The essays are introduced by a Foreword authored by Thomas G. Long, whose own work, *The Witness of Preaching*, focuses on four historical expressions of pulpit ethos: the herald, the pastor, the story teller and the witness.

Readers will probably find the contents of these essays useful to the extent of how compatible they are with their own denominational preaching tradition. As a Lutheran reader of these essays, I think many Lutheran preachers would be interested in, but find foreign, Charles L. Campbell's version of the preacher as "naked street preaching and homiletical foolishness" (89 ff.). On the other hand, Lutheran preachers might find John S. McClure's version of preacher as "host and guest" (119 ff.) echoing Lutheran sacramental emphases.

I found this work intriguing in that there are also three significant sub-texts running through out. Literally speaking, one of the more obvious of these is the lively work found in the footnotes. It is fascinating to read the sources and discussions in the essays which each author uses to buttresses their arguments for their chosen trope. Philosophy, history, theology, homiletics and spirituality all provide resources for these authors.

A second sub-text in this work, both implicit and explicit, features the historical debates around the relationships of preaching and persuasion. While the term *ethos* is not used, Robert Reid's introduction notes that the goal of the collected essays is to "invite homileticians to share their own preaching tropes that quite naturally reveal what they believe about the nature of agency in preaching" (2). Reid addresses this to some extent in his essay in a section entitled "Is There Still Room for Rhetoric?" (160ff.).

Finally, and to no one's surprise, the denominational sub-texts also determine to some extent what tropes authors have adopted.

This work has the major effect, it seems, of not only addressing a significant number of possible self-interpretations for the preacher but forces the reader/preacher to ask a crucial question: "What trope would I use to define my own preaching?"

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