

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. *How Women Transform Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2021. 93 pages. \$29.99.

Tubbs Tisdale's *How Women Transform Preaching* takes the reader on a journey--a journey with women who have followed the call to preach and teach preaching, despite opposition. Originally presented as the 2019 Lyman Beecher Lectures, the research shows how the increasing presence of women clergy over the past sixty years, albeit gradual, has transformed the practice of preaching. Tubbs Tisdale skillfully weaves together stories of early preaching women, homiletical foremothers, and women students of preaching, analyzed with her own homiletical instincts and experiences, resulting in a collection of *herstories* that have altered the landscape of the preaching tradition in the United States.

The book begins with an exploration of early studies conducted on women clergy and ordination, namely, Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang's *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* and Carpenter's *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen*. Both studies revealed the low rates of ordination for women across denominations, if ordination was an option at all. Those women who did receive ordination often found it difficult to find ministry employment; were often steered towards positions with less status; and were significantly undercompensated as compared to their male counterparts. The author notes how opportunities for fulltime pastoral employment were slim, and even more so for African American women desiring to serve in historically Black denominations. More recent studies (2018) show increased percentages of ordained women in mainline denominations, yet delayed growth in other traditions. Challenges for women in ministry identified in earlier studies persist, including inequitable compensation and clergy women appointments as assistant pastors or to rural churches for extended time periods. Tubbs Tisdale connects the statistical data to lived experience by sharing personal stories from women homileticians recalling when they first heard a woman preach, even if the sacred speech act wasn't acknowledged as 'preaching'. The narratives reveal tenacity, ingenuity, and creativity as women preached, regardless.

The second chapter is a concise view of early preaching women in the United States. Tubbs Tisdale cites works by Larson and Brekus covering Quaker and Evangelical preaching women, respectively, and Collier-Thomas' *Daughters of Thunder*, specifically addressing African American preaching women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Mentions of women prophetesses, active in the Puritan tradition at least as early as the seventeenth century, and women spiritual leaders in Africa and in enslaved communities, offer glimpses into the under documented history of women who chose to follow God's call, often in the direst circumstances. Tubbs Tisdale identifies three types of transitions that facilitated the rise of women as early preachers in the United States: 1) ecclesial and theological transitions; 2) political and geographical transitions; and 3) transitions in the lives of the women themselves (31). Readers are invited to consider what contemporary evolutions and innovations make space for more preaching women today.

The book concludes with the author in conversation with sixteen foremothers in the field of homiletics, reflecting on the central question: *what difference has the presence of preaching women made in preaching today?* Here she abridges ten progressions, even revolutions, in the field of preaching because of women preachers, such as: expanded imagery for God; reclamation

of under preached texts, using feminist, womanist and postcolonial hermeneutical resources; theologizing from a feminine perspective; expanded views of voice and authority in the pulpit; and preaching that is more invitational than authoritative. Not insignificantly, women scholars have excavated untold stories of women preachers through in-depth research, thus, making available literature that reclaims women and centers the voices of women. These changes in preaching, asserts Tubbs Tisdale, have created more welcome conditions for some marginalized persons, but it is still not enough. Preaching and teaching women of color continue to experience resistance and disregard for their homiletical contributions and persons in LGBTQ+ communities experience ongoing challenges for acceptance in many faith traditions.

*How Women Transform Preaching* is a needful historical and contemporary record of stories of named and unnamed preaching women and women homileticians. I recommend this book for academic classrooms as well as church studies, and any persons interested in the ways in which preaching women impact the church and the world. The book is a resource for researchers of the traditions of women preachers across time, race, denominations, sexuality, and ordained/not-ordained status. It also includes a convenient timeline of women's ordination in the United States and biographical sketches of the homiletical foremothers interviewed. Tubbs Tisdale points preaching women, and those who support them, forward with hope and with a dose of realism: "we still have a long way to go" (74).

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