

Winterbourne L. Harrison-Jones, ed. *From Generation to Generation: A Commemorative Collection of African American Millennial Sermons from the Festivals of Young Preachers 2010–2015*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2015. 368 pages. \$25.99.

From Generation to Generation presents sermons from six annual volumes published by Chalice Press (352). The sermons were preached at six Festivals of Young Preachers and are available on YouTube (353). “What this book represents, more than anything, is the Black millennials’ counter-cultural commitment to the work of the ministry” (4), specifically the ministry of preaching.

The Academy of Preachers (AoP) sponsors the Festivals of Young Preachers. The editor of this volume is a 2010 product of the AoP and “has been a part of the Academy of Preachers since its inception in 2008” (back cover). The AoP “is a national non-profit, transdenominational organization with a mission to ‘identify, network, support, and inspire young people in the call to gospel preaching’” (359).

The collection contains manuscripts of sixty-six sermons preached at the AoP’s Festivals of Young Preachers. Sixty of the sermons are by young preachers, perhaps between the ages of 14 and 28 years (359); and six are by senior preachers. Fifteen of the sixty-six sermons are by women, including homiletician Teresa Fry Brown. Harrison-Jones organizes the young preachers’ sermons into six thematic sections.

Lyvonne “Proverbs” Briggs cites an African proverb, “When you pray, move your feet” (48), to proclaim an active dimension of love. That active orientation takes center stage in the sermons that address social justice in the book’s sixth section. Brandon Jamar Perkins exemplifies the role of social justice rhetoric in preaching by young African Americans as he proclaims, “Until we reach our own Sinai filled with the promise of God’s enduring presence, let us not grow weary in the fight against our stories of terror and oppression. May we continue to work, cry, struggle, and pray together so that our story, our collective story, our redeeming story, our comforting story, our salvific story, our liberating story, can be told” (267–268). In alignment with more expansive anthologies of African American rhetoric, such as *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787–1900* (edited by Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham, 1998) and *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (edited by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas, 2010), Perkins combines diverse dimensions of the African American experience(s) and uses the juxtaposition to call for ongoing action toward social justice.

The sermons demonstrate a variety of preaching methodologies, bringing biblical texts and contemporary situations into conversation, and contain a range of interactions with the Bible, theological scholarship, cultural traditions, and popular music. Theological conflict appears occasionally, and a preacher might even struggle with a text (e.g. Gary F. Green II on Exodus 20:18-21). Several of the sermons end with personal applications; a few offer communal implications.

Marvin McMickle writes in the foreword that the book “will be an important contribution to the study and celebration of preaching as an oral art form and as a structural science” (xiv). The volume celebrates preaching, especially by young African Americans. An anthology like this, however, leaves the study part of McMickle’s prediction to scholars. Therefore I encourage homileticians and rhetoricians to study these sermons, exploring the intersections of religion, race, and rhetoric and magnifying a few voices from faith communities that have received limited consideration in the academic study of Christian proclamation.

In addition to recommending this volume to scholars, I recommend it to preachers, especially those in African American and culturally diverse communities. I also recommend the book to Christians who are not preachers or scholars but welcome spiritual nourishment. Finally, both religious and nonreligious readers can learn about race-conscious Christian rhetoric through this anthology.

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