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Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-cultural Strategies

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Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies

James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers

Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001

159 pages, \$24.80 Softcover

The preacher looks out into the congregation and addresses people that are similar to him/herself but other people dissimilar in a number of ways. An important difference lies in the realm of culture. How does one preach amidst cultural diversity? This is the question two Lutheran seminary professors James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers tackle in their book *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies*.

The authors base their book on their own experiences plus the derived experiences of other preachers in the United States who regularly face this cross-cultural challenge. The authors have done extensive interviewing and capture the passionate voices of preachers, interweaving them in this book. The usual way to understand culture encompasses ethnicity and race or popular culture. However, the authors creatively view culture through the four frames of ethnicity, class, displacement, and beliefs. Each of these four frames finds explication and then application to preaching in successive chapters. The biblical and theological image of loving neighbour is central in the book.

While the book has its primary focus on the preaching event, the context expands to other pertinent areas. Preaching is integrally part and parcel with worship. The broader context includes the life of the local church where the preacher's connection with the congregation grows into collaboration for preaching. Beyond the local church is its mission to the local community (including social action) and to the world.

Preaching to Every Pew is a provocative book, not a simple "how-to" book. It pushes the reader to think long and hard about the context for preaching. In this way it is an important addition to those books that look closely at the congregation like Leona Tubbs Tisdale's *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. There is applicability to Canada and other countries where multiculturalism is woven into the ideology and fabric of the country. While the authors seem to have predominantly Anglo congregations in mind, the content has pertinence to ethnic congregations that inevitably grapple

with their larger contexts of immediate community and successive generations.

There are a few additions to this book that this reader would have appreciated. These homileticians do not refer to a single preaching book. The suggested readings do provide a helpful list of books based on the four frames of culture plus communication but the conspicuous absence of related books in the field is puzzling. Along with a substantial bibliography, there is the need for notes to substantiate and provide direction for future study. Also, I wish to read full sermons and know how the preacher attempts to integrate cultural sensitivity. Then I would like to hear the listeners' responses to those sermons and how the sermons connected and spoke to them.

Preaching to Every Pew is a needed addition to homiletical literature. It is part of the pioneering work in the area of preaching and culture. It leads us down the adventurous and exciting pathway to preach the Word faithfully in our modern world.

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Early Christian Worship

Paul Bradshaw

Collegetown MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001

96 pages, \$19.29 Softcover

Anglican scholar Paul Bradshaw has established himself as an eminent liturgical scholar on both sides of the Atlantic, first in Britain, and now at Notre Dame University in the USA. This book comes from a third direction. It began as an undergraduate text at the University of South Africa. Well known for his more scholarly endeavours, here Bradshaw takes a stab at writing a short book on a broad topic. He succeeds partially. His book has three chapters: Christian Initiation, Eucharist, and Liturgical Time (by which he means Daily Prayer, the Office, and the Calendar).