

Mike Graves and André Resner, eds. *What's Right with Preaching Today: The Enduring Influence of Fred B. Craddock*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2021. \$31.00.

In *What's Right with Preaching Today?*, Mike Graves and André Resner invite a diverse host of homileticians to answer that infamous question by looking at the life and work of Fred Craddock. Fred Craddock's name is immortalized in homiletical lore as one of the most significant contributors to preaching in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Professors of preaching, seminarians, and listeners of sermons will benefit from these personal stories and essays written both by those who knew Craddock personally and some who knew him briefly or from a distance. This festschrift is worthy of the legend in whose honor it is written. *What's Right with Preaching Today?* highlights, among many other honorable qualities, the rhetorical genius, homiletical wisdom, humor, personable affection, and the down-to-earth personality that characterized Fred Craddock.

The title of the book is influenced by Harry Emerson Fosdick's question, "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" from a 1928 essay written in *Harper's* magazine (xi). Just as Fosdick examined and identified the "matter" with preaching in 1928, Craddock is known for his critique of the popular propositional, deductive sermon approach common in the last half of the twentieth century. Craddock's incisive diagnosis of the "matter" of preaching resulted in a prognosis that preaching had promise and potential in the inductive sermon method. However, *What's Right with Preaching Today?* reintroduces the reader to a multifaceted Fred Craddock whose genius extends beyond his most notable contribution as the father of the New Homiletic movement.

Graves and Resner aim to highlight positive aspects of contemporary preaching. They also seek to stimulate conversation between listeners and preachers while offering encouragement to the Body of Christ (xxi). The editors accomplish their goals and offer other profitable takeaways such as challenging their reading audience to think deeply about how homileticians teach preaching and how preachers are developed. Two examples in the text come to mind. Debra J. Mumford raises the question, "But how are preachers supposed to preach about a subject that is as divisive and potentially explosive as race?" (100). Mumford contends that Craddock's emphasis on how people receive images helped her approach in teaching preachers how to engage congregations on the topic of racism. Margaret Moers Wenig, in her short but significant piece, speaks to how the form of the sermon shapes the faith of the listener (91-92), another pedagogical admonishment.

An equally beneficial aspect of the book is the textbook-like chapters which focus on homiletical strategies and concepts. The writers provide these homiletical insights while honoring Craddock. Barbara K. Lundblad, for example, writes about images in the sermon (49-64), while André Resner features the work of theologian Edward Farley who stressed the relationship between the Bible and the sermon, making for more theologically robust proclamation (156-180). As another example, Luke Powery masterfully provides commentary about preaching and prayer (137-149).

The most significant and unique offering of this book comes from Craddock's former students whose chapters make the reader *feel* as if they knew Craddock, or that they want to be like Craddock -- a scholar who was simultaneously pastoral and professorial. In this book his students testify of a teacher who knew that effective pedagogy rests in one's ability to put relationship above research, without compromising the latter. These testimonials are consistent in their description of what Craddock's teaching meant for them. M. Eugene Boring writes, "It could not have entered my mind that, apart from my immediate family, no one on the planet would have a greater influence on me" (44). Likewise, Robin Meyers confesses, "Fred Craddock

was the single most important influence on my life as a preacher and teacher” (1). And Nancy Coil Lear admits that hearing Craddock made her feel “that I was truly in the presence of Jesus (not Jesus the Christ, but Jesus the man)” (133).

The personal stories contained in *What’s Right with Preaching Today?* convince me that Craddock’s prescription of the inductive method for preaching was more influenced by his love and devotion for the people who hear sermons than his technical analysis as a scholar. He cared about listeners so much so that he invited them to participate in the homiletical journey as companions on the way to faithful revelation. These writers present a scholar who “challenged barriers and broke down stereotypes with his humility” (221). The inductive method remedy to one-way, top-down preaching was a product of a tender heart and a tough mind, to borrow a phrase from The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *What’s Right with Preaching Today?* reminds us of the gift God gave the academy and church in Fred Craddock as well as what’s right about preaching today.

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