

Maurice Elliott and Patrick McGlinchey, eds. *Perspectives on Preaching: A Witness of the Irish Church*. Dublin: Church of Ireland Publishing, 2017. 244 pages. £10.00/€11.00.

As the title implies, this collection seeks to present a “uniquely contextualised” Irish perspective on preaching (8). Three essays appear under the category of “Preaching Scripture.” “What Does Scripture Say About Preaching?” by Ferran Glenfield, offers a general overview of preaching in the Old and New Testaments as paradigmatic for ministry today. “Emotion and Encounter in the Witness of Israel’s Prophetic Poets,” by Katie M. Heffelfinger, documents the emotively evocative character of prophetic language in Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, and Joel, making a plea for more experientially oriented modes of discourse: “preachers...should seek to lead their congregations into encounters with the God who speaks in and through the text” (44). On the subject of “Narrative Preaching,” Robin Stockitt identifies six narrative principles in Ezekiel’s story of the valley of dry bones (Intention, Origin, Sequencing, Omissions, Inclusions, and Emphasis). Citing Ricoeur, this essay mostly concerns narrative analysis rather than homiletical theory or practice in particular.

Commencing the section on “Denominational Charisms,” Maurice Elliott reflects “On the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Task of Preaching.” Elliott opposes inductive and subjectivist tendencies in the “New Homiletic,” as represented by “Craddock, Childers and Long” (66–67), whose work is not directly cited. Rather, “Anglican preaching is intended to encourage those who listen in accordance with the gospel message and the theological intention of the Prayer Book” (69). The essay thus accords the *Book of Common Prayer* a regulatory function equivalent to that of Scripture itself. In “Preaching and Celebrating, Word and Sacrament: Inseparable Signs of the Church,” Patrick Comerford explores the balance of word and sacrament within Anglicanism, then reviews the entire sweep of church history to countermand any “false dichotomy” (83) between the two. Adopting the opposite perspective, Trevor Morrow (former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) addresses “Preaching in the Reformed Tradition.” Reciting Reformation formularies “in which the preacher is the mouthpiece of God” (95), he names Scripture, Christology, use of the vernacular, and anointing of the Holy Spirit as “key elements” in this tradition (102–103). “The Task of Preaching: A Methodist Perspective,” by Brian Fletcher, reviews John Wesley’s preaching ministry (particularly in Ireland), then discusses factors that contributed to his effectiveness: anointing, reliance on Scripture, breadth of learning, simplicity of style, and sustained attention to nurturing converts. Insisting that “Preaching is at the heart of the Catholic experience” (“The Roman Catholic Experience,” 129), Shane Crombie chronicles the shift in theological emphasis between the First and Second Vatican Councils and recounts the history of Catholic preaching missions in Ireland. His exposition of the *Homiletic Directory* (2014) notes the centrality of preaching based on “the Word of God” within contemporary Catholicism.

The final four essays are designated “Preaching to the Culture.” In “The Business of Preaching and the World of Literature,” Richard Clarke (Anglican Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland) argues for “imaginative and creative use of language” as an act of resistance to “a culture where words have become denuded of all resonance and subtlety” (161). Barry Forde describes the challenges of “Preaching in a University Context.” He finds resources for addressing religious and cultural pluralism in the pluriformity of the biblical witness, and relates how his own ministry encompasses a variety of strategies for outreach within the university community. Harold Miller contends that “preaching is a priestly kind of exercise...surely the highest possible calling this side of eternity” (“The Preacher: The Person

and the Passion,” 177). He discusses “passion” within “evangelistic,” “expository,” “inspirational,” and “meditative” forms of preaching, advocating diversity of homiletical styles so as to accommodate differences of personality and learning style. Patrick McGlinchey’s “Preaching to the De-Churched and the Unchurched in Contemporary Ireland” is the only essay that consistently addresses cultural concerns. McGlinchey follows Tim Keller (who follows Jonathan Edwards) in proposing that preaching “affectionately,” “imaginatively,” and “Christologically” (202–205) is required to engage “Felt Needs and the Postmodern Imagination” (the title of the final section [205–10]). McGlinchey also provides a “Conclusion,” summarizing common themes, areas of obvious disagreement (“Apparent Dissonance”), and topics for further exploration.

This volume offers an intriguing glimpse into various debates and concerns within “the Irish church.” Nine of the twelve essays are by Anglicans and only one by a Roman Catholic; just one is by a woman. Although Heffelfinger, Stockitt, Crombie, and McGlinchey are notable exceptions, the majority of contributors appear to plot a course independent of recent homiletical discussion elsewhere. Accordingly, this collection will primarily be of interest to those already familiar with the contemporary Irish and/or UK scene.

Michael P. Knowles, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON, Canada