



BOOK REVIEWS

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BOOK REVIEW EDITOR'S NOTE

Cognitive bias takes many forms. Chronological snobbery is but one that affects nearly all of us on some level. It is the belief that the thinking, art, or science of an earlier time is inherently inferior to that of the present. Chronological snobs assume the latest to be greatest and the past to be naïve at best. Readers suffering from this bias have little time for old books.

The Bible is ancient. Scholars, including an innumerable company of preachers, have studied and written about it for thousands of years. Their research continues. And while we have witnessed exciting new developments in the field of homiletics as our discipline has gleaned from the fruits of other fields, we must beware of chronological snobbery when it comes to the voices from our own past.

Starting in this edition, our *Journal* will include reviews of at least one book from years gone by. These titles will be approved, not assigned, by the Book Review Editor as they are submitted by this journal's readership. EHS member John Duncan, who suggested the addition of this new feature, gets us started by offering a review of two works by the late Calvin Miller.

If you wish to review a book from our discipline's history or, like John Duncan, to review two or more works by the same author as part of a single submission, please email your proposal to the Book Review Editor. The same submission guidelines will apply as for reviews of recent publications. Acceptable titles may

have been originally written from the second century to the first decade of the twenty-first. Reviews of little-known gems to history's bestsellers are all welcome.



Preaching to a Divided Nation: A Seven-Step Model for Promoting Reconciliation and Unity. By Matthew D. Kim and Paul A. Hoffman. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 978-1-5409-6474-8, 193 pp., \$24.99.

Reviewer: R. Larry Overstreet, Retired, Corban University School of Ministry, Salem, OR.

Kim and Hoffman clearly enunciate why they wrote this book in its Introduction (1-6). They identify the divisive issues currently facing American culture as including ethnicity, economics, gender, politics, and abuse of power. They argue that these same concerns are harmful to the church, and they intend to offer preachers "some guidance, skills, and tools for those bumping along with us" (3).

That guidance, which is the great strength of the book, is detailed in seven steps, with each described in one of the seven chapters of the book. These include: The Theological Step: The Sins of Pride and Prejudice; The Contextual Step: America's Past and Present Reality; The Personal Step: Facing Our Sin and Acknowledging Our Prejudices; The Positional Step: We Are Heralds, Not Heart-Changers; The Methodological Step: A Homiletic for Reconciliation and Unity; The Practical Step: Pre-Sermon, Mid-Sermon, and Post-Sermon Practices; and, The Categorical Step: Biblical Themes and Texts. Each chapter ends with vital "Questions for Reflection" and challenging "Practical Next Steps." The concepts presented in these chapters, the challenges raised, and the potential solutions presented do indeed offer guidance, skills, and tools for dealing with the main disputes facing today's preachers. Some conservative readers, whether political or theological, may immediately put up a "red

flag” when Kim and Hoffman favorably quote Raphael Warnock to begin chapter 1, since he is a progressive Democrat and believer in black liberation theology. The quotation itself, however, is worthy of consideration.

For the evangelical pastor, a welcome characteristic of each chapter is the inclusion of well-chosen and carefully applied biblical texts. Although a reader may occasionally differ with Kim and Hoffman’s understanding of a particular text, as I did as a complementarian while they appear to be egalitarian, the overall scriptural emphasis is appreciated. An area which needs clarification is their statement, “A major contributor to the cycle of systemic sin in our nation stems from existing educational, pedagogical, and scholarly structures” (32). While all of this may be correct, it ignores the deeper cause of systemic sin, which is the inherent sin nature each person possesses.

Following their conclusion (133-137), Kim and Hoffman add six brief appendices providing specific suggestions related to achieving their goals. The seventh appendix is the most valuable since it provides six abbreviated sample sermons on specific issues faced by the contemporary church: classism, ethnocentrism, political division, reconciliation, sexism (by Hoffman), and unity (by Kim).

This reviewer would have appreciated greater clarification on a particular direction of the book. Its title indicates *Preaching to a Divided Nation*, but most of its content (correctly in this reviewer’s opinion) is not directed toward the nation but the church. Pastors do not commonly, if ever, preach to the *nation*, but we do preach to our churches. Our churches are the places where reconciliation and unity must begin.

A few content matters should be addressed if the book is reprinted. Neither Kim nor Hoffman is included in the book’s Index. Yet, both are referenced in footnotes multiple times throughout the book. A glaring problem occurs on page twenty-eight, when Kim’s book *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People who Hear Our Sermons* (Baker, 2017) is recognized on the page without any identification that he is the author. In addition, a grammatical error occurs on page thirty-

eight in the sentence, they “maintain that until recent decades the impact of these destructive forces have been ignored....” Since the subject of the sentence is singular (“impact”), the verb “have” should be changed to “has.” Furthermore, the Latin “sui generis” (67) may impress some readers, but many may not grasp its significance of being “unique” or “its own kind.” Additionally, as a reader whenever I see a “first,” I look for a “second.” A “first” occurs on page eighty-five (referencing Matt. 22:36-40) and should be followed by an omitted second” on page eighty-six (referencing Matt. 28:18-20). The problem recurs on page ninety-two, where it is difficult to identify where a “second” should even be.

This is a helpful book for pastors to read in our current politically, sociologically, and philosophically divided times. Those divides affect the church, and the Scriptures deal with the issues that cause the divisions. Kim and Hoffman help preachers see the way toward solutions, using God’s given Scriptures as our authority.



Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits are Hurting the Church. By Katelyn Beaty. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2022. 978-1-5874-3518-8, 193 pp., \$24.99.

Reviewer: *Scott M. Gibson, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

In *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits are Hurting the Church*, author Katelyn Beaty presents a full and rich exploration of the place of celebrity in the American evangelical world—one which preachers and teachers of preaching will want to be aware. Beaty begins the book by stating that “the very nature of celebrity, especially in a digital era, is that it hides its power behind the illusion of intimacy” (7), and “celebrity is a distinctly modern phenomenon fueled by mass media” (7). She develops these themes throughout the book.

The book is part research, part confession, part personal reflection, and part lament. These elements do not work against each other. Instead, this honest and closely developed project demonstrates solid research and thoughtful analysis.

The book is divided into three sections with chapters under each part. The first part is “Big Things for God.” Chapter 1 is “Social Power without Proximity.” Here, Beaty defines what she means by celebrity: “For the purposes of this book, I’d like to offer a definition of ‘celebrity’ as *social power without proximity*. We put celebrities on pedestals, from which they influence, inspire, entertain, and exhort us” (17-18). Next, chapter 1, “The First Evangelical Celebrities,” focuses on Billy Graham’s at times both comfortable and uncomfortable engagement with celebrity. She ruefully reflects, “Graham has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He shared the gospel with stars, and in doing so, became one himself” (36). Then, chapter 3 explores the celebrity of megachurch pastors, particularly Bill Hybels among others.

Part Two is titled “Three Temptations” and includes chapter 4, “Abusing Power,” a compelling exploration of celebrity and the megachurch carapace that often protects the isolated celebrity. Next, chapter 5, “Chasing Platforms,” is a fascinating peek into the world of Christian publishing and the way book publishers perpetuate celebrity. Then, chapter 6, “Creating Persona,” explores the loneliness celebrities experience.

Part Three includes chapter 7, “Seeking Brand Ambassadors,” which surveys the conversions of the famous to Christianity and how their celebrity is leveraged for the faith—for good or ill. Then, finally, chapter 8, “The Obscure Messiah and Ordinary Faithfulness,” serves as the conclusion to the book, seeking to find a solution to the epidemic of celebrity culture in American Christianity. In the final paragraph of her book, Beaty writes:

Maybe recovering from celebrity’s toxic effects means accepting that our lives will be mostly a series of “unhistoric acts” whose final effects remain unknown to

the world. Maybe it means casting off the big ideals of living big lives for God and accepting that our greatest moments of faithfulness may be achieved in complete obscurity. Maybe it means getting back down to the roots—to something as small as a mustard seed. To a faith that is hidden and unnoticed, barely visible to the human eye. The kingdom of God is not coming through bright lights and loudspeakers and impressive buildings and multimedia teaching series and PR specialists and strategic partnerships and virtual content. It is not coming through entertaining anecdotes and polished talks and bestselling books. It is not coming through any strategy. It's not even coming through you and me. We don't build or usher in the kingdom of God. We merely attest to its reality in our lives. If only we would get out of the way (175).

This helpful book provides an insightful contribution to the current conversation about the nature and place of evangelicalism—and calls us to make needed changes in our perceptions and in our practices as preachers and followers of Christ.



Preaching the Manifold Grace of God: Theologies of Preaching in the Early Twenty-First Century, Vol. 2. Edited by Ronald J. Allen. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-7252-5962-1, 330 pp., \$41.00.

Reviewer: Jared E. Alcántara, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.

In *Preaching the Manifold Grace of God: Theologies of Preaching in the Early Twenty-First Century*, Ronald J. Allen curates the second volume of a two-volume set on theologies of preaching and their impact on practice. As editor, he partners with eighteen collaborators in this volume. Allen retired in 2019 from Christian Theological Seminary (Indianapolis, IN) where he taught

preaching for thirty-seven years (1982–2019). He has authored or co-authored more than forty books and one hundred articles and book chapters. Post-retirement, he still maintains an active writing and research agenda in homiletics.

The previous volume of *Preaching the Manifold Grace of God*, Volume 1, contained twelve essays that explored theologies of preaching from a historical-theological perspective and was reviewed in a previous issue of this *Journal*. This second volume contains chapters on theologies of preaching in “contemporary theological movements” in the twenty-first century (xi). Each chapter follows a similar structure: “summary of the main theological ideas of the family, the purpose and characteristics of preaching associated with that family, a case study of the movement’s approach to preaching in action (a sermon), a brief evaluation of the strengths and limitations of each theological family, and a short bibliography for further reading” (xiv).

In his introduction, Allen describes the healthy balance that he hopes to achieve. On the one hand, readers should recognize that “[p]reaching is a thoroughly theological act” that reveals our understanding of God, the Bible, our listeners, and the world (xi). Our theologies need to be explored, interrogated, and respected. On the other hand, readers should realize that their contexts shape their theology and practice in ways they do not always comprehend. Our contexts need to be recognized, named, and located. “There is no universal theology of preaching,” Allen writes. “Instead, there are multiple approaches to the theology of preaching” (xi).

Unlike the first volume which examines theological differences in historical-theological families, this volume attends to theological differences among the following twenty-first century theological movements: evangelical, liberal, neo-orthodox, postliberal, existential, radical orthodox, deconstructionist, Black liberation, feminist, womanist, Latinx liberation, Mujerista, Asian American, Asian American feminist, LGBTQAI, Indigenous, postcolonial, and process theology. EHS’s own Scott M. Gibson contributed the chapter on evangelical preaching.

As a result of reading this book, pastors will expand their knowledge of twenty-first century homiletical traditions, particularly movements that lift up the importance of race, ethnicity, and gender as interpretive lenses. They will learn new terms and develop new insights through studying the history, scholarship, strengths, and weaknesses associated with these movements. In addition to learning about minoritized communities, they will learn about shifts in white-majority theologies such as the Radical Orthodox movement (chapter 6). Pastors of color will have an opportunity to access multiple chapters by minoritized homileticians, including minoritized women, whose contributions center stories and experiences in communities of color. Likewise, majority-culture pastors will learn (some for the first time) about theological movements in minoritized communities and their connections to homiletics.

Every reader will be introduced to a tradition or movement that is completely new and unfamiliar to them. For instance, this reviewer benefited greatly and learned much from reading Raymond C. Aldred's chapter (16) on "Preaching in the Indigenous Theological Families." Only a few resources have been published on this preaching tradition, so it was refreshing and exciting to see a recent homiletical contribution.

Some readers may struggle with maintaining interest and retention as this book spans 300-plus pages and considers eighteen different theological movements. Others who lean toward a more conservative theology and practice may struggle with the Mainline-centric focus as well as the sections and chapters on feminist theology, liberation, and human sexuality. Some readers of color may struggle to find their traditions in the chapters on minoritized theological movements because the emphasis is placed almost exclusively on liberation and the eradication of -isms without much attention to other themes such as salvation, holiness, or evangelism.

Even so, Allen's collection achieves its goal, the balance that he seeks in the Introduction. The same preaching that is a "thoroughly theological act" is *also* widely diverse and divergent in its interpretation, expression, and location. All one must do is

read the list of theological movements in this volume to see how much diversity and divergence exists in twenty-first century preaching.

This book exposes readers to ongoing conversations in homiletics and contemporary theology, and it closes important knowledge gaps. Because of its length and subject matter, it would likely function best as a reference text and resource in an academic setting, perhaps in an advanced M.Div. course on preaching traditions in which a breadth of theological diversity is represented or in a Ph.D.-level course on theology or hermeneutics.



Preaching from Inside the Story: A Fresh Journey into Narrative. By Jeffrey W. Frymire. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-6667-3277-1, 188 pp., \$28.00.

Reviewer: *Kristopher Barnett, Clump Divinity School at Anderson University, Anderson, SC.*

Jeffrey W. Frymire holds a Ph.D. in homiletics from Fuller Seminary and serves as Associate Professor of Preaching and Dean of the Chapel at Asbury Seminary in Orlando, Florida. In *Preaching from Inside the Story: A Fresh Journey into Narrative*, Frymire seeks to “give preachers permission to use their God-given creativity in the service of Biblical preaching through a storytelling approach to narrative” (xix). He blends scholarly research and practical application in service to the goal. *Preaching from Inside the Story* is the author’s second book on narrative preaching, following *Preaching the Story: How to Communicate God’s Word Through Narrative Sermons*.

The most recent volume begins with a chapter recounting his own journey into narrative preaching. Frymire’s mother introduced him to storytelling at an early age. Later, professors and mentors like James Earl Massey helped him appreciate the intersection of homiletics and narrative. Chapters 2-4 explore the weighty topics of narrative hermeneutics, neurobiology, and

philosophy of story, respectively. Frymire provides solid and insightful research on these topics while maintaining a personal and practical tone. Each chapter points the reader to homiletical application. Chapter 5 concludes the first section and summarizes the author's contributions to narrative homiletics.

The book's second section provides five sample sermons by the author that include insights linking back to the discoveries outlined in the first section. The number of sermons and the clear explanations accompanying them help the reader "hear" how the principles work in actual sermons.

Preaching from Inside the Story covers similar ground to other works in narrative preaching that might be more familiar to EHS members. For example, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* by Steven D. Matthewson and *Preaching Old Testament Narratives* by Benjamin H. Walton work well to introduce the concept of narrative preaching. As the titles imply, those works focus specifically on Old Testament narratives, while Frymire includes both Testaments. In addition, Frymire's chapter on neurobiology and his work on Aristotle's philosophy of story provide unique contributions to the field, or at least, uniquely framed contributions to the field.

Frymire appropriately focuses on the text serving as the foundation of the sermon. His theology of narrative preaching states, "A narrative/storytelling sermon is based in a text and in its context. It is not stringing together a series of stories from other sources as you 'drive by' the text" (7, footnote 4). Frymire emphasizes telling the biblical story rather than simply telling stories that tangentially connect to the Bible.

Some of the most vital contributions appear in chapter 5. Frymire encourages preachers to develop a narrative sense in this chapter while engaging a storytelling lens. The narrative sense refers to the way preachers view biblical stories (95). Frymire presents a spectrum of five storytelling lenses (Flatlander, Landscaper, 3-D Set Designers, Cinematographers, and Insiders), encouraging preachers to move toward the Insider lens so congregants can participate in the biblical narrative (96-98). He wants preachers to explore an alternative structure in sermon

construction by communicating through story rather than points (7, footnote 4). He asserts that the storytelling approach invites listeners to participate. "Rather than being an empty vessel into which points are poured, the listener becomes an archeologist accompanying the preacher in the discovery of wisdom found in the ancient artifacts of the Biblical account" (27).

While retracing his journey into narrative preaching in chapter 1, Frymire recounts a discovery. The discovery came while he explored exilic Jewish worship practices. Following O. C. Edwards and Alexander Deeg, Frymire contrasts Halakhah (logic) and Haggadah (story) preaching styles. While reflecting on these styles, Frymire asserts, "I realized that I had stumbled upon this origin story of the narrative sermon." (19) This intriguing claim needed further development. Narrative preaching might be rooted in exilic worship practices. However, it also seems that pre-exilic prophets like Nathan in 2 Samuel 12 practiced some form of narrative preaching. Oral transmission of the Torah prior to the written word could also be evidence of early forms of narrative preaching.

Preaching from Inside the Story attains the goal of providing permission for preachers to practice a storytelling approach to narrative. In addition, this work offers insight into cultivating storytelling in the pulpit by studying the text with a narrative sense and communicating the text with a storytelling lens. Frymire communicates with the experience of both a preacher and a professor. Preachers seeking to hone their skills in narrative preaching would benefit from this book, as would instructors trying to overcome fears that students bring to narrative texts.



Resonate: How to Preach for Deep Connection. By Lisa Washington Lamb. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-6667-3557-4, 140 pp., \$23.00.

Reviewer: Gregory K. Hollifield, Memphis College of Urban and Theological Studies at Union University, Memphis, TN.

To diagram a sentence, one must first identify its subject and verb. In inflected languages, the subject and verb are often a single word. To parse it, one must account for the verb's person, number, tense, voice, and mood.

Our uninflected English word "preaching" is both a noun and a verb. Multiple works in the field of homiletics dissect preaching as a noun, considering its subjects (including the person of the preacher and the Bible as preaching's subject matter) and objects (including its audience, aims, and outcomes). Nothing until now, in this reviewer's awareness of the literature, has thought to parse preaching as a verb. This is the genius of Lisa Washington Lamb's book.

The table of contents summarizes clearly what the reader can expect. Each chapter unfolds an aspect of the preacher's calling relative to the different parts of a verb: 1) Preacher as Witness and Host: The Power of First-Person Speech; 2) Preacher as Shepherd: The Promise of Second-Person Speech; 3) Preacher as Proclaimer: Declaring God's Goodness with Third-Person-Singular Verbs; 4) Preacher as Sage: Teaching Wisdom with Third-Person-Plural Verbs; 5) Preacher as Storyteller: Fueling Faith by Narrating the Past; 6) Preacher as Priest: Discerning the Work of God in the Present; 7) Preacher as Visionary Prophet: Walking into the Future with Hope; 8) Preacher as Leader: Choosing and Using Modes of Influence; and 9) Preacher as Catalyst: Sparking Transformation in the Active and Passive Voice.

To illustrate how each chapter develops its theme, the first chapter takes up the first-person aspect of preaching. Preachers are called to serve as witnesses to what they have discovered in the text, what they have personally experienced of God, and what others report of their experiences with Him through their own stories. All of this is preaching in the first-person-singular.

As a member of both the human family and believing community, the preacher also functions as host. He speaks of our common condition, including our beauty as God's image bearers, ability to change, sin and brokenness, longings, anxieties,

sufferings, and diverse perspectives. This is first-person-plural preaching. It lays bare what we are. It calls for second-person preaching to point the way forward and third-person preaching to describe what God has done.

Lamb's purpose is not that one should work his or her way through the paradigm that the book provides "as a perfunctory checklist each week, but instead that it would drive [the reader] to a deeper pursuit of God-honoring excellence in [the reader's] proclamation, rooted in love for the people who listen" (xxi). Lamb's hope is that this process will yield wisdom and joy for readers as they live into their vocations to speak good news. "That, in turn, will foster a more profound sense of presence and connection" with those the preacher loves and addresses (xxi).

Two audiences for this fine little book come immediately to mind. The working pastor who preaches in the same voice week after week without even realizing it will benefit greatly, not to mention his poor congregation, from considering the other persons, voices, and moods that make up the task of preaching. Professors of preaching will find Lamb's book to be a helpful tool for stretching their students' conception of their sacred calling, as it shows how by changing the verbal stance of their sermons they will serve in a variety of roles that promise to connect them more deeply with their hearers and their hearers to God.



Taking Kierkegaard Back to Church: The Ecclesial Implications of the Gospel. By Aaron P. Edwards. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 987-1-7252-5958-4, 210 pp., \$28.00.

Reviewer: Alex Kato, Crossroads Bible Church, Bellevue, WA.

Aaron Edwards' *Taking Kierkegaard Back to Church* is an insightful and sometimes playful presentation of new/old ideas for preaching and church life. Six of the eight chapters are previously published articles, making the book a series of suppositions rather than a sustained argument, but this fits Kierkegaard's

eclectic style. Both examining Kierkegaard's writings and hypothesizing what he might have said or done, Edwards suggests that contemporary American evangelicalism—despite often characterizing itself as marginalized—may be entangled with comfort and power like eighteenth-century Danish Christendom, requiring a new hearing of Jesus' teachings.

Personally, the concept of "defamiliarization" (45) brought into focus a need I had recognized only peripherally heretofore: To help longtime churchgoers truly encounter a biblical text, preachers must first show the hearers that they do not understand or live by the text as much as they assume they do. Similarly, preachers must grapple with their own "idealism," the extent to which they prefer the thought of an obedient Christian life more than the actual living of it, much like the arms-length obsession of Kierkegaard's pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, for Cordelia (151). Other Kierkegaardian concepts like "appropriation" (45), "subjective-objective dialectic" (81), and "ecclesial individualism" (175) illuminate new avenues for further homiletical reflection. Characteristically, they defy quick assimilation, but their eventual effect could be paradigmatic.

Because of its meandering approach, the book is unlikely to fit in homiletics syllabi. It ventures beyond homiletics into various ecclesiological matters, with preaching in view roughly half the time. It will most help competent preachers seeking new ideas who are comfortable with the discipline of philosophy (though it does not require familiarity with or technical knowledge of any school or philosopher, including Kierkegaard). In terms of difficulty and ecclesial tradition, it is geared for a tiny sliver of society, but that sliver includes most EHS members. Uncomfortably insightful at times, in good Kierkegaardian style, it defamiliarizes preaching and the Christian life, suggesting possibilities for new growth in teaching, preaching, and faith.



New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament, Second Edition. By Ben Witherington III and Jason A. Myers. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-5326-8968-0, 380 pp., \$45.00.

Reviewer: *Thomas Kitchen, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, UK.*

Is rhetoric merely, as Quintilian put it, “the art of speaking well”? This very question is discussed and dissected in the second edition of Witherington’s (and now Myers’) volume.

Beginning with an overview of oral culture in the ancient world, the book then traces the history and methodologies of rhetoric and continues by studying the rhetoric of many books in the New Testament, including the Gospels, Acts, six of Paul’s letters, the “catholic” or general letters, and Revelation (the latter of which has been added for this new edition). Bringing the book to a close are two appendices which do not appear in the first edition—“The Elementary Exercises,” which discusses what aspiring rhetoricians would have been taught and when; and “An Unapologetic Apologetic,” a paper which uncovers “even very complex rhetorical techniques [that] are in play in the NT” (297), specifically Greco-Roman techniques.

The book truly is impressive and courageous in its scope, especially considering all the above is covered in 320 pages, not including the bibliographies. These bibliographies attest to the need for this new edition, as the section is enormous—forty-four pages compared to the first edition’s five. This is a well-researched work.

At the end of each chapter is a set of “Questions for Reflection.” These may perhaps not be particularly helpful for those more expert in the field, but for those who are students and laymen, a time to digest the book’s contents within this particular format is welcome.

It is difficult to find fault with this book, and I am reluctant to stretch myself and find one. Those more proficient and

knowledgeable will no doubt find remarks and conclusions with which they disagree. However, this particular book was written for those new to the field of rhetoric and in need of an overall picture. In this sense, the work succeeds wonderfully.

We are told that the apostle Paul sometimes appears not to be a particularly educated man. “[B]ut when we grasp the rarity of [his] education, writing, speaking, and letters, then the apostle with thirteen letters attached to his name jumps out as a rather highly educated person” (10). Witherington and Myers conclude therefore that the New Testament is a collection of books full of highly educational material, well worth reading and studying, as well as being the good news of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, we find that “[r]hetoric was a tool useable with the educated and uneducated, with the elite and the ordinary, and most public speakers of any ilk or skill in antiquity [who] knew they had to use the art of persuasion to accomplish their aims” (4). Regardless of whether we view ourselves as elite or ordinary, *New Testament Rhetoric* teaches us to keep learning and mining the great truths of Scripture and to proclaim them, all while remaining aware of the cultural and social norms surrounding us. I recommend the book heartily.



The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition: Preaching the Literary Artistry and Genres of the Bible. By Douglas Sean O'Donnell and Leland Ryken. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022. 978-1-4335-7044-5, 304 pp., \$23.99.

Reviewer: Derek Kitterlin, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College, New Orleans, LA.*

The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition is a personal *festschrift* by O'Donnell in honor of his Wheaton College professor Ryken, including contributions by Ryken on the topic of each chapter. Chapters are based on Ryken's source material and his own experience and perspective gained through many years as a pastor. O'Donnell explains the purpose of his book using the

metaphor of “reversed thunder.” He writes, “[U]nderstanding what happens in the pastor’s study, as he seeks to understand, and then explain, illustrate, and apply God’s Word, can help everyone who regularly teaches God’s Word tap into the surge behind the storm” (15).

O’Donnell lists seven convictions that he shares with Ryken regarding a literary approach to the Bible: (1) it is essential to good preaching; (2) helps avoid reductionistic preaching; (3) acknowledges that meaning is communicated throughout the Bible using various literary forms; (4) equips the preacher to help his congregation relive the text as fully as possible, so as to live out the message of the text; (5) offers an awareness and appreciation of the artistry of God’s inspired word; (6) opens the entire canon to exploration and exposition; and (7) adds freshness and enjoyment to our reading and preaching, along with an antidote to the misinterpretation of Scripture (15–22). Together, O’Donnell and Ryken identify two main goals for their book. First, to “inform and inspire pastors to understand that ‘attentiveness to the literary dimensions of the Bible should be foregrounded in expository sermons’” (23). Second, “to supply a foundation for preachers to move from sermons filled with merely abstract theological propositions and proof-texted moral applications to sermons that are fresh, relevant, interesting, and accurate-to-the-authorial intention—words of God’s Word that relive the human experience and revive a love for God and others” (23). In this reviewer’s estimation, they accomplish both goals.

O’Donnell’s reliance upon Ryken’s scholarship imbues the book with a plethora of literary knowledge. His summaries and guidelines for implementing Ryken’s thought helped their work to achieve its first goal. Their second goal was accomplished, at least in part, as the authors dedicated significant space to discussion of various biblical genres. Their homiletical section is informative but not methodological.

To appreciate how *The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition* unfolds, imagine yourself being an art student touring an exhibit of a particular master’s work. The curator-instructor

tells you what to look for in the art and what you should include in your own artwork. She does not explain all the techniques for achieving these effects, only that you should aspire to create them. So it is with this book. Ryken is the artist. O'Donnell is the curator. He explains Ryken's work and teaches the reader what should be in the sermon. He leaves it to the reader to figure out how.



Gospel Witness Through the Ages: A History of Evangelism. By David M. Gustafson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 978-0-8028-7728-4, 461 pp., \$39.99.

Reviewer: *Todd H. Hilkemann, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

Evangelism “is not accidental, coincidental, or additional but essential to the church’s nature” (1-2), so insists David M. Gustafson, professor of evangelism and missional ministry at Trinity International University. In a straightforward and mostly descriptive style, Gustafson aims to “expand readers’ perceptions of the evangelistic task...to appreciate and learn from the contributions of earlier generations of Christians, and to shape our identity as gospel witnesses today.” Furthermore, he hopes to alert the church “to the mistakes and abuses of the past” which have harmed her gospel witness (vii).

Writing as a “Protestant in the Pietist-revivalist tradition” from an “evangelical conviction to proclaim the gospel to the whole world” (15), Gustafson draws upon a robust set of secondary and primary sources to highlight evangelistic “persons, movements, and methods” throughout church history (10). His monograph traces a roughly chronological and mostly Western history of evangelism. He begins with a brief survey of the proto evangelism of the Old Testament but focuses most of his attention on the Christian story beginning with the New Testament through today. His survey fills in some gaps in church history as he foregrounds evangelism. For example, when

discussing theological controversies, he highlights the evangelistic implications of those debates. When he reviews the formation of the creeds, he emphasizes their evangelistic function, as “easy-to-use means in order to share the gospel with others” (66). As he describes John Wesley’s robust prayer life, he notes how Wesley’s “dependence on the Holy Spirit and prayer were vital to evangelism” (247). Most of the familiar characters and eras in Western Protestant church history make an appearance. Gustafson helps readers to see them in the light of evangelism. He also introduces readers to a number of lesser-known figures.

In eleven of the twelve chapters, *Gospel Witness* describes evangelistic efforts during a specific era. In chapter 11, “Global Indigenous Evangelism,” the author identifies evangelistic efforts led by indigenous Christians “in Africa, Asia, and Latin America” (343) from the early 19th through the mid-20th centuries. Gustafson persuasively demonstrates that “there has not been a single form of gospel witness but multiple forms” (418). He provides examples of evangelism through word (preaching, teaching, writing, and translating) and deed (prayer, art, small groups, miracles, music, hospitality, discipleship, athletics, media, and social action). His treatment stresses the creative and contextual breadth of evangelism throughout church history.

Gospel Witness has many strengths. It provides an important insight into the sometimes bi-focal nature of evangelism. Beginning with Christendom, “Evangelism became not merely a matter of preaching the gospel to those who were ignorant of the person and work of Jesus Christ but a matter of convincing nominal Christians that they needed to be converted to Christ” (81). Portions of the book, especially the extended citations of primary sources, may inspire (re)new(ed) evangelistic zeal. Gustafson includes a wide variety of theological perspectives. Many Western Protestants will be able to identify part of their own denominational story. The “Discussion Questions” at the conclusion of each chapter are especially thoughtful. Gustafson mostly avoids commentary, but his questions encourage meaningful reflection for “informed and

thoughtful” (416) evangelism in the church today. Preachers may find new characters to explore and new ways to understand familiar figures. Furthermore, they will be challenged to recognize that preaching plays an important part in evangelism, but only a part. Thus, they will consider how their own preaching faithfully and contextually proclaims the evangel while also equipping and inspiring others to do so in creative ways.

This book has two primary weaknesses. First, Gustafson’s summaries of church history sometimes overwhelm his observations about evangelism. At times, the evangelistic implications of an individual are relegated to a few sentences in a paragraphs-long summary. For those who are already conversant in Western church history, the summaries may seem like a review. Second, Gustafson’s history is an uneven one. His book primarily traces a Western Protestant evangelical history of evangelism while mostly overlooking other branches. Beginning with the 18th century, most of the book focuses on evangelism in the United States, a subject about which Gustafson has clear expertise. His important chapter on “Global Indigenous Evangelism” feels inadequate since, as Gustafson notes, “the Global South ...[is] Christianity’s new epicenter” (414). Gustafson includes important stories of a few women, African Americans, and Latin@ Americans, but this reviewer wanted more of those stories. Yet these weaknesses are tempered by the subtitle “a history of evangelism.” Gustafson disavows any notion that this is an “exhaustive or comprehensive account” (11). When read as a history, *Gospel Witness* is an important contribution that will enlighten and challenge preachers, church leaders, and scholars.



What Do We Do When Nobody Is Listening?: Leading the Church in a Polarized Society. By Robin W. Lovin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 978-0-8028-8232-5, 162 pp. \$19.99.

Reviewer: R. Larry Overstreet, Retired, Corban University School of Ministry, Salem, OR.

Lovin is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church and a retired professor of ethics from Southern Methodist University. He writes from the perspective of mainline Protestantism and as someone concerned about the deepening polarization in American life, including life in the church.

In Part I: Divisions (chapters 1-2), the book asserts that readers need to understand how polarization has developed in our society and how that has affected contemporary churches. Lovin then moves to a discussion of how the church should function in a polarized society. He suggests that churches may incorrectly mobilize public opinion to “protect” their identity, or they may withdraw to “exist within political society,” but not be part of it (47). In contrast, Lovin presents his case for a sociological and ethical model which he believes will redirect the church to build unity in a polarized and divided society. In contrast to be either on the “left” or the “right,” Lovin argues that the church needs to function to bring back effective moral discourse.

Part II: Listening (chapters 3-5) stresses that Christians need to listen to the word of God (chapter 3), to the world (chapter 4), and to those who have not been heard (chapter 5). To Lovin, hearing God’s word “involves encountering God’s action in every experience and being ready to respond to God’s action as we encounter it in that event” (84), which is remarkably different than careful exposition of the Scriptures themselves. This involves developing faith, hope, and love through a theocentric faith which will impact the totality of American society for the good.

Listening to God’s word will enable the church to listen better to the world. To illustrate how this occurs, Lovin uses Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life and death as a template for the church to follow as it helps society form practical virtues.

Adam Hamilton, in the book’s Foreword, refers to Romans 12:2 in a manner that makes the reader expect Lovin’s book will seek to establish a biblical framework rather than one from a philosophical/sociological perspective. Unfortunately, that does not occur. Although writing as a professing Christian,

and seeking to strengthen the American church, Lovin approaches the subject differently than most solidly evangelical believers will find useful. While he frequently mentions the “church,” “Christians,” “theologians,” the “word of God,” and leans heavily on the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he does not directly appeal to Scripture itself until page eighty-six. From there to the end of the book, Lovin refers to eighteen texts of Scripture which he applies to his emphases, without detailed exegesis of any of them.

Lovin’s final ten pages are his exhortation for changing the church to impact its culture. He suggests churches “are in a good position to bring these projects to wider attention, because what they do often involves recognized human needs and builds on collaborating with other groups,” and in doing this “the church bears witness to the ultimate unity of all things in God” (153). For evangelicals, a glaring deficiency in his entire approach is a complete lack of gospel emphasis, which alone can change a person’s heart. This weakness permeates the book and leaves a Bible believing preacher crying for a better solution. For this reason, many readers will find this a disappointing book.



How to Preach Proverbs. By Jared E. Alcántara. Dallas: Fontes, 2022. 978-1-9480-4878-1, 246 pp., \$18.49.

Reviewer: *Matthew D. Kim, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

In this excellent series, flowing out of a study group in the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Jared E. Alcántara, professor of preaching and the Paul W. Powell Endowed Chair in Preaching at Truett Seminary, has produced another solid volume on genre-sensitive preaching. In *How to Preach Proverbs*, Alcántara excavates the rich soil of biblical wisdom to both inform us on the significance of proverbs and how to preach them effectively.

The book lays out a sharp structure including seven topics (genre, imagery, characters, themes, timing, integrity, and

justice) that receive their own due chapter. Alcántara opens each with a story, anecdote, example, or illustration which leads nicely into a well-defined strategy on the given topic. For instance, in chapter 1, Genre, his strategy is: "Do What the Genre Does." From there, he shows and tells how this strategy can be achieved by submitting practical tools.

Chapter 7 on "Justice" was my favorite. As preachers, we tend to avoid Alcántara's suggestion to "Adopt a Prophetic Tone" either due to fear of what might come out of our mouths or feeling like it is not our place to do so. His homiletical courage to guide preachers in this way is worthy of commendation. Justice is not as polemic or taboo a subject as our various Christian contexts can make it seem to be. It is biblical, faithful, and within the purview of speaking on behalf of God, which all preachers are called to do, albeit with grace and wisdom.

Another key feature which I appreciated is how each chapter concludes with three salient resources: "For Further Study," offering a short bibliography, a "Talk About It" section with valuable conversation starters (a great idea to support introverted pastors), and a "Dig Deeper" moment where Alcántara imparts practical ways to develop skills on these various chapters.

In the two Appendices, readers will find excellent tips from Rebecca W. Poe Hays, a professor of Christian Scriptures at Truett Seminary, on giving sermonic attention to Proverbs 31:10-31. Following that are three penetrating sample sermons from the author, Ralph Douglas West, and Ingrid Faro.

This review cannot do justice to the depth and scope of the command which Alcántara demonstrates on preaching this important biblical genre. He has distilled an often-complex genre into digestible parts. The book is clear, concise, content-rich, and imaginative. My only wish is that each chapter had a designated sample sermon to explore additional possibilities of preaching on Proverbs (acknowledging, of course, a publisher's restriction on word counts). That said, Alcántara continues to resource the church and academy with substantial biblical, theological, and

homiletical works that synthesize theory and practice. Highly recommend this book!



Divine Laughter: Preaching and the Serious Business of Humor. By Karl N. Jacobson and Rolf A. Jacobson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022. 978-1-5064-6867-9, 152 pp., \$19.99.

Reviewer: *Christopher Kearney, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

Divine Laughter by Karl Jacobson, senior pastor at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Minneapolis, and his brother Rolf, professor of Old Testament and the Alvin N. Rogness Chair of Scripture, Theology, and Ministry at Luther Seminary, is one of the newest additions to the *Working Preacher Books Series*. In it, they address the often-overlooked subject of humor in the Bible and how preachers should make use of it to better explain God and the biblical text.

The Jacobsons begin by identifying what stand-up comedians have in common with preachers. Both groups see the world askance, use the power of intrusion, and practice their own forms of truth telling. As interesting and helpful as these insights are, the book truly excels in dividing and defining the different types of laughter seen in Scripture. For example, the laughter of God's enemies at God and God's people is distinguished from the righteous laughing and rejoicing in moments of restoration. The brothers emphasize that good laughter is not at the expense of others.

The authors survey biblical humor as found in various genres and practiced by a cross-section of people, including narrative and wisdom literature, prophecy, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and others. However, the Jacobsons' best work is done in their analysis of the prophets, specifically Amos. Their textual exegesis and suggestions on how to read from Amos aloud dives deep into the Hebrew text and allows for a fresh reading of the prophet's words.

To what will be the surprise of many readers, Sarah in Genesis 18 is repeatably referenced as a positive example of laughter. The authors suggest that Sarah is not laughing at God but laughing with God. One might question their decision to use that event as the key argument of their book. This interpretation seems to minimize God's subtle rebuke of Sarah. Still, this is only a minor criticism, as the authors' main points are well supported in other passages.

A caution to bear in mind while reading *Divine Laughter* is that what one person finds humorous may not be funny at all to the next person. For example, the Jacobsons find Abimelech catching a glimpse of Isaac and Rebekah having sex outside his window as a humorous event. Perhaps, but this reviewer imagines that not everyone in the pew will find it so amusing. This example serves as a good reminder that discretion must be exercised when highlighting humorous textual elements in the sermon.

The Jacobsons' overarching point is that the preacher should be moving toward a homiletic of joy. This is because humor has the power to bring people together as well as disarm them. They do not demand that humor be used in every sermon, but only that the preacher should read the Bible unafraid to find humor in it.

Their last chapter provides helpful suggestions on preaching in general. Here, the brothers urge every preacher to find their unique voice, rely on their individual strengths, use the power of silence, be personal, and be unafraid to laugh. Two sample sermons by each of the authors appear in the book's appendix. Overall, *Divine Laughter* provides a breath of fresh air into preaching methodology, which can often be stuffy and overly serious.



The Visual Preacher: Proclaiming an Embodied Word. By Steve Thomason. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022. 978-1-1506-6473-2, 114 pp., \$19.99.

Reviewer: Jonathan Nason, New Hope Church, Queens, NY.

In *The Visual Preacher: Proclaiming an Embodied Word*, Steve Thomason offers a simple and practical guide for how to employ visual elements of various kinds in the sermon. Although the book is narrowly focused on incorporating multi-faceted visual elements in all aspects of the sermon preparation and delivery process, it serves as a good reminder to all preachers of the importance of helping congregants “see” Jesus in their sermons, even if it is just by use of vivid language in illustrations and biblical exposition.

The book consists of two parts. Part one is made up of three chapters focused on the “Foundations of Visual Preaching.” Part two similarly consists of three chapters focused on the “Visual Sermon.”

Chapter 1 lays the theological foundation for visual preaching. Thomason argues that “The Word of God is always intertwined with a dynamic visual element” (14). Likewise, “[t]he purpose of preaching is to embody the Word...[and] good preaching embodies the Word so people can see it” (8). The emphasis on *seeing* the Word in preaching is the main goal of this book. Thomason states, “my goal for this book is to offer you practical ways to combine visual communication with the Word of Scripture and the words of your sermon, so that when you are done preaching, your listeners will say, ‘We have seen Jesus’” (11).

In chapter 2, Thomason answers the objection that one must be an artist to do visual preaching. He offers practical tools and advice on how a preacher can utilize visual study methods during sermon preparation and explains how these tools can turn into visual elements in the teaching of the text.

Chapter 3 focuses on the use of visual elements, such as mind mapping and creative storyboarding, while constructing a sermon. Mind mapping is helpful for those who are not linear thinkers and is a useful brainstorming tool for those who are. Creative storyboarding is another tool for linear thinkers who want to incorporate visuals in their sermon preparation.

Chapter 4 argues that everything in the worship space is a potential visual aid to preaching. The preacher's body, decorations in the auditorium, items in the hallway, and physical illustrations on stage during the sermon are discussed and examples are given.

Chapter 4 talks specifically about artistic images in the sermon. Thomason goes into detail about how to create a visual arts team at one's church to help the preacher with visual elements. If that is not possible, he recommends specific crowdsourcing websites that can be used free of copyright restrictions. For someone who is unaware of these resources or unsure of how to display their images in PowerPoint or other display software, this chapter will be especially helpful.

Chapter 6 discusses the filming and broadcasting of sermons, either live or following postproduction editing. For someone with limited knowledge of framing, lighting, and video cameras, this chapter is a good beginner's guide.

In sum, *The Visual Preacher* would be helpful to those readers desiring to use more visual art, other than PowerPoint, in their sermons or for someone who possesses no experience with technology in sermon presentation. Other than that, there is nothing novel about the book. It does a good job of consolidating widely available information about visual elements in preaching but offers little more.



Speaking Across Generations: Messages That Satisfy Boomers, Xers, Millennials, Gen Z, and Beyond. By Darrell E. Hall. Downers Grove: IVP, 2022. 978-1-5140-0308-4, 176 pp., \$14.59.

Reviewer: Nicali K. Yeputhomi, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.

As a campus pastor, Darrell Hall experienced the challenges of preaching to a congregation consisting of different age groups. In his book *Speaking Across Generations*, he argues convincingly that every generation communicates differently and that preachers

must be prepared to speak effectively to all generations at once, namely, elders, boomers, Xers, millennials, and gen Zs.

“The seasoned preacher still wants to appeal to the young. The preaching phenom yearns for the respect of the aged,” observes Hall. Figuring out how to manage each generation’s communicational distinctives led to the publication of his book. His research came from focus groups within his Atlanta congregation and a nationwide survey in collaboration with the Barna Group.

In chapter 1, Hall discusses how every generation sees the same things differently and how a knowledge of generational science can help preachers speak effectively to each one. Generational science studies how people born within a certain time frame share in their experience of historical events that, in turn, shape their worldview.

Chapter 2 delves into generational intelligence, which has to do with understanding the values and perspectives that shape the language of a generation. Generational intelligence enables preachers to move from being unilingual to becoming polylingual, an important trait for preaching effectively across generations. The author continues his discussion of language in chapter 3, as he explains how one must know more than phraseology in order to understand a language. True understanding requires a deeper knowledge of the thought formation and reasoning of a group as demonstrated through its distinct rhetoric.

Chapters 4 through 8 employ the tools of generational science to identify how language functions within the generations studied. The arguments in these two chapters are backed by solid research and end with a sample sermon to show what preaching in each generation’s language would look like.

Chapter 9 shifts the discussion from what it takes to become an intergenerational preacher to an emphasis on the importance of churches becoming intergenerational. Chapter 10 calls preachers towards “embodying an intergenerational culture which will influence our preaching as well as the way we carry out the rest of our duties.” The book concludes with an

exhortation for readers to preach in such a way that satisfies “people’s hunger for justice, understanding, wisdom, and meaning.”

Hall writes as a millennial and presents his arguments with both the freshness of a young leader and the pastoral maturity that supersedes age or generation. His writing style is clear and simple. Readers will benefit most from his discussion of how each generation’s experiences of historic events have shaped their language and outlook.

There are a few areas of Hall’s work that need further development by way of practical application. His two final chapters end weakly, with a discussion that is much too general. Overall, the book promises to equip preachers to address hearers from each generation alone or all generations at once. This reviewer looked forward to learning how to do the latter especially but felt disappointed after reading the entire volume.

Overall, *Speaking Across Generations* broadens the reader’s understanding of the congregation from a generational perspective and the preacher’s responsibilities towards it. Packed with many interesting insights and fresh ideas, church leaders will benefit from reading Hall’s work.



Jeremiah and Lamentations: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By Duane Garrett and Calvin F. Pearson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-2567-7, 499 pp., \$38.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Francisco Cotto, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL.*

Seemingly, Jeremiah and Lamentations are rarely preached for good reason. Jeremiah is a book that appears to “have no structure whatsoever” (58). It is not assembled in chronological order and “its organizing principles have eluded readers” (58). The meaning of the five dirges in Lamentations is easily understood, however it is challenging for the preacher to understand the “implied message of the book in the canonical context and to construct messages for Christian congregations

that are both true to the book and relevant to contemporary life and worship" (432). Biblical books that are hard to interpret and difficult to relate to modern audiences are often ignored by preachers. Authors Garrett and Pearson want to change that. Their commentary is among the latest in the Kerux Commentary series from Kregel, designed to provide rigorous exegesis and homiletic helps that will enable preachers to proclaim the theological truths of the biblical book(s) under consideration.

Careful exegesis will sometimes lead commentators to go against conventional wisdom. Garrett and Pearson show a willingness to do this respectfully, whether it is choosing to divide passages differently than is common (198) or attempting to understand the new covenant by pursuing a mediating path between covenant and dispensational theologies (285-89). These portions of the commentary are well reasoned. There are deep excursions on several issues of interpretation, including the sabbath (206-207), the connection of Jer. 31:15 and the Slaughter of the Innocents in Matthew (272-273), and the similarities and differences between the suffering servant of Lamentations 3 and Christ (465-67). The thorough and compelling exegetical work presented by the authors often led this reviewer to read the commentary for intellectual and spiritual stimulation, not solely to construct a review. The reader will certainly benefit from an excursus on the use and meaning of "heart" (לֵב) in Jeremiah because of its importance throughout the book.

It is a challenge for any preacher to apply and creatively present the big idea of the sermon in a compelling way. Garrett and Pearson follow the same format of other volumes in the series by ending each preaching section with suggestions for "Creativity in Presentation." The recommendations given in this volume are uneven, with several attempts at application reading more like suggestions for exhortation. Instead of offering practical ways for the big idea to be implemented in the life of the hearer, the applications are often simply ways for the preacher to encourage the audience to take the big idea seriously. Examples of some of the ideas for being creative in presenting the sermon include planning to move to specific areas on the

stage (159) and varying when prayer is done during the message (241). Those suggestions should be a regular part of any preacher's sermon planning week-to-week, regardless of the passage expounded.

Any commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations ought to instill confidence in the jittery preacher that they are books which can be successfully preached in contemporary churches. Garrett and Pearson accomplish this. Any preacher who consults their commentary will have a greater understanding of the text and find help in relaying Jeremiah's timeless truths to a modern church audience.



Preaching: A Simple Approach to the Sacred Task. By Daniel Overdorf. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-4722-8, 240 pp., \$20.99.

Reviewer: *Kevin Maples, Theologians Without Borders, Auckland, New Zealand.*

As promised in the subtitle, Overdorf delivers a simple but solid approach to sermon preparation and delivery. Seven of the eight chapters walk the reader step-by-step through Overdorf's method. But the opening chapter, "CONVICTION Drives Preaching," lays his theological foundation. This chapter makes explicit what many novice preachers have lived but may have never considered: what we believe about God, His word, and our task determines what we preach and how we preach it. Overdorf paints a compelling vision of the holy moment of preaching in which the Holy Spirit empowers the preacher to deliver God's word to announce the salvation of Christ, a moment of eternal consequence for hearers.

The remaining chapter titles are good descriptions of the steps in Overdorf's method: "RESEARCH the Scripture text," "FOCUS on a single idea," "SHAPE the flow of thought," "DEVELOP each segment," "BOOKEND with an introduction and conclusion," "POLISH with descriptive language," and

“EMBODY the sermon in the preaching event.” His method follows the well-worn path of other evangelical homileticians. Instead of wading through novel or trivial ideas, readers will be immersed in tried-and-true concepts, such as Haddon Robinson’s “big idea,” that can aid them in moving from the text to the pulpit.

Overdorf writes with exceptional clarity, revealing his experience in guiding new students through the preaching process. The heart of a pastor pulsates throughout each chapter, creating a warm, endearing tone. Due to the simplicity of the book, it is best suited for undergraduate introductory classes.

The book contains a handful of bonus articles. Though they contain excellent information, they do not fit into the flow of the book. Included in these articles is a timely discussion of plagiarism in the pulpit. While addressing this problem, Overdorf gives practical advice on how to use sources with integrity.

One of the book’s many strengths are the exercises at the end of each chapter. They will help readers begin to process and apply the information they just encountered. The aspect of the book that this reviewer found to be most helpful was the examples that Overdorf gave of the preparation process. Many books have examples of sermons, but readers are still left to wonder how to imitate the development of those sermons. Overdorf’s examples allow students to peek behind the curtain and see how he prepared the sample sermons at the end of his book.



1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By David B. Schreiner and Lee Compson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-2558-5, 315 pp., \$31.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *R. Larry Overstreet, Retired, Corban University School of Ministry, Salem, OR.*

This work by Schreiner and Compson is a recent addition to the Kerux Commentaries series. The goal is to combine a biblical scholar with a homiletician as writers of each volume. Its purpose is for a reader to thereby glean both the text's meaning, as understood by its original readers, and the text's relevant application to the modern listener.

The first major section offers an "Overview of All Preaching Passages," showing how the volume will present twenty-three suggested preaching sections (of widely varying Scripture text lengths). These pages provide brief statements of a text's exegetical idea, theological focus, preaching idea, and preaching pointers. At first this seems like a valuable contribution—until a reader encounters all of this identical material repeated at the beginning of each commentary section. Then, it seems unnecessarily tedious.

The volume then moves to an "Introduction to 1 & 2 Kings." Much of this material will be familiar to those who have read an introductory Old Testament textbook or other commentaries on Kings. For those who have not, much of the information here will be beneficial.

The bulk of the commentary is presented logically and flows well. It begins with "Exposition" of the text, followed by its "Theological Focus," and finally by "Preaching and Teaching Strategies." Clear headings signal precisely what topic is being considered as the reader progresses through the text of Kings, observing its broad interpretation, especially as it connected with its original readers—Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity. Each section is punctuated with sidebars and "Translation Notes" and concludes with thoughtful "Discussion Questions."

For preachers, each "Preaching and Teaching Strategies" section provides direction toward "Exegetical and Theological Synthesis," a "Preaching Idea" (sermon's theme), "Contemporary Connections" (which answers: "What does it mean?" "Is it true?" and "Now what?"), and "Creativity in Presentation." Personally, this reviewer found many of the suggested sermon outlines to be inadequate because of: (1) a clear

lack of connection between the theme and the outline presented; (2) many outlines being so brief that they afforded no significant help; and (3) a lack of coherence between points in the suggested sermon outlines. In contrast, the clear points of application set forth in the “Now what?” sections are precise and timeless in their relevance.

The staunch theological conservative will find some areas of the text significantly troubling. Following are six examples. First, in discussing authorship and date of writing, the writers present alternate views but come to no conclusions (42-43). Next, the writers seem overly impressed by positions held by “a clear majority of scholars” (42), ignoring those who hold to conservative positions (for example, R. D. Patterson and H. J. Austel, “1 & 2 Kings,” *EBC*, Zondervan, 1988). Third, an implicit defense of “Deuteronomistic History” is presented, indicating Deuteronomy was written in the sixth century BCE (44), with no discussion of the alternate view that Moses actually wrote Deuteronomy (as affirmed by both Jesus [Matt. 19:7-8] and Paul [Rom. 10:19]). Fourth, the reference to Solomon building the Temple 480 years after the exodus (1 Kings 6:1), referred to as a “ceremonial number” (110), has a footnote instructing readers where they can find discussions of “the problems of the early date” but no direction toward conservatives who hold to the accuracy of the 480-year statement. A similar situation occurs when 2 Kings 14:7 asserts that Amaziah killed 10,000 Edomites, and it is suggested that this “may be a stylized number” (250). No defense of Scripture’s accuracy is postulated. In contrast, a volume such as John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Baker, 1968) which supports Scripture’s accuracy of numbers is ignored. Fifth, a discussion of Pharaoh Shishak favorably presents Israel Finkelstein’s position that the description of Shishak’s invasion of Jerusalem (1 Kings 14) is “a literary creation” (177-78), rather than taking Scripture as authoritative. Sixth, a footnote discussion of the difficulties of chronology in Kings asserts that “any precise chronology or reconstruction of the Omride and Davidic lines is unobtainable” (232). Others would argue, in contrast, that Edwin R. Thiele’s *The Mysterious Numbers of the*

Hebrew Kings (originally published in 1951, with several following publication dates), along with others who built on his thesis, solved those problems.

A disconcerting part of the book relates to the sixty-seven printing errors that this reviewer observed and reported. Setting that matter aside, although this book has numerous strengths, this reviewer cannot recommend it. Other commentaries provide better interpretation of *Kings*, and volumes like the *NIVAC* contribute significantly to bridging the gap between the written text and modern listeners.



Psalms, Volume 1: The Wisdom Psalms. By Charles H. Savelle Jr. and W. Creighton Marlowe. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 978-0-8254-5846-0, 227 pp., \$27.99 (hardback).

Review: *Joshua Peeler, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Albany, LA.*

In their work, Savelle and Marlowe examine fifteen psalms. They argue that each of these psalms is wisdom literature and divide their book broadly into two major sections: psalms about God's righteousness and psalms about God's word. The goal of their volume, and the wider *Kerux* series, is to combine careful exegesis in search of the biblical text's original meaning with contemporary application.

At its best, the book serves as a quick reference guide. Because it addresses only fifteen psalms, many genres within the psalter are not considered. Instead, a few specific examples of wisdom psalms are examined to make broader points about their place in the Bible and use in preaching. Consequently, this commentary should not be used as the only or primary resource in academic writing or sermon preparation.

Savelle and Marlowe present four key components of each psalm analyzed: the exegetical idea, theological focus, preaching idea, and preaching pointers. The exegetical idea is the concept discussed in the text itself, that is, the central idea of the text. The theological focus addresses the overarching placement of the text

in the historical metanarrative of God's work throughout history. The preaching pointers, or suggested methods for preaching the passage, are the most practical sections. (I have personally used several of these pointers already in the crafting of various messages.) The section on the preaching idea of each passage is also beneficial as it suggests a sermon's main idea in one full sentence. Preachers may want to use the authors' preaching ideas and pointers to refine their own work.

The commentary includes short sections on literary structure and themes. These quick explanations provide helpful insights that will assist pastors in their interpretation and the presentation of the gospel through their messages. Awareness of a psalm's key themes before undertaking a detailed study will enable the preacher to examine the passage with an eye towards a particular theme. Select elements from the presented themes are used as chapter titles in Savelle and Marlowe's guide and can be used by the preacher to inform sermon points, titles, or applications.

The authors include basic analysis of some of the Hebrew vocabulary within each psalm considered. These word studies are one of the weaker areas of their work for two reasons. First, their select words and phrases are often of little help to understanding the wider point of the verse or overall message of the psalm. For example, when discussing Psalm 19, the authors examine the meaning of "rejoicing of the heart" (166). In this instance, the phrase's meaning is clear enough in English translations and does not require detailed treatment. Second, the terms that the authors select do not consistently include the most relevant terms in the passage. Examples of this were observed in the authors' commentary on Psalms 1, 73, 91, and 119 (see pages 81-88, 121-128, 129-138, 171-178).

Ultimately, this volume should be used in tandem with other commentaries. It lacks the necessary depth to be used as a primary source. However, that does not render it ineffective or impractical. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, this reviewer found the guide to be both practical and helpful in crafting sermons on some of the psalms treated in its pages. Pastors would do well to

add this book to their libraries, while understanding its limitations. That said, Kenneth Langley's *How to Preach the Psalms* would be a more advisable purchase for pastors considering a sermon or series drawn from the sacred psalter.



God is in the House: A Fresh Model for Shaping a Sermon. By John Woods. Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2022. 978-1-83973-272-0, 221 pp., \$22.99.

Reviewer: Timothy Y. Rhee, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Drawing from the vast riches of over forty years of preaching ministry, John Woods, training director for the School of Preachers Trust, offers a condensed and yet substantial manual for composing effective sermons. Altogether, *God is in the House* aims to “take the image of a house and use it to describe how a well-built sermon can be put together in such a way that the listener is drawn in to hear the message” (7). To accomplish this, Woods draws from different biblical images of God as builder to illumine helpful insights on a variety of homiletical topics.

In Part One, “Getting Ready to Build,” Woods focuses on the vital moments that come before composing a sermon. In sum, preachers must study the Scriptures carefully and, in doing so, ground their messages in authorial intention. In the same breath, Woods similarly contends that they must delight in the “faithful habits of Bible reading, study, meditation, and prayer” (12).

Part Two, “The Zones of the House,” shifts to discussing the actual substance of the sermon itself. Beginning with a front door, various suggestions for compelling sermon introductions are given. Woods then draws a parallel between bedrooms and the structure and movements of a sermon. Ultimately, when preachers shape their sermons in alignment with Scripture’s floorplan, hearers are invited in and shown around the house room by room (74). Following, Woods likens the “connectors” of the home, such as the Wi-Fi, to sermon transitions, which help

preachers remain clear and lucid. Moreover, with regards to sermon illustrations, tools such as film, music, and multicultural commentaries are encouraged to beautify preaching in like manner to wall-art and windows. Finally, in terms of an exit door, Woods challenges preachers to have well-defined strategies for sermon conclusions where they do not merely stop but finish well (126).

In Part Three, "Four Vital Considerations," Woods expands his analogy by discussing several ways to ensure "the house" of one's sermon never loses its "it" factor. To begin with, he encourages the development of various competencies such as emotional and cultural intelligence to meet the pressing needs of listeners. He also touches on the importance of breathing and pauses, as well as embodied preaching that elevate the multi-sensory aspects of Scripture. Furthermore, he also urges preachers "to deliver a felt Christ and communicate living truth" by way of Christ-centered preaching (168). All things considered, Part Four, "Sample Sermons," provides three sermon examples, each with Woods' own reflections, as well as a concluding chapter on preaching at funerals.

The strengths of this book are many. In fact, my sole critique is that perhaps Woods has tried to pack in too many good things, to the point that less might be more for certain readers. Nevertheless, I am also sympathetic in knowing that this is the culmination of a life well preached! On one note, Woods is masterful in the way he seamlessly integrates a robust biblical theology to support each of his arguments. Furthermore, it is also evident that Woods is well-read, often reaching beyond the scope of evangelical scholarship to compose a more nuanced and robust homiletic. This especially shines in his willingness to explore the realm of homiletical aesthetics, arguing, "It is possible for the preacher to construct an impressive palace of words, but words alone are never enough" (139). He then goes on to expound various ways to evoke the imaginative realm by way of taste, touch, and aroma. Finally, Woods' constant pastoral reminders regarding the importance of prayer alone are worth

the cost of the book. For example, he writes, “[Prayer] is our vital breath, and every breath we take has been given by him” (174).

God is in the House will greatly encourage and serve all preachers, ranging from students of preaching to the most seasoned of homileticians searching for fresh insight and inspiration. While Woods does not necessarily say anything new, his ability to integrate his own experiences with a wide range of homiletical voices makes this a unique contribution to the broader field of homiletics.



Galatians. By Matthew S. Harmon. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021. 978-1-6835-9563-2, 531 pp., \$49.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Fieldon J. Thigpen, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

The Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary series, edited by T. Desmond Alexander, Tom Schreiner, and Andreas Köstenberger, considers the theology of the Bible as a whole by investigating its parts. Contributors hold to the infallibility of Scripture from a distinctly evangelical perspective, explore the contribution of their book to the theology of the whole Bible, and aim to present application for Christian practice and proclamation. Matthew S. Harmon has contributed the volume on Galatians. Having earned his Ph.D. in Biblical Theology from Wheaton in 2006, he is currently professor of New Testament studies at Grace Theological Seminary and serves as one of the teaching elders in his local church.

Harmon’s commentary contains three major sections: Introduction, Exposition, and Biblical and Theological Themes. The Introduction is a concise twenty-one pages in which he argues for Pauline authorship, an early dating prior to the Jerusalem Council, and a South Galatian audience. Though relatively brief, the section is well researched and heavily referenced with diverse resources in the footnotes.

The Exposition portion of the book is roughly three hundred and fifty pages of commentary. The outline of Galatians is broken down into subsections in which Harmon presents the “context,” “structure” (verse-by-verse commentary), and “bridge” (contemporary application) of each pericope. Readers will find Greek and Hebrew skills helpful, though not necessary as English translations are provided. The author’s commentary reflects his solid grasp of Paul’s Jewish background and knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. He makes repeated mention of Paul’s inner-biblical quotes, allusions, and echoes from the Old Testament.

In the paragraphs devoted to “structure,” Harmon’s dissertation work on the influence of Isaiah on Paul’s theology in Galatians is on display as early as his comments on 1:4. Here he argues that the apostle’s phrase “gave himself for our sins” is a reuse of Isaianic language from Isaiah 53 (32). The author frequently includes content footnotes to describe the Hebrew language parallels within the Greek text in order to situate the original Old Testament contexts more clearly and to frame Paul’s theology. The “bridge” paragraphs serve as brief forays into application, each of which points toward the importance of moving from theological reflection to practical application in personal discipleship.

The “Biblical and Theological Themes” portion of the volume is approximately one hundred pages of excurses on nine different biblical theological topics germane to Galatians. Examples include Salvation History, the Law, and Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Galatians. In each instance, the author traces the biblical backgrounds of the given theological theme and highlights how the theme is presented in Galatians.

Harmon’s work is a worthy addition to the EBTC series as it is truly a biblical theological commentary which seeks to present an understanding of Galatians within the larger framework of the entire canon. Harmon often provides detailed analysis of the text and then follows it with a succinct and sharp summary which can be particularly beneficial for preachers. One such example is his two-page discussion on false teachers (83–84)

followed by a three-sentence summary statement (85). As homileticians strive to condense heavy research into clear and concise statements, many will find Harmon's work helpful.

Preachers who decide on a sermon series through Galatians will be enriched by the author's direct Introduction, insightful analysis of the Jewish influences within Galatians, theological connection of Galatians to the biblical canon, and pastoral summary statements designed to guide readers towards personal application. The EBTC volume on *Galatians* would be useful as a pastor's commentary, an undergraduate or seminary textbook in an exegetical course on Galatians, or even as an in-depth Bible study guide for church members who are more advanced in their study of the Scriptures.



Illustrating Well: Preaching Sermons that Connect. By Jim L. Wilson. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022. 978-1-68359-589-2, 168 pp., \$19.99.

Reviewer: Mark O. Wilson, Southern Wesleyan University, Central, SC.

Jim Wilson, who serves at Gateway Seminary in California, provides practical guidelines for sermon illustrations in *Illustrating Well: Preaching Sermons that Connect*. The book draws from research conducted by a team led by Wilson himself into the usage and effectiveness of various types of illustrations.

After presenting a biblical/historical case for utilizing illustrations, Wilson provides four helpful metaphors explaining their function as bridges, windows, lights, and pictures. He then outlines four characteristics of effective illustrations (asserting that they should be familiar, clear, interesting, and appropriate) and provides a helpful green, yellow, and red-light rubric to assist preachers in assessing whether their illustrations meet these criteria. Wilson wisely reminds readers that illustrative material should always illuminate, rather than overshadow, the biblical text.

The bulk of the book presents Wilson's findings after his team reviewed a number of manuscripts uploaded to an online sermon database and tabulated the frequency of various illustration types. These sermons contained an average of 2.43 illustrations each which, after analysis, were broken into two major clusters: frequently and infrequently used types. Eighty-five percent of the illustrations fell into "frequently used" cluster, composed of four categories: personal, fresh (current/familiar people and events), biblical (drawn from the Bible narrative itself), and hypothetical ("imagine if. . . or "suppose that. . .").

Wilson's team found that personal illustrations were used most frequently (24%) with "fresh illustrations" (22%) following at a close second. The "fresh illustration" label was new and helpful to this reviewer, conflating some types he had previously differentiated. Wilson has previously championed the "fresh illustration" concept in other endeavors, such as his website: www.freshministry.org which contains several samples. Readers may be surprised that biblical illustrations ranked third in the research, as it was the *most* frequent type of illustration appearing in this reviewer's recent research into the preaching practices of thriving congregations. Since the sample size of both studies was small, the jury is still out.

It was a relief to see that "classical illustrations" fell into the "lesser used" cluster. While there are occasions when a familiar, but worn, illustration is useful, Wilson's claim that fresh is always better than stale is true! Illustrations, like peaches and green beans, are less tasty from a can. The "lesser used" cluster also included historical and fictional illustrations, as well as object lessons. This reviewer especially appreciated Wilson's encouragement to consider using more stories from church history, as they serve the dual purpose of illustrating the point as well as teaching the historic context and foundations of our faith traditions.

The book investigates each illustration type and provides practical guidance for how preachers should (or should not) utilize it. For example, while Wilson acknowledges the potential effectiveness of personal illustrations, he warns against making

ourselves the heroes of our own stories and suggests that they should not be used unless they are authentic, proportionate, and suitable. Throughout the book, ample examples are provided to demonstrate effective and ineffective uses of the various illustration types. The placement of illustrations and differences in using them for deductive versus inductive (or narrative) preaching are also addressed. Preachers who wish to freshen up their sermons and connect more engagingly with their listeners will find a helpful resource here.



Charismatic and Expository Preaching: A Case Study of Two Preaching Methods within the Local Church. By Lewis D. Mathis. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022. 978-1-66679-399-4, 139 pp., \$24.00.

Reviewer: *Thomas Rho, George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

Inspired by his observations of contrasting congregational responses to charismatic and expository preaching, Lewis D. Mathis, an associate pastor at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church and a 2021 D.Min. graduate (Biblical Studies) of Liberty University, explores whether the charismatic style of preaching “can be incorporated into a form of expository preaching that is biblically sound and theologically acceptable as a new movement of the Holy Spirit for the church in the modern age” (6-7). Throughout the book, it is clear that Mathis is motivated to see churches reach and teach people through an effective, engaging method of preaching. His book attempts to offer the church one possible way.

Mathis begins his work by laying out his approach to his inquiry. In chapter 1, he introduces his understanding of expository and charismatic preaching. His characterizations of the two methods of preaching are heavily influenced by his personal observations at his church and the literature that he reviews in this chapter. He also describes the case study that he

conducted to test his hypothesis about the ability to faithfully integrate charismatic and expository preaching.

In chapter 2, Mathis defines expository and charismatic preaching. He starts by using F. B. Meyer's definition of expository preaching. He supplements this initial description with insights from authors such as Faris D. Whitesell and Merrill F. Unger. Mathis's treatment of charismatic preaching is significantly more substantial than that of expository preaching. In this section, Mathis answers his research question: "Charismatic preaching is mesmerizing, and one can see it as a spiritual movement of God if the charismatic preacher holds to the very foundation of expository preaching" (33). He then goes on to summarize the charismatic movement and to highlight the primary issues, such as spiritual gifts, that divide charismatic preachers from expository preachers. He concludes this chapter by asserting that the two styles of preaching can be integrated because of the common need for the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3 introduces the research methods used to test Mathis's hypothesis and further analyzes the debate between expository and charismatic preachers on the Holy Spirit's work. He acknowledges that "many biblical scholars point to errors in the charismatic interpretation of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit and the gifts the Spirit provides for the church" (80). Despite these interpretative differences, Mathis asserts again that expository and charismatic preaching can be integrated because the common thread that holds them together is the need and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 4, the most interesting part of the book, reviews the results of the author's case study. He conducted his research within three churches, each of them different in their preaching style. These differences are reflected in the answers to Mathis's interview questions and are worthy of consideration. Mathis also collected and analyzed questionnaires given out to members of each church. His findings and the overall argument of his book would have been aided by the inclusion of more churches, but as Mathis points out early in this chapter, the pandemic prevented him from widening his research.

In chapter 5, the author reviews his findings and reiterates that the integration of charismatic and expository preaching is tenable both theologically and practically. He concludes that the two styles of preaching can coexist because “both charismatic and expository preachers stand on God’s word and yield to the Holy Spirit” (113).

This book was written with the intention to help local pastors who believe that charismatic theology is not compatible with expository preaching. The book might help some charismatic preachers who are hesitant to preach expository sermons, but overall, the book was unconvincing. First, it was unclear what charismatic preaching is. Mathis points out distinctives about charismatic worship and theology, but he does not define charismatic preaching in a way that seems to be incompatible with expository preaching. Second, Mathis mistakenly characterizes expository preaching as inherently cessationist. He does this primarily by citing John MacArthur’s issues with the charismatic interpretation of key biblical passages while holding up MacArthur as a representative of expository preaching. Third, Mathis’s sweeping statements about the congregants’ responses to charismatic and expository preaching lacked evidence. His argument would have been stronger with more examples to substantiate his claims.



Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition. By Calvin Miller. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 978-0-8010-1290-7, 284 pp., \$19.99 (hardback); *The Sermon Maker: Tales of a Transformed Preacher.* By Calvin Miller. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. 978-0-3102-5509-3, 156 pp., \$16.25 (hardback).

Reviewer: J. David Duncan, *The Church at Horseshoe Bay, Horseshoe Bay, Texas.*

Calvin Miller (1936-2012) pastored the Westside Baptist Church in Omaha, Nebraska for twenty-five years and taught homiletics at two seminaries. He once preached a masterful sermon at

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary titled “I Wanna Get Washed” from the book of Habakkuk. He framed the sermon with a single image decorated with a solitary quote.

Habakkuk (1:2) cried out, “O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?” He then prophetically and poetically responded by raising the need for revival, repentance, and awe before God, saying, “But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him” (2:20).

Miller opened his message with a quote from the musical *Godspell* (1973): “I wanna get washed.” He then painted a picture of what it was like to bale hay as a boy in Oklahoma and the longing for a wash in the metal outdoor shower at the end of the day. The hay glittered his body with wheat, chaff, chiggers, and itching alfalfa. Miller recalled the sheer joy of a shower at day’s end—the scrubbing off and washing away of the itching, burning irritants. From there, his sermon challenged hearers to repentance, revival, and the blood of Christ as the cleansing power to equip Christ’s servant in preparation for Christ’s service.

Miller outlines his preaching philosophy in his book *Preaching*. Here he speaks to the heart of the “image-driven sermon” and warns against “older sermon styles” (16). The book highlights his philosophy of “narrative exposition” (20-22). He claims that many hearers feel the old, expository style of preaching to be “boring” (20). Whether that claim is actually true, Miller boldly proclaims his style as art—the creating of an image in the sermon and the painting, crafting, and shaping of the sermon like a work of art. In discussing the art of narrative exposition, he asks, “How frequently should you use a motif (for example, “I wanna get washed!”) within the sermon?” His response, “This is a question of art, and the answer is a matter of artistry...” (109).

Miller’s approach to preaching requires deep study (exegeting the text, the preacher, the call of the sermon, the audience, and the scripture’s story). Although he personally worked hard at exegeting the text accurately and expounding it faithfully, Miller was less John MacArthur (the weighty

expositor) and more Fred Craddock (the narrative storyteller speaking with narrative flow). Each style serves its gospel-proclaiming purpose. Ultimately, the preacher must choose his or her style under God's call. Always, though, "Preachers are those who are called to be artists of persuasion" (146). The preacher persuades the listener to follow Christ.

Preaching offers practical insights, creative ideas, anecdotes, quotes, and significant depth to improve the preacher's communication of the gospel for God's glory. One added bonus that makes this book especially memorable is that it leaves the reader with the sense that its writer knows God, knows preaching, and has walked through the valley of the shadow of preaching in its dark lows and climbed the mountain in its glorious heights. It also comes with a penetrating question for every preacher: "Do we ever reach the stage when we preach entirely for the glory of God with no investment of our own need to be celebrated?" (210)

Before *Preaching* (2006), Miller released *The Sermon Maker: Tales of a Transformed Preacher* (2002). If *Preaching* details Miller's philosophy of preaching, *Sermon Maker* pictures the journey of one preacher, Sam, from an expository preacher to a "sermon maker." The book aims to show how to "marry exposition and metaphor in such a way that people will listen" (9). Sam is a preacher making his way from being a purely expository preacher to an interesting, informative, new style of narrative expositor.

More than likely, Miller is narrating his own journey in this book from being a young pastor into becoming a mature pastor-priest-preacher. As a pastor, the preacher cares for the sheep, the congregation. As a priest, the pastor listens, nurtures, and feeds the sheep with the tenderness of a shepherd. As a preacher, the pastor understands the text, its context, his or her local context, and the hearts of hearers in their pain and joys, hopes and dreams. The book's format takes some getting used to with helpful preaching insights and quotes from homileticians and preachers on the lefthand pages and the story of Sam on the right. Miller's insights and his narration of Sam's journey

emphasize personal devotion in preaching, a passion for Christ, and reliance upon the Holy Spirit. After all, “a good preacher brings to the pulpit good sermons from his (or her) private devotion” (121).

Always witty, Miller concludes, “Whenever God smiles on good preaching, all angels are obligated to grin” (151). These books offer two ways of looking at the same topic—narrative exposition that is image-driven.