

Paul Scott Wilson, gen. ed. and Jana Childers, Cleophus J. LaRue, John M. Rottman, associate eds. *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008. 506 pages. \$55.00

As an interdisciplinary discipline, homiletics relies on the resources and perspectives of other academic disciplines such as rhetoric, language, biblical studies, theology, ethics, and sociology to name a few. The *Handbook* takes seriously these disciplines as conversation partners and puts them in dialogue with homiletics. As a product of this dialogue, the *Handbook* becomes an indispensable tool for preachers and teachers of preaching.

The *Handbook* contains eleven major sections consisting of the primary resources that contribute to the task of preaching and sermon preparation. These sections include the following: Bible, Bible Genres, Ethics, Literary Criticism, Poetics, Preacher, Social Location, Experience, Rhetoric, Sermon, and Theology. Each of the sections begins with an introduction by an individual with expertise in that particular field.

The space devoted to each of the eleven areas is fairly evenly distributed with the longest sections being “Theology” (73 pages) and “Sermon”(62 pages). The sections on “Ethics” (24 pages) and “Rhetoric” (25 pages) are the shortest. There are a total of 240 articles in the *Handbook*. There is also a convenient alphabetical listing of the articles.

The editor, Paul Scott Wilson, does not claim that all of the important topics in homiletics are covered. I noticed that while the topics of “Missional Preaching” and “Emerging Church Preaching” were included, post liberal preaching was not. Neither was the topic of humor. Even though the reader may discover a few others like these not addressed, the volume does an excellent job of including the majority of subjects related to the field of preaching. In addition, Wilson acknowledges that the volume makes no attempt to “cover the history of preaching or biographies of important preachers” (xxvi).

The scholars who contribute to this volume come from a diverse background of disciplines and denominations, which complements the dynamics of the conversation. There are a total of 135 contributors from the fields of homiletics, theology, biblical studies, and other disciplines.

The *Handbook* will serve teachers and students of preaching in the classroom as well as assist preachers in preparing weekly sermons. Suggestions are given in two preface articles as to how to use the book in these ways. John Rottman offers advice on how to use the *Handbook* in the classroom. The *Handbook* will serve as a valuable resource in preaching courses because it covers the whole spectrum of topics when it comes to the task of preaching. Because it integrates theology, homiletics, rhetoric, and biblical studies, it offers an indispensable model for students to follow. Rottman suggests using a particular section around which to conduct or structure a preaching course. “Any number of courses can be assembled using the articles in the *Handbook of Preaching . . .*” (xxviii).

Jana Childers offers ideas for using the volume to aid preachers in their weekly preparation of sermons. It can serve as a conversation partner for preachers to generate ideas about the biblical genres or exegesis or hermeneutics. It can also assist in the development of structure and delivery of the sermon (xxix). The articles are cross-referenced and act like bread crumbs to enable preachers to follow up on other related articles.

One section that lacks some consistency is Bible Genres. Twenty-seven essays are included under this category. Some of them are clearly genres but others are simply individual books of the Bible. For example, included are “Contextual Epistles” and “Sermonic, Theological

Epistles.” But when it comes to the Wisdom genre, separate articles are written on Ecclesiastes, Job, and Proverbs. Consistency would dictate that one categorize the Wisdom Literature according to Traditional Wisdom and Skeptical Wisdom or something akin to that. Included also are individual articles on Song of Songs and Esther. But no article is devoted to Hebrews. Why are some books given individual attention and others are not? Why are some genres included and others like Pastoral Epistles are not?

Wilson and his associate editors have assembled an exceptionally fine homiletical resource. I am impressed with the breadth and depth that the volume covers. This *Handbook* is a must for both the classroom and the pulpit.

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