

Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen. *Dialogical Preaching: Bakhtin, Otherness and Homiletics*. Arbeiten zur Pastoraltheologie, Liturgik und Hymnologie 74. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014. 199 pages. \$78.

With this text, Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen offers a promising revision of her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Copenhagen. Here she uses Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and carnivalesque genres of literature to examine a range of homiletical approaches.

In Chapters One, Two, and Four, Lorensen surveys Bakhtin's thought in relation to preaching in general. Chapter One sets up Bakhtin's "pragmatist" view of the inter-relation of theory and practice, as opposed to the linear view of theory informing practice, as a lens for proposing a trans-linguistic approach to homiletics and preaching.

Chapter Two introduces main themes of Bakhtin's dialogism that will inform the analysis to follow in the book. Lorensen explores the ways Martin Buber, Søren Kierkegaard and speech act theory influenced his thought at the same time that he moved beyond all of them. She explores his critique of a transfer/transmission theory of communication. Especially important to her project is her analysis of Bakhtin's three senses of dialogicity. First, is the sense of addressivity: language is always addressed to an other in response to and in anticipation of the "foreign" word of the other. Second, is the sense that all words a speaker uses have already been shaped and inhabited by former use, requiring speakers to choose how to use other's words in conveying new meanings. And, third, is the sense that dialogicity is not simply an approach to speech but is an other-oriented ethic.

In Chapter Four, Lorensen surveys Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque genres in which "a reversal of roles and hierarchies, dissolving traditional lines between actors and audience" occurs (96). She thereby argues that preaching is/should be this sort of genre.

In the remaining chapters, Lorensen uses Bakhtin's concepts to evaluate a range of approaches by various homileticians, some of whom are directly influenced by Bakhtin and others who are not. In Chapter Three, she briefly surveys German, Swedish, Danish and North American homiletical works that lean towards dialogue in some way or another. A great deal of the attention in this chapter is focused on the "New Homiletics," [sic] especially Fred Craddock's inductive approach.

The later chapters of the book are each focused on the work of a particular homiletical scholar. In Chapter Five Lorensen examines the homiletical work of Danish theologian, Svend Bjerg, who draws on Bakhtin to argue for dialogical sermons that create space for a polyphony of voices and "a mighty room of experiences" (117). Chapter Six focuses on James Henry Harris's use of Bakhtin to reflect on the heteroglossia of African American preaching. Chapter Seven explores John S. McClure's *Other-wise Preaching* and suggests ways that Bakhtin's valuation of dialogism and the carnivalesque fit with McClure's use of Levinas in grounding a homiletical approach that emphasizes otherness in the preaching event. In Chapter Eight, she lifts up Charles L. Campbell's work on preaching in a liminal setting "on the street" (as opposed to preaching in a strict liturgical setting) as a model for a carnivalesque approach to the preaching assuming the role of the fool for the sake of the gospel and the dialogicity of the experience on the street with the word from scripture.

In the concluding chapter, Lorensen shifts directions. Here she works to reconcile the emphasis on otherness and difference in Bakhtin and various homiletical approaches and the emphasis on God as Wholly Other in Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and Eberhard Jüngel.

*Dialogical Preaching* reads like a dissertation that needs refinement and focus. Tangents often interrupt the discourse. The author tries to do too much, resulting at times in surface-level analysis and unsupported claims. Most problematic is the fact that the work is not controlled by an overarching methodology. In other words, Bakhtin's work is not used in a consistent manner to evaluate the approaches of the various homileticians considered and to build a cohesive argument.

That said, this work foreshadows great potential for bringing Bakhtin into the homiletical conversation in new and significant ways. Lorensen has laid out before (and others) a number of trails to follow in considering preaching through the lenses of dialogism and the carnivalesque. Especially helpful would be a narrow analysis of various works based on Bakhtin's three senses of dialogue (as she did partially with Craddock, 82–84) followed by a constructive proposal concerning how to preach in a way that involves all three senses. As someone committed to preaching as conversation, I very much look forward to her continued voice in the homiletical dialogue.

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