

BOOK REVIEWS

Bailey, E. K., and Warren W. Wiersbe. *Preaching in Black and White: What We Can Learn from Each Other*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. 182 pp. Paper, \$19.00.

Stereotypes about Anglo-American and African-American preaching have been around for years. One of the most virulent and stubborn is that black preachers have more heat than light, whereas white preachers have much light but no heat. In *Preaching in Black and White*, two of America's well-known preachers, one black, the other white, seek to offer an accurate portrait of how their respective communities conceive of and practice preaching. The book is the outgrowth of a conversation that E. K. Bailey, one of America's top African-American preachers and sponsor of the annual International Conference of Expository Preaching, had one day in Dallas, Texas with Warren W. Wiersbe, a former pastor of the Moody Church and author of more than 150 books. The men have been friends for years and have preached in each other's pulpits, demonstrating an intentionality to be open to cultural distinctiveness when it comes to preaching.

Preaching in Black and White is divided into three sections: "We Talk Together," "We Preach Together," and "We Learn Together." In "We Talk Together," the authors identify and expand on the historical and contemporary factors that have shaped their cultural heritage, analyzing in turn how their preaching traditions have been impacted. According to Wiersbe, "every preacher is part of a preaching tradition that goes back for centuries" (26). Affirming that the best of both traditions is unambiguously biblical, the authors conclude that the two racial groups have much in common, even if they are different.

Before exploring how they prepare their sermons, Bailey and Wiersbe delve into the crucial element of the heart preparation of the preacher. For Wiersbe, "the most important part of our lives is the part only God sees," a thought echoed by Bailey, who adds that "you have to give the Lord a rested body and a prepared mind as well as a prepared message" (62, 63). The dynamics involved in preparing Christ-centered, Spirit-filled messages, the content of the sermons themselves, and how to deliver sermons for maximum impact round out part 1 of the book.

Not content to be mere theoreticians, the authors, in "We Preach Together," demonstrate their exegetical and homiletical skills with a manuscript of one of their sermons. Theirs is a manuscript of the same pericope, Luke 19:1-10, the well-known story of the encounter of Jesus with Zacchaeus. The section concludes with a conversation about the sermons, as the preachers place their presentations on the examining table, dissecting them in the presence of the reader. They are refreshingly honest and self-effacing, with Wiersbe concluding that even though he exegeted the passage safely, he lacked the cultural context that makes a participant out of a listener. "I would not pass in delivery, . . . it's a little too left-brained. It's a little bit too organized," he asserts (161). Wiersbe admits that were he to preach the same sermon to a black congregation, he would

have to add life, pictures, and imagination to it (165).

Bailey, whose sermon "The Testimony of a Tax Collector" is decidedly more narrative, believes that left-brained thinkers would not resonate with his sermon as readily as right-brained ones, who he believes would "rejoice over the creativity, (and) the excellence, with which . . . the sermon was communicated" (160). Bailey admits that he likes to pitch his messages toward the heart rather than the intellect, because, as he succinctly puts it, "it's the heart that really captures the will" (165). He bemoans the fact that a lot of folk leave the church with informed heads but cold hearts (165).

Part 3, "We Learn Together," deals with what preachers may learn from other preachers and, more importantly, how they should go about acquiring and using that knowledge. Both Wiersbe and Bailey admit that there are mixed blessings in being exposed to the sermons of others, stressing that while listening to and reading the sermons of others may lead to growth, doing so may also trigger imitation or plagiarism. Worse, the practice may lead to intimidation, the feeling that what one has to offer is not good enough. To counter all of the aforementioned, Bailey counsels that "there's no substitute for a biblical sermon from the heart of God through the heart of a preacher who loves his people" (173). Part 3 ends with a brief biographical sketch of several black preachers and a short list of some Anglo homiletics and practitioners.

A strength of this valuable volume is the honesty of its authors. Unafraid to speak the truth, Bailey and Wiersbe tackle head-on some of the myths surrounding black and white preaching. Wiersbe admits that during his seminary training he and his colleagues "weren't introduced to black preaching," and Bailey contends that "White America never allowed black preachers to affect their theology or their sociology" (25). The result of both men's openness is a glimpse into their respective cultures that yields valuable information both for curiosity seekers and those genuinely interested in cross-cultural dialogue and understanding, not to mention the sacred art of preaching.

Another strength of this book is that it offers insights from two skilled preaching practitioners. Both Bailey and Wiersbe are adept at integrating theory and practice, and their sermons, notwithstanding their disclaimers, reflect exegetical soundness and contextual relevance. The valuable gems relating to sermon construction and delivery that are sprinkled throughout the book help to make it a must-read for all interested in improving their preaching competencies.

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Bauer, David R. *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003. 327 pp. Paper, \$16.95.

The *Annotated Guide* will save hours of research time not only for students and pastors, but also for scholars seeking to find an overview of the best of what is available in the areas of biblical studies outside their own fields of expertise. With a font and layout that is welcoming and an organization that is clear and