

American, or "barrio" Christianity is the underside of American religious history, and by continuing the marginalization of this slice of the American pie, we rob ourselves of its insights, vigor, and life-transforming spirituality. Chapter 1 is a rehearsal of the racism that is such a part of our national psyche.

"From the barrio," Recinos tells us, "Latinos challenge mainline Christianity's ways of interpreting Jesus of Nazareth by relating his message to the world of overlooked people." This book carries the message and punch of Liberation Theology, without the Marxist social analysis that marks much of that approach. While it is difficult reading for Anglo Christians, it is important.

Recinos repeatedly draws parallels between events in the life and death of Jesus and the Anglo mainline and Hispanic storefront churches of U.S. cities, reminding us of the biblical emphasis on God's preferential concern for the poor. His reading of Scripture is passionate and loudly reminds us that the Gospels were not written to or for the elite in cathedrals or large churches, but for the poor and socially marginalized (1 Cor 1:18-2:5). He reminds us that in our affluence and capitalist orientation, we may be missing much of the reality of the good news.

In Chapter 4 Recinos makes specific application to the Salvadoran refugees in the U.S. and the implication of U.S. forces in the political turmoil and murder that wracked that country during the 1970s and 1980s.

Chapter 5 recounts the gruesome stories of two survivors, a woman and a man. Both have every right to be bitter and vengeful, but their love becomes a serious testimony to the transforming grace of Christ.

The author has his apparent blind spots, however. For one thing, he seems to view globalization as an option that he would rather not choose, failing to realize that globalization is inevitable and that each social group must either adjust and survive or disappear. He does not ask why the Hispanic community has failed to become a serious force, a factor that has been noted both in Washington, DC and Los Angeles. Are Latinos excluded or do they exclude themselves? Is their problem the urban reality of poor schools and language barriers, or is there also an internal factor of political passivity?

Chapter 6 is a clarion call to the mainline churches of the U.S. to listen attentively to "uninvited guests" at the "banquet," to hear their stories, take them seriously, and to reinvent themselves as socially conscious and responsive to the underside of society, especially in light of Jesus' statement that those who seek to preserve their lives will lose them (Mark 8:35). Reinvented churches must be more broadly based, with a socially engaged and informed theology. Only then can they minister effectively to all of society, not merely to affluent suburbanites and others like themselves.

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Robinson, Haddon W. *Making a Difference in Preaching: Haddon Robinson on Biblical Preaching*, ed. Scott M. Gibson and Keith Willhite. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 158 pp. Hardcover, \$16.99.

Making a Difference in Preaching is a compilation of several articles and chapters from other works on preaching that Haddon Robinson wrote over a forty-year span.

Edited by Scott Gibson, a colleague of Robinson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and with a foreword by Keith Willhite, a former colleague of Robinson when the author was distinguished professor of preaching at Dallas Theological Seminary, the book seeks to highlight the key differences between excellent and mediocre preaching. As Robinson tells it, when he was a teenager he started on a quest to find out why some twenty-minute sermons seem like hour-long ones, and why some hour-long sermons seem like twenty-minute ones.

Robinson is supremely qualified to write this book. For two decades a previous book of his, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, has been at or near the top of lists of books on preaching, and several prominent preachers and homiletics teachers view it as the standard or definitive work on the subject. At the very least, most preachers have read *Biblical Preaching* at least once.

Making a Difference in Preaching is divided into three sections titled "The Preacher," "The Preacher and Preaching," and "The Preacher and People." Sections 1 and 2 consist of four chapters each, with the third section consisting of five chapters. In chapter 1 the author focuses on the person of the preacher, saying that he or she must be both theologian and evangelist to be true to the preaching profession. Robinson contends, and rightly so, that "clear theology is basic to sound witness," and bemoans the wall that some have erected between the two. For him the "church needs scholarly evangelists and evangelistic scholars" to powerfully impact the world for Christ (26, 27).

In the second chapter Robinson proposes six guidelines to help preachers capture and retain the authority preaching needs to be powerful. In the following chapter he presents and elaborates on a profile of the American clergyperson. The last chapter of section one deals with an issue with which all pastors have had to deal at one time or another. Entitled "Preaching With a Limp," it offers preachers helpful hints on how they may be faithful to their calling when they do not feel like preaching because of a crisis or problem they are experiencing. The chapter is must reading for pastors.

In the second section of the book Robinson deals with the mechanics of preaching. He begins with an analysis of expository preaching, using his analysis as a foundation for an exploration of homiletics and hermeneutics. The author believes that the ethical Bible exegete is the person who views exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics as complementary components of a whole that either stands together or falls when separated. Yet Robinson knows that for a sermon to be effective, it must be more than an exegetically exact and homiletically sound treatise. Arguing that all preaching involves a crucial "so what," he posits that sermons must intersect with real life if they are to scratch where people are itching. Even so, Robinson cautions preachers to exercise maximum care in relating Bible truths to the contemporary situation so as to avoid the pitfall of eisegesis. The last chapter of the second section of the book is an examination of how the author goes about breaking out of what he calls "sermon block." Here he offers six "kitchen helpers" to assist preachers in getting from the biblical text to the completed sermon.

The book's third section is a call for preachers to relate proactively to their hearers. Using such chapter titles as "Preaching to Everyone in Particular" and

"Listening to the Listeners," the author challenges preachers to get into the skin of their audiences and to solicit and covet feedback from them. He rounds out this section with two chapters on preaching about money, providing valuable tips on a sensitive subject around which not a few preachers would rather detour.

A strength of this book is the "Questions to Consider" and suggestions for additional reading with which each chapter ends. The questions make excellent fodder for classroom, collegial, or personal reflection, and the reading lists are rich resources for preachers who are sometimes so busy with parish responsibilities that they do not have time to stay abreast of the literature in the field. Another strength of the book is its size. As texts on biblical preaching go, this one is slim. *Making a Difference in Preaching* is only 158 pages. Yet Robinson succeeds in conveying a wealth of information in this brief book, deftly juxtaposing scholarship and his personal experience in the pulpit to provide preachers with useful tools to revive and energize their preaching. His mixture of theory and methodology is refreshingly incisive and instructive. Robinson reveals an understanding of, and resonance with, the concepts he shares, refusing to provide his readers with the pat answers and platitudes that nonpractitioners are prone to proffer. So compelling are the author's ideas and insights, and so cogent and concise his writing, that this reviewer read the book in one sitting.

Making a Difference in Preaching is a worthy addition to the literature in the field of preaching. Students and practitioners, both lay and paid, should find it immensely helpful as they struggle with the unending task of crafting biblical sermons that hit home. Few, if any, who buy or read this book will regret it.

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Rolston, Holmes, III. *Genes, Genesis and God: Values and Their Origins in Natural and Human History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 400 pp. Paperback, \$18.95.

Seeking to reconcile the divide between science and religion has become a popular sport among intellectuals. Recently published examples of this include *Rocks of Ages* by Stephen J. Gould (NY: Random House, 1998), *Seduced by Science* by Steven Goldberg (NY: New York University Press, 1999), and *The Sacred Depths of Nature* by Ursula Goodenough (NY: Oxford University Press, 1998). Into this morass Holmes Rolston III, University Distinguished Professor and Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University, has added his thoughts in *Genes, Genesis and God*. Material in this book was presented as the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh during 1997-1998. This is not the first time Rolston has published on the topic of science and religion, and many, but not all, of the ideas in *Genes, Genesis and God* can be found in his other books, including *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* and *Conserving Natural Value*. Rolston is also a prominent thinker in the arena of ethics and the environment, having published respected works on this topic, such as environmental ethics.

It is in the subtitle, "Values and Their Origins in Natural and Human History," that the book's actual subject matter is described. One has to wonder if the main title was chosen for marketing purposes or perhaps because of the natty