

When Spinks asks, ‘What is Celtic about contemporary Celtic worship?’ the answer is almost nothing. Here the liturgical historian patiently debunks a growth industry of propagandists peddling Celtic spirituality in ways which completely misrepresent the ascetic, austere and Augustinian liturgical heritage of the Roman church in ancient Ireland and Britain.

Spinks concludes his visit to the worship mall by stopping at its ‘anchor store’ – the Roman Catholic Church. Like Brooks Brothers, it is usually slow to change and continues to debate its last merchandising update a half-century ago. He notes that the recent language changes in the Roman liturgy stem from the conservative takeover of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). This reaction leaves the ICEL texts from 1973 stranded in the mainline Protestant denominations which adopted them, even as Rome now reverts to more archaic language. This attempt to mitigate the modernity or alleged linguistic banality of the Paul VI Mass in English has thereby ‘been bought at considerable ecumenical cost’. While contemporary Roman Catholic worship thus juxtaposes elements of ‘something old and something new’ typical of postmodernity, Spinks finds its most recent liturgical revisions unprepared for a postmodern world. While that may be true, it must also be noted that since the publication of Spinks’ book Robert Schuller’s *Crystal Cathedral*, a monument if there ever was one to postmodern ‘pastorpreneurship’, has filed for bankruptcy and been purchased by the Roman Catholic diocese in which it stands.

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Geoffrey Stevenson (ed.), *The Future of Preaching* (London: SCM Press, 2010), pp. xiii + 226. £16.99/\$20.62.

These essays, deftly introduced by Stevenson’s overview, take the measure of preaching, present and future, amid three realities. First, we preach in increasingly diverse cultural contexts. Second, new communication technologies present fundamental challenges to the classic preaching tradition. Third, the development of the preacher him/herself, as the site of mediation among these influences, is crucial.

Some – notably Pitt, Stackhouse and Schlafer – bid us rethink, theologically, the nature and function of preaching amid these changes. Others wrestle with the shifting social and technological contexts in which preachers seek a hearing today. Essays by Bradshaw on Black preaching, Johns on ‘the news’ as a preaching resource and Littledale on the power and limits

of digital technology are particularly thought-provoking. Derber, Francis, Withers, Stevenson and others stress the formation of congregations and preachers, expanded rhetorical possibilities, generational and psychological diversities and hermeneutical issues.

Particularly lucid are those essays which sketch a theological understanding of preaching as backdrop to their interdisciplinary discussion. Stevenson, Pitt and Paul are notable in this regard. Lacking such a theological point of departure in Johns' arresting essay on preaching and the news, we are left searching for hermeneutical footholds to guide the enterprise he commends.

Somewhat surprising here is a heavy reliance on the New Homiletical projects of the 1990s or even the 1980s. Since the mid-1990s, implicit modernist assumptions of the New Homiletic have been critically revised from the standpoints of postmodern social theory, rhetoric and discourse theory. One might have wished for stronger engagement with this emerging wave of theory.

Nonetheless, the book makes us partners in a high-stakes conversation about the future of preaching pedagogy and practice. Moreover, we are encouraged to continue that conversation in highly accountable communities of preaching practice, ready to risk fresh proclamation.

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