

John S. McClure. *Ethical Approaches to Preaching: Choosing the Best Way to Preach about Difficult Issues*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021. 128 pages. \$23.00.

Drawing from a diverse group of scholars, John S. McClure's "introductory handbook" outlines four ethical approaches to preaching. He provides the reader with clear and distinct pathways to viewing, understanding, interpreting, and preaching complex subjects because different issues require different approaches (25).

Limiting himself to four kinds of ethics (Communication, Witness, Liberation, and Hospitality), McClure invites pastors, preachers, and teachers of preaching to think anew about their journey from text to sermon when dealing with ethical problems. He extends the invitation by challenging the reader's comfort level (complacency) with their current praxis, then calling the reader to a new and more meaningful way.

Instead of another homiletical theory or method, McClure offers the reader a way to "approach" ethical issues. He defines "an approach as a practical way to get from here to there" (xvi). Because the approach is new, McClure warns the reader to expect discomfort while simultaneously encouraging the reader to stay the course.

To get from here to there, McClure relies on four organizing questions that function as a hermeneutical framework for each approach. They are (1) The Way Out – helps listeners identify the best way out of the ethical issue (xvii), (2) The Way In – provides listeners a way into the ethical issue (xviii), (3) The Way Through – helps listeners identify where they are and what's at stake by using familiar illustrations, images, stories, etc. (xix), (4) The Way Toward – helps listeners identify where they are going (xx).

After defining the hermeneutical framework, McClure wades into the body of the text, which includes four chapters. Each chapter presents one of the ethical approaches, suggest appropriate ethical situations for their use, and provides annotated sermons as examples and additional reading resources.

In the first chapter, McClure argues that Communicative Ethics is preaching that seeks broad moral consensus, particularly when congregants hold strong positions. They are sermons that "search for the moral high ground in situations of public, national, or global crisis" (26).

The second chapter describes how Witness Ethics concerns itself with preaching that addresses an "accommodationist mode" of preaching (36). It is countercultural preaching aimed at character development. Its goal is to help listeners "claim unique forms of Christian moral agency in the public square" and beyond (37).

In the third chapter, McClure discusses Liberation Ethics that intentionally focuses on systems of injustice wherever they exist. It is a social ethic that seeks to "unmask, critique, and change current social systems" (61). The preacher's work is "conscious raising," helping the listeners understand how systems work.

The last chapter explains Hospitality Ethics as preaching that seeks to cultivate wide-ranging relationships. This ethic aims to bridge the divide of differences with face-to-face dialogue.

This handbook is a gem. As rightly stated, it challenges the reader to try a different path. From the outset, McClure grabs the reader with his easy-to-follow framework and invites them to follow him. With the care of a long-term pastor, he skillfully moves through each ethical approach, teaching and encouraging the reader along the way. After each chapter, the good pastor says, "now you try it." This book is made for the times in which we live. It is the resource pastors, preachers, and teachers of preachers need now.

Jackie Blue, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA