

Robert Stephen Reid, editor. *Slow of Speech and Unclean Lips: Contemporary Images of Preaching Identity*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010. 196 pages. \$24.

As I said when endorsing this book, and as commonplace among contemporary scholars of preaching, the images that we use to describe our worlds and vocations go a long way towards shaping our perceptions of those tasks and how we go about them. In this book, eight scholars of preaching propose and explain eight images for the sermon. Each image creates not only a distinct understanding of the sermon but also distinct perspectives on how to prepare, what to do in the moment of preaching, and what happens in the afterglow of the message.

These provocative essays arose from a working group, chaired by editor Reid, in the Academy of Homiletics. They show the depth and maturity that comes from collaborative consideration in an atmosphere of trust in which participants can push one another with questions, challenges, and possibilities.

For James Kay, the preacher is a messenger of hope. For this homilist, the purpose of the sermon is to bring hope from God to the contemporary community. Kay draws on a postliberal theological reading of To the Hebrews to help the preacher narrate today's listeners into the hope of God. Lucy Lind Hogan imagines the preacher as lover. From this point of view, the language of lover goes beyond image to suggest the preacher's way of acting in the world. The sermon bespeaks God's love for the world even as preacher and congregation love the world. André Resner envisions the preacher as God's mystery steward. Resner draws the notion of mystery from the apocalyptic tradition: God's great mystery is the end of the present age and the coming of the new world. The preacher is a steward of this awareness. Charles Campbell thinks of the preacher as a "ridiculous person." Campbell has in mind naked street preaching; that is, not preaching in the buff but preaching on the street, removed from the liturgical assembly, and in such that the preacher's exposure is itself confrontation and invitation to those who hear it and to the world in which it takes place. Such a figure looks ridiculous from the standpoint of contemporary sensibilities

For Lincoln Galloway, the preacher is a fisher. To be sure, Jesus called the disciples to gospel fishing. But Galloway draws on his prior life in Montserrat, where the Caribbean is omnipresent of the Caribbean, and the narrative of Jesus in the gospel of Mark, to show how the language of fishing can affect multiple aspects of a preacher's perception and work. John S. McClure sees hospitality as the framework within which to understand the preacher. The minister is both host (to the congregation) and guest (of God and of the congregation who, then, host the preacher). The preacher, then, is not a univocal authority but a member of a community that is searching together for an adequate interpretation of God's purposes. Anna Carter Florence draws on Acts 12 and the response of the disciples to Rhoda's news that Peter had been released from prison, "You are out of your mind," to imagine the preacher as "one out of your mind." The preacher has the choice—and is called to help the congregation make the choice—between believing Rhoda or believing, with the disciples in the house, that Herod still has Peter imprisoned. The editor envisions the preacher as "one entrusted" to seek a faithful response from others. The preacher, then, is called to a theologically appropriate use of rhetoric to seek such a response.

Each of these ways of imaging the sermon has strengths and weaknesses. But all are provocative and all deserve discussion in the marketplace of scholarship in preaching. In the masterful Foreword to the volume, Thomas G. Long suggests an appropriate use for this book in the preaching classroom or in a seasoned preacher's reading. "It would be a misuse of this book

if readers thought of these eight proposed governing images as interchangeable identities, like a trunk full of Halloween costumes ready for the preacher to try on . . . Rather, this volume is an invitation to take this collection of essays in hand, like a jewel, and to turn them in the reader's imagination, receiving the flashes of light that reflect from each" (xx). In so doing, preachers can consider ways in which these various images can contribute a preacher's own voice.

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