

The book of Revelation, while still obscure for many Christians and all too clear (in problematic ways) for many other Christians, has stimulated an encouraging and enlightening literature. Since the publication of George B. Caird's still highly recommended commentary, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, in 1966, a regular stream of useful books presenting Revelation as peace literature has emerged. Kraybill's book complements these others, but still makes its unique contribution.

Nonetheless, there are differences of emphases among these writers. A way that my own approach differs from Kraybill's is to focus more on the narrative of the book of Revelation as a whole. Kraybill picks up on important themes throughout Revelation, but does so in a kind of scattered fashion – jumping from chapter 1 to chapters 12 and 13, and then back to 4 through 11, then to 15 through 19, and then back to 2 and 3, and ending with 20 through 22. This approach, while allowing him to lift up what he sees as the book's central themes, might also be disorienting and deprive the reader of an important element of John's thought grasped only by reading the book as a self-conscious narrative structured in a particular way.

All in all, *Apocalypse and Allegiance* is an excellent volume, making a most useful contribution to present-day Christian faithfulness to the way of Jesus.

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Leonora Tisdale Tubbs. *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Most preachers know intuitively that over the long haul the prophetic and the pastoral go together. An effective word of challenge to the faithful will gain traction only if those who voice such a challenge are trusted and respected, and list themselves among the gathered sinners. But beyond the intuition that challenge and nurture somehow go together, preachers have

basic questions about the how, what, why, and when of prophetic preaching and about how it is related to the more comfortable pastoral role.

Tisdale Tubbs, an experienced preacher and teacher of preaching, offers a short work (it can be read in a day or less) that will inspire and clarify prophetic preaching. To be clear: it is the prophetic that is the focus in this work and not the pastoral, even though the subtitle may suggest otherwise. She does not weave the pastoral and the prophetic but offers a practical study of the prophetic with a nod to the importance of the pastoral.

This volume stays close to the issues at hand for preachers who are curious about prophetic preaching. What is prophetic preaching, why do we shun it, what do we do with the flack that results, and what forms are best suited to this kind of preaching? These questions are explored with biblical and theological depth, actual sermons, and stories from the lives of preachers and churches. The wisdom here is clarifying, energizing, and easy to apply to one's next sermon.

After carefully summarizing different streams (for example, social gospel, biblical, liberationist) that have come together in the current era under the umbrella of prophetic preaching, the author works with several "hallmarks" of prophetic preaching. Prophetic preaching is rooted in the biblical witness; it is countercultural; it is concerned with and names individual and social evil; it offers hope and encouragement in light of God's passion for justice; and it gives courage to, and empowers, the church to change the social order. The prophetic preacher is one who is imaginative, honest, humble, and always a pastor.

While Tisdale Tubbs works with several hallmarks of prophetic preaching – making it appear that her definition is broad – this work is rooted in a (narrow?) liberal American Protestant understanding of the prophetic. Anecdotes from the American civil rights era abound. We also hear much from Riverside Baptist Church in New York, where a certain kind of prophetic preaching and theology is highlighted. The prophetic topics that come to the fore are racism, sexism, problematic distributions of wealth, and speaking truth to power. While the American Civil Rights Movement and current American issues identified by one branch of Christianity are good and worthy of prophetic reflection for all preachers, I wonder what other topics (or evils) – both individual and social – might help to clarify and

expand prophetic preaching. For instance, what might prophetic preaching sound like in Canada, which has a quite different civil rights history?

Tisdale Tubbs has spent a lifetime thinking not only about prophetic preaching but also about prophetic churches, and about how preaching can contribute to the creation of such communities. In her second chapter she calls for a “spirituality of prophetic witness.” She examines strategies for both the preacher and the church that connect solitude and speech, the lives of the privileged and the lives of those who suffer, the individual and the social, as well as prayer and prophetic witness. The prophet is not a lone ranger who stands against the church. The prophet is one who prays, preaches, worships, and lives a life of pastorally connecting both God’s heartbreak and God’s sure promises among God’s people.

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