

Amy McLaughlin-Sheasby. *The Suffering of Job and an Enfleshed Homiletic: Bearing the Body's Witness*. Library of Homiletics. T&T Clark, 2025. 240 pages. \$108.00.

"Though wounded bodies surround preaching, preaching is seldom reconceived through the experiences and wounds of others" (3). The force of this book lies in its refusal to move too quickly away from this claim. Drawn from the author's own encounter with suffering bodies, this study exposes the limits of theological discourse that continues to explain suffering while remaining insufficiently answerable to its embodied reality. In that sense, *The Suffering of Job and an Enfleshed Homiletic* stands within a wider practical-theological concern that theodicy can concentrate on explaining suffering while leaving the suffering body unseen and unheard.¹ McLaughlin-Sheasby takes up that concern within homiletics by treating bodily pain as a theological reality and by developing an enfleshed homiletic attentive to the witness of wounded lives.

The first chapter reads Job not mainly as a theodicy text but as a crisis of theological discourse, arguing that a primary concern of the book is "God-talk in the presence of another's wounds" (13). This is a significant move for homiletics, since it shifts attention away from abstract explanations of suffering and toward the ethical problem of theological speech that refuses revision. McLaughlin-Sheasby's discussion of reception history is also important, showing how the anguished Job of the poetic dialogues has often been overshadowed by the more familiar image of a worshipful Job and the "patience of Job" (49–50). The chapter thus presents Job as a canonical challenge to theological speech that fails to reckon truthfully with suffering.

The second chapter turns from Job's speech to Job's body, treating the suffering body not as the background to theological debate but as what unsettles it. McLaughlin-Sheasby shows that Job uses the faculties of his body to test wisdom and God-talk (59). The chapter argues that bodies do not simply receive preaching after the fact. Bodies shape theology, exist in interdependence with others, and belong to the very conditions in which theological speech takes form.

The third chapter develops bearing witness as an ethical practice rather than a merely affective posture. McLaughlin-Sheasby clarifies the relation between witness and testimony by arguing that testimony bids others to join the original witness and to co-bear the truth of another's life. In that sense, preachers may become fellow witnesses, or false witnesses who reject or discredit another's truth (128).

The fourth chapter treats suffering, radical suffering, and trauma as related but not interchangeable terms, pressing for greater precision where wounds evade direct contact and explanation (138). Trauma, in this account, resists neat narration, which means that preaching in its presence cannot proceed by easy theological closure. Particularly compelling is the chapter's emphasis on the fragmentary nature of traumatic testimony and the responsibility of the witness to attend to suffering with patience, openness, and care (146).

The fifth chapter widens the argument by asking how preaching contexts and practices must be re-examined in light of suffering, testimony, and embodiment. Through the metaphor of the "theological landscape," McLaughlin-Sheasby turns to the life, terrain, and relations that shape a community's theological imagination (166–67). The chapter also presses toward self-examination, urging preachers to reckon with the ways they approach suffering and to release

¹ Eilidh Galbraith, "Doing Practical Theology 'from the Place Where It Hurts': The Significance of Trauma Theology in Renewing a Practical Theology of Suffering," *Practical Theology* 17, no. 1 (2024): 69–81.

theologies that cannot endure another's wounds. At the same time, it expands homiletical horizons beyond the pulpit and beyond the congregation, toward an enfleshed gospel pressed and shaped by the testimonies of those who surround the preaching event (197).

What is striking about the book is the way it binds biblical interpretation, theological epistemology, ethics, and preaching practice together without reducing any one of them to the others. As McLaughlin-Sheasby states from the outset, this is a book about the implications of bodies for preaching, especially bodies marked by the memories, scars, and open wounds of radical or traumatic suffering (3). An enfleshed homiletic finally asks preachers to dwell within the instability that suffering brings to theological discourse. It affirms the provisionality of theological speech, the interdependence of bodies in community, and the irreducible weight of human experience for theological imagination (4). McLaughlin-Sheasby leaves preachers with an invitation to remain with wounded lives in the reality of their pain, and there to allow theological discourse itself to be shaken and reshaped.

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