

important symbolic action of Michael standing up in Dan 12:1 (nor is there an entry on "Arise," where this idea might also have been discussed).

Another example of a weak reading is in the entry on "Satan." The author writes, in summary, "In the OT, Satan functions as a member of the divine council under the sovereignty of God," then adds that in the NT, however, Satan is the devil or enemy (761). This ignores the fact that Job presents Satan as having come "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it" (1:7), appearing before the Lord as a visiting accuser or adversary rather than as a council member. Also, Rev 12:10 is conveniently ignored, wherein Satan is described as "the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night." Surely this verse would have provided a splendid opportunity, in a book such as this, to point out both the paradox in this passage in Revelation—Satan is both "hurled to the earth" (vv. 9, 10) and accusing continually before God—and the way it illuminates Satan's wandering and accusing in Job, suggesting a metaphorical revelation in human terms of a very real state of affairs.

The author of the entry on "Servant" writes that Jesus wanted leaders to be servants, then writes, "The modern church picks up this concept in theory by using words such as *deacons*, *ministers* or *pastors* for its leaders" (774). Unfortunately, the audience at which this book is aimed would not necessarily recognize that "deacon" and "minister" literally mean "servant" in the Greek. Indeed, by its choice of words, the "modern church" does not pick up "this concept in theory" but obscures it in order to glorify the holders of offices, as has been done since the second century. The article on "Slave, Slavery" does not deal with this either, nor with the epistle writers who describe themselves as slaves of Christ. Is this not imagery? Surely this image deserves study (and emulation).

Despite the size of this book, it is far from complete. Among the images I thought to look for and didn't find were "burn," "consume," "dedicate," "devote," and "elder." There is an entry on "antihero," but none on "type," "antitype," or "emblem," all much more important aspects of biblical imagery than is the antihero.

Despite these gripes, I think the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* is a very fine book, and I expect to refer to it often to look for insights I might have missed. Topical word analysis is a very useful tool, both for students learning the tools of the trade and for personal study, so long as one does not ignore the context, and the *Dictionary* offers hundreds of good examples of such analyses. Though meant primarily for the amateur, theologians will find that they use the book often, especially because of its emphasis on the imagery and literary aspects of the Bible. Teachers of "Bible as Literature" may find the book less useful unless they shift away from the study of rhetorical form and toward an analysis of imagery and meaning in their classes, but they may find that students would approve such a change.

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ED CHRISTIAN

Webb, Joseph M. *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice, 1998. 184 pp. Paperback, \$19.99.

*Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism* provides a significant discussion of the challenge our pluralistic world brings to the art of biblical preaching. But

while articulating a very compelling and, at points, exceptionally realistic depiction of the phenomenon and the implications of pluralism itself, the methods Webb uses and the solutions he proposes essentially empty preaching of its biblical integrity and spiritual/moral power.

Webb envisions preaching that is both pluralistic and prophetic (14, 105). He is concerned with pluralistic integrity in the pulpit and in our dealings with other people in order that we may be aware of and sensitive to what is actually going on inside another person's mind during the preaching event and what their response might be afterwards (58-61). In effect, though, Webb virtually surrenders preaching to pluralism so thoroughly that any notion of prophetic is merely espousing the virtues of pluralism (81).

What begins as a creative and informative description of a legitimate homiletical concern ends in unimaginative and hollow "same old, same old" arguments about "relativity," "universality," and "otherness" set against an indistinct backdrop of process theology (103-122). In essence, Webb reverses the usual pattern in which preaching follows theology and articulates a homiletic that leads the way to a new theology. Preaching, then, is a creative event that generates a new gospel vision, but one that is only quasi-biblical. Christian terminology may be there, but lacking concrete biblical content and meaning. Given the "pluralistic gospel" Webb proposes, as well as his assertions of the pluralism of the "book"—where appealing to the Bible or even to a set of specific biblical texts is no longer of any help—how can there ever be the "reinvigorated" or "prophetic" pulpit that he envisions (103, 81)? I doubt there can.

The contribution that *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism* brings to the art of preaching is found in Webb's initial discussion of pluralism and how humans use symbolism in their formulation of reality and communication. He outlines three conceptions of pluralism from a Christian perspective—multiculturalism (the awareness and understanding of other cultures for the purpose of evangelism), contextualism (assuming unique features and contours of the cultures into which Christianity is accepted), and radical pluralism (no one, ultimately, including Christians, has a corner on the market of correctness, truth, or views of God). Webb rightly notes that radical pluralism is the "real world" where contemporary preachers live and work (2). Taken seriously, this new form of pluralism undercuts the traditional doctrines of Christian uniqueness and superiority (something which Webb unfortunately allows). It is in this context that Webb introduces "symbolic interactionism" (from social and communicative theory) to the homiletical community (13). While the presuppositions of process sociology (the outgrowth of process philosophy and process theology) form the theory of pluralism—and thus preaching—which he outlines here (9-11), Webb's discussion of signs, symbols, and human consciousness is very enlightening in terms of helping one grasp (in part) the "why" of pluralism and how preaching itself becomes part of the "symbolic activity" and resulting pluralism of definition (25).

According to Webb, every congregant comes into the preaching situation with a virtually unlimited set of meanings and feelings already in place—that is what opens the door to the sheer power of human pluralism (25). In addition, the preacher him/herself comes with his/her own set of meanings and feelings. The dynamics of the diversity of presentation and understanding, as well as responses

to preaching are incredible. The sermon situation on the surface appears to be a monologue, with the preacher active and the congregation numbly passive. What the preacher sees as he or she looks out over a congregation is a collection of iceberg tips, but what that preacher does not see, even as the act of preaching goes on, is the lively and unpredictable activity of definition-making and sorting that is going on 'under the surface' of every participant, however passive or inattentive each may appear to be (34-40).

In spite of the questionable direction in which his presuppositions ultimately lead in this part of his discussion, one instinctively senses a truthfulness to the phenomenon Webb thus describes. It is precisely in this pluralistic dynamic of understanding and response that the challenge of preaching is at its height. What of it? What can or should the preacher do? Is there any hope of unanimity in truth perspective, moral life, spiritual experience, or community? Or will there ever be only pluralism and everyone right in their own eyes?

While the solutions Webb outlines are not compelling—especially his inductive analysis of the text (88-102)—his discussion of pluralism provides a compelling argument for tolerance and sensitivity on the part of the preacher. Many will find here, as well, a compelling argument for homiletical creativity in connecting more graciously and understandingly with people where they are, as well as the need for bringing Scripture to bear on people's lives in a more profound, unambiguous, and relevant way (something Webb does not appear to encourage).

In light of the issues which Webb's description of the phenomenon of pluralism raises, one cannot help but stand in awe at the biblical perspective of the gospel with its explicit, unchanging content going to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Matt 28:19, 20; Rev 14:6). Somehow the phenomenon of diversity and pluralism (as well as symbolism and definition) within the human family is no deterrent to the kind of oneness envisioned in Christ or the distinct, objective nature of the moral/spiritual principles and truths God would have such a diverse people come to understand. One wishes that Webb had discussed how this biblical reality of cross-culture redemption is realized via the Holy Spirit, who is undoubtedly at work in the whole human symbolizing process as well as the preaching moment—bringing a oneness that links both the universality of human need and the divine solution.

Obviously, Scripture makes no apology in presenting God as choosing defining symbols in keeping with either the nature or need of man or himself and his redemptive work. Nor does Scripture apologize in assuming that such unequivocal definitions will be understood cross-culturally. Webb obviously fails to clarify the distinction between the subjective nature of symbolization and the objective nature of truth in relation to human nature or the phenomenon of common human need, predicament, and hopes. He also overlooks the reality that the individual may not be accurately internalizing what is morally or spiritually good/right/true for human beings.

While Webb rightly posits that the preacher has no control over the reception of the message preached, his discussion misses the reality that the preacher also has no control over the biblical message itself; and, if he or she wishes to preach with true pluralistic integrity, he/she cannot have control over its interpretation either (one must come to Scripture in humility, free from personal presuppositions and

agendas, or at least aware of what they might be). For the biblical preacher in a pluralistic world, God must be given full control of the message, and the interpretation of that message, as well as its reception. But this assumes a view of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit that Webb does not hold. The role of Scripture in defining reality (symbolization) and one's perceptions of reality (definition) must never be lost sight of if the preacher is to fully understand the challenge pluralism brings to preaching. This book is both very practical and at the same time very disappointing, a must-read that helps one get in touch with both pluralism and the need for something beyond pluralism to reinvigorate preaching and make it truly prophetic.

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