

Chelsea Boone Yarborough. *Proclamation Beyond the Pulpit: The Expansive Homiletical Practice of Black Women*. Baylor University Press, 2025. 144 pages. \$29.99.

Yarborough's concise volume makes a timely contribution to homiletics, especially as the field, like other areas of practical theology, wrestles with how preaching can faithfully address declining engagement with religious services in the United States. By investigating preaching that has historically existed at the religious margins and outside of the pulpit, Yarborough provides rich examples of preachers who can show a way forward in this current moment. While articulating the expansive homiletical practices of Black women, Yarborough invites practitioners of preaching to think expansively about their own practice – including how they may show up in spaces outside of the pulpit to proclaim the wholeness, justice, and freedom of the gospel.

Throughout the book, Yarborough aims to accomplish three tasks: (1) “remove homiletical limitations of space and location”; (2) “explore what Black women preachers throughout history teach us about preaching”; and (3) “excavate the unique homiletical insights that emerge from these preachers” (3). These tasks are grounded in three underlying and corresponding assumptions. The first assumption is that preaching can be performed in spaces outside of the physical space of the church pulpit. The second is that Black women have preached effectively in ulterior spaces that have not been historically authorized, or even recognized, by institutional churches as locations where preaching *can* be realized. The third assumption is that because the church and homiletics have not recognized spaces beyond the pulpit as valid places for preaching, they have overlooked the valuable homiletical insights of Black women preachers who shared the gospel in those spaces after being excluded from others.

Building compellingly on the work of scholars who have illumined and elevated the homiletical practices of Black women, Yarborough's invitation to preachers, especially Black women, is to interrogate and recalibrate the assumptions both of what preaching is and where preaching can happen. Yarborough casts a bold and empowering vision that will resonate as liberative for many who sense the call to preach but have been relegated to the margins by not having their call fully affirmed by their faith communities.

Yarborough's work carefully balances its critique of homiletics' neglect of Black women preachers with a constructive intent, demonstrating a clear way forward rather than merely suggesting one. While outlining the absence of Black women in both Black homiletical literature and general studies of women in homiletics, Yarborough also contends that most scholars of Black women preachers have not gone far enough in their appreciation of certain practitioners, past and present. This is because they, too, have held onto the dominant understanding that preaching can only be accomplished in a “church” and its “pulpit.” To counter this assumption, Yarborough constructively proposes that scholars who share these concerns should follow the path laid by Lisa Thompson's seminal work *Ingenuity*, in which outsiders to the pulpit are reconsidered as authoritative preachers in alternative spaces. Like Thompson, Yarborough seeks to redefine notions of legitimate preaching contexts.

Yarborough moves the book from theoretical to practical by examining the proclamation of Sojourner Truth, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Fannie Lou Hamer. Her detailed portrayal of these well-known historical figures as preachers provides readers with clear examples to support Yarborough's claims. Yet some readers may be disappointed to find only three examples or that lesser-known figures were not included. Yet Yarborough clearly states that her project is a starting point for future scholarship and encourages scholars to continue the work. Students will appreciate the rich descriptions and new insights that Yarborough provides about these preaching exemplars. This study does not simply confirm that these women were preachers or that they preached beyond the pulpit; more importantly, it reveals homiletical wisdom in their preaching to inspire readers as they discern their own voices and the spaces where the Spirit is calling them.

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