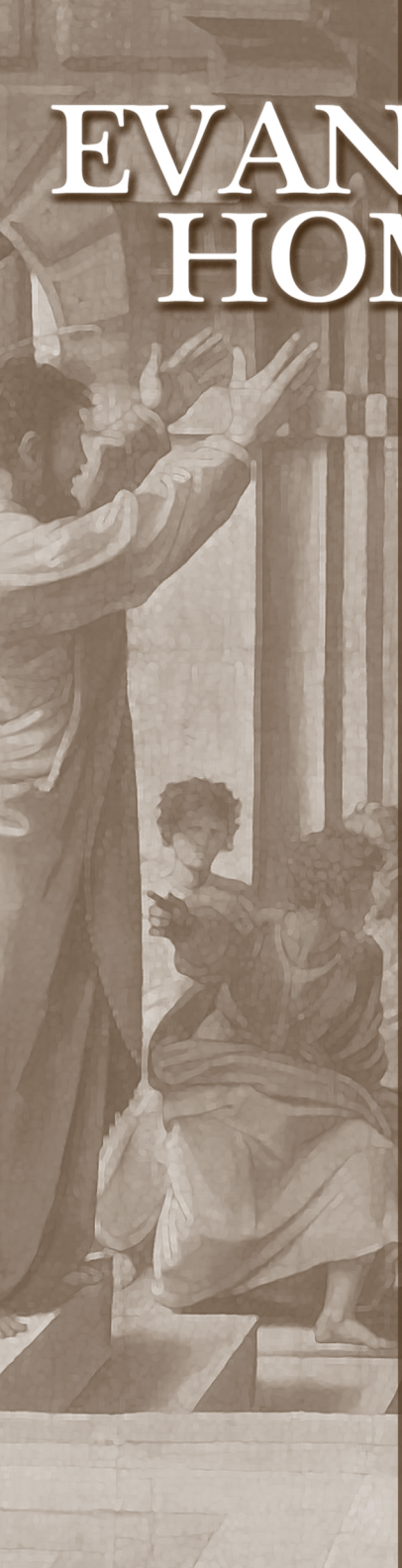

THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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Manuscripts: Though most articles and book reviews are assigned, submissions are welcome. They must by typed and double-spaced. All articles will be juried to determine suitability for publication. Please send articles to the General Editor, Scott M. Gibson, at scott_gibson@baylor.edu. Letters to the editor are also welcome. Those who have material of whatever kind accepted for publication must recognize it is always the editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

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Please note: Although the articles in *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* reflect the general concerns of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, some details in the articles may not reflect the position of the Editorial Board.

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The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is the publication of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. Organized in 1997, the Evangelical Homiletics Society is an academic society established for the exchange of ideas related to the instruction of biblical preaching. The purpose of the Society is to advance the cause of biblical preaching through the promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching; to increase competence for teachers of preaching; to integrate the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology; to make scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics.

Statement of Faith: The Evangelical Homiletics Society affirms the Statement of Faith affirmed by the National Association of Evangelicals. It reads as follows:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A WORLD HOMILETIC

SCOTT M. GIBSON
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The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Evangelical Homiletics Society was held at Moody Bible Institute 13-15 October 2023. The annual scholars gathering featured the theme, "A World Homiletic." In planning for the event, the Evangelical Homiletics Society governing board wanted to reflect the worldwide influences of the field of homiletics as the society embarks on the next phase of growth. The intention was to look beyond North America to a global perspective on homiletics. Hence, invitations were issued to two homiletics scholars from two different parts of the world, Ezekiel A. Ajibade from Nigeria, Africa, and Sam Chan from Sydney, Australia. These scholars provided plenary session presentations and served on a panel to engage questions from those in attendance. This issue of the journal includes both Dr. Ajibade's and Dr. Chan's thoughtful and challenging addresses.

Gregory K. Hollifield's guest editorial explores the nature of biblical preaching, noting that there are various features—comedy, tragedy, and ambiguity—all surfacing in the preaching task. These factors are not to be ignored but embraced by the attentive preacher.

The recipient of the Scott M. Gibson Emerging Scholars Grant for 2023 is Patricia M. Batten of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Batten is a Ph.D. student at the University of Aberdeen, focusing on disability and its intersection with homiletics. As a rising scholar, Batten's paper, "Homiletic of Belonging" was selected for its outstanding demonstration of engaging a relevant issue in homiletics. Her observations about

how people with intellectual disabilities might be spiritually changed through evangelical preaching are insightful for any preacher and helpful in comprehending the meaning of a world homiletic.

Nathan Wright and Alison Gerber's paper, "What's Our Big Idea? Analyzing the Academic Literary Corpus of the Evangelical Homiletics Society" was selected to be the Keith Willhite Award. The Keith Willhite Award, named after society co-founder, Dr. Keith Willhite (1958-2003), is given to the author of the paper that is recognized as having the most impact among papers presented at the conference. Wright and Gerber explore the world of the EHS corpus and present engaging findings and instructive challenges for the society to consider as we look back and move forward with our research and writing.

The recipient of the Haddon W. Robinson Biblical Preaching Award for 2023 is Bree Snow. Her sermon is titled, "The Cure for Conceit," raises issues on which the preacher can reflect as he or she faces one's own private world.

Having served as president of the society for 2021-2022, I include two closing articles. The first explores the present and potential future of the world of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, an address given at the Celebration Luncheon on the closing day of the annual meeting, "Reflections on the Future of the Evangelical Homiletics Society." The second is a sermon, "The Sides of Preaching," based on 1 Timothy 4:11-16. The presidential sermon is a tradition of EHS. The outgoing president preaches at the final worship gathering on Saturday morning. There is an inside and outside world of preaching—and the preacher.

The book review section closes this edition of the journal. Once again, Gregory K. Hollifield, Book Review Editor, has gathered a respectable collection of reviews written by members of the society. One can see the important effort and perceptiveness demonstrated in this section of the journal by both the Book Review Editor and those who read and reviewed the numerous books included in this edition—a new world of homiletics reading.

The Evangelical Homiletics Society has only scratched the surface of understanding a world homiletic. Yet, the 2023 annual scholars gathering in Chicago and this edition of the journal mark the beginning of such efforts, efforts we trust will increasingly characterize the society in the future.

GUEST EDITORIAL

THE COMEDY, TRAGEDY, AND AMBIGUITY OF PREACHING

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INTRODUCTION

Included in the purpose statement of our Evangelical Homiletics Society is a line saying we intend "to provide a forum for the identification, study, research, and modeling of biblical preaching." It is that word "research" that opens up the possibility for all sorts of discussions pertaining to our craft. There is no field of study from which the observant preacher cannot draw some insight that will inform how he or she understands the Bible and the homiletical task. The reason for this has to do with the very nature of God's revelation. Our God reveals Himself and the truth He embodies in ways both general and special. To find truth anywhere is to discover some aspect of Him. He is the author and sustainer of all life. Life testifies to Him. As biblical preachers, we are called to expound that testimony.

Eighteenth-century English writer, art historian, and politician Horace Walpole famously observed, "Life is a comedy to those who think and a tragedy for those who feel." The Bible looks squarely at life and gives us elements of both and more.

The Book itself is a grand comedy. Everything works out right in the end. But it is a comedy interlaced with tragedy. So much goes so desperately wrong before the end comes. It also includes degrees of ambiguity, leaving us to wonder.

Preachers who see only comedy in Scripture are apt to deliver sermons that never seem to get at the real pain their hearers experience. They generalize it, though all pain is particular to its sufferer. They gloss it over, dismissing their hearers' existential distress with talk of their "real" problem that only Jesus can solve. Their thinking is sound enough, but it lacks feeling.

Preachers with a keen eye for biblical tragedy are more likely to deliver sermons that are therapeutic or prophetic by nature, depending on their particular personalities and spiritual gifting. They either probe hearers' pain with great empathy and dispense practical counsel for dealing with it or expose the sin they perceive to lie behind that pain and denounce it with holy zeal. Their feelings are acute, but they can muddle their thinking.

Preachers especially attuned to the Bible's ambiguities deliver more than their fair share of sermons that leave hearers to wonder, looking for meaning and purpose. They walk away pondering, "What did the preacher mean by that? Why do I feel so confused? What am I supposed to do next?"

Just as the Bible is a comedy, wrapping a tragedy, and haunted by ambiguity, preaching that is true to Scripture and to life as we know it should be comedic, tragic, or ambiguous depending on a sermon's text. But how?

STORIES THAT GRAB AND HOLD US

The metanarrative of Scripture is just that, a narrative, a story. Granted, it is a big story made up of lots of little stories and other literary genres. Nonetheless, it *is* a story.

What is a story? Lisa Cron has spent decades working as a literary agent, television producer, consultant to a major motion picture studio and ad agency, and advisor to writers, nonprofits, educators, and journalists. Since 2006, she has taught in the

UCLA Extension Writers' Program. In her book *Story or Die: How to Use Brain Science to Engage, Persuade, and Change Minds in Business and in Life*, Cron maintains, "A story is about how an unavoidable external problem forces the protagonist to change internally in order to solve it."[1] Contrary to popular opinion, she insists that a story is more than plot. Without the presence of an imperiled protagonist with whom we can identify and about whom we care, the plot is "just random facts, regardless [of] how objectively 'dynamic.'"[2] Identification and empathy are key. Skillfully told stories synchronize our emotions with the protagonist's. Their gradual exposing of what the protagonist finally realizes comes as something like a revelation to us the story's readers and hearers. If we accept that revelation, it transforms us. These are the stories that grab and hold us.

According to Cron, the protagonist's worldview must go through four stages for a story to be capable of changing an audience's mind. The stages are: misbelief (a closely held but erroneous belief that the audience shares with the protagonist), truth, realization (the discovery that the previously held belief is wrong), and transformation. No longer blinded by misbelief, the protagonist and audience are able to see what will help them fulfill their true agenda.[3]

Applying Cron's insights to the task of biblical preaching, we can better understand how both Scripture and our sermons may be comedic, tragic, or ambiguous. It all depends on how the four stages identified above are arranged and whether any is missing.

PREACHING COMEDY

When all four stages appear in a text or sermon and arranged in the order given above, the effect is comedic (not to be confused with humorous). The outcome is a happy one.

Episodes four through six of the *Star Wars* saga constitute a comedy. When we first meet Luke Skywalker in episode four, he is a dreamer, misinformed about his father's true identity, and seemingly destined to be a poor farmer like his uncle Owen. As

moviegoers we sense in his hopelessness traces of our own. All of that changes when Luke meets Ben and learns more, not all, of the truth about who he is and the potential he possesses. Luke's full realization of his true self does not come until episode five. Somehow, his discovery then causes us to rethink our own worth and prospects. Finally, when episode six begins, Luke is in full-on Jedi knight mode. He knows his destiny. He has been transformed, and his father will be too before the credits roll![4]

Gospel preaching is comedic by nature. It begins by exposing the lies we hold dear. The very first and biggest one being what the serpent told Eve, that is, obeying God is *not* in our best interest.

Once a lie is exposed by examining what disobedience has wrought in the protagonist's and audience's lives, the truth has a greater chance to be heard. If it is heard, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the hearer will realize, like the protagonist, that the previously held belief was wrong. Following that, the possibility of transformation is opened.

Most Christian preaching will be comedic. It proclaims Jesus as the truth and looks to a future when all things set wrong in Eden will be set right in the end. If one accepts this message, life takes on a different hue. It appears more comedic than tragic.

PREACHING TRAGEDY

Transposing stages one and two, then three and four, creates the following order: truth, misbelief, transformation, and realization. It is this order that creates a tragedy.

Star Wars episodes one through three trace the tragic descent of Anakim Skywalker, Luke's father. Early on, he is presented with the truth about his innate abilities. Episode two finds him growing in those abilities but also showing signs of a dubious character. Come the third episode, the evil chancellor has twisted Anakim's mind. He believes a lie. Good is now evil. Evil is now good. His transformation is both psychic and physical. Only later, much later in episode six, will he realize

with bitterness and deep regret what we the moviegoers realized much earlier. His story is largely a tragedy.

The story of mankind's fall is similarly tragic. Adam and Eve possessed the truth but came to believe a lie. As soon as they tasted what God's lovingkindness had forbidden, they were transformed. Immediately, but only partially it seems, did they realize what they had done. Their encounter with their Creator later that evening, followed soon after by their expulsion from paradise and the harsh realities of life outside the Garden, would serve to make that realization painfully clear.

Texts and sermons that progress from truth to lie to transformation to realization are tragedies. They speak powerfully to hearers who, like a story's protagonist, once knew the truth but came to believe otherwise. They were transformed in the process and only later, if ever, came to realize with bitterness and regret what had become of them. This is the story of mankind as recounted by Paul in Romans 1. "Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up…" (vv. 21-24).

Tragic preaching has its place. It can be either therapeutic or prophetic. We find both in the Old Testament's prophetic section. Jeremiah and Hosea preached with tenderness, inviting a broken people to be made whole again. Ezekiel and Amos, on the other hand, preached with a scathing zeal. Who among us does not yet wince at the thought of expounding Ezekiel chapter twenty-three? Much of Israel's history was a tragedy. If the Bible records it as such, why should we not preach it as such? Preachers in both of our Testaments did.

PREACHING AMBIGUITY

The problem with comedic preaching especially is it tends to wrap up too much of life's complexity in a neat little package

with a Jesus-bow on top. Life is not tidy. It is messy and, often, ambiguous.

Not all of Jesus' sayings are clear for their full meaning. Peter acknowledged that there are many things in Paul's writings that are hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16). And let's not even get started on the Book of Revelation! Ambiguities abound.

Nowhere is the ambiguity of life as we know it more prominent than in the Book of Ecclesiastes. "Who knows[?]" is one of the preacher's repeated refrains (2:19; 3:21; 6:12, 8:1). "You do not know" and he or man "does not know" are another (8:8; 9:12; 11:2, 5-6).

There is so much that we simply do not know. It seems that the older and wiser one grows, the more one realizes how little he or she really knows. But is that not precisely where faith enters the picture? We don't know, but we believe in a God who does.

Today's hearers are rightfully leery of anyone claiming to hold all the answers. It does not matter how many degrees they hold or which way they wear their collar. Yes, we preachers speak with authority when we rightly divide God's word, but we do not speak omnisciently. We still only "know in part and prophecy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). Perfection is yet to come.

Preaching that is honest will sometimes have to admit "we don't know." We don't always know where the truth ends and the lie begins. Rather, we *realize* that the serpent lied. We have eaten the poisonous fruit and sense that we are less like God for it. We don't know good and evil like He does. Rather we say with Paul, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

CONCLUSION

Horace Walpole had it right. Life is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel, and often ambiguous for us all. The Bible looks at and describes life without flinching. For that

reason, it is filled with comedy, tragedy, and ambiguity. Biblical preaching will be no less.

NOTES

1. Lisa Cron, *Story or Die: How to Use Brain Science to Engage, Persuade, and Change Minds in Business and in Life* (California / New York: Ten Speed Press, 2021), 71. Note: The evolutionary bias in Cron's writing is blatant and persistent. But if readers can look past it and the occasional profanity, her work offers much to ponder.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 86-87.
4. Such examples of the comedic in literature and cinema abound. The saga of Harry Potter is another that springs immediately to mind.

ENGAGING A WORLD HOMILETIC

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this conference to which I will address is, "Engaging a World Homiletic." The world is a big place. With a population of 7.9 billion in seven continents and consisting of nothing less than 3800 cultures, the world is enigmatic and a big assignment to comprehend.[1] Yet, God loves this world and the people in it. We are commissioned to go into the world, preach the gospel and make disciples of its component nations. Paul's words in Acts 17:24-28 is very profound: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"[2]

From the passage above, there is an indication that God was deliberate in situating every human being where they are and for a purpose: seek, reach him, and find him. The task of preaching and of a preacher stand between these divine designs. Paul later asks in Romans 10:14-15: "How, then, can they call on

the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" The preacher, therefore, becomes the connector between men and women in their divine location and the vision of God to see them seek him, reach out for him and find him.

A "world homiletic" presupposes that God has placed humans in their different locations in the world and within their cultural and other contexts. He has also raised preachers (and continues to call in places where they do not have one) who would preach to them and ultimately lead them to salvation in the holistic sense.

To prosecute this task, I will discuss the basic assumptions in homiletics and Christian preaching. I will examine preaching from an African context and perspective since that is my root. I will situate African preaching in a global context and offer a few considerations to put in place if one is to engage a world homiletic. The idea of "engaging" as we are attempting to do is "to give attention to something" and possibly "participate" in it.[3] It is to seek to understand it, to know how to handle and probably involve in it.

THE IDEA OF HOMILETICS

Haddon Robinson gave one of the most profound definitions of preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher applies to the hearer."[4] In drawing out his homiletic theory from this definition, he surmised that in preaching, preachers communicate ideas, the idea of the passage should govern the idea of the sermon, and preaching must be applied.

Germane to our discussion, is that preaching is communication; a preacher communicates ideas. The theological nature of preaching as a divine event may pitch it against human communication theories, but the elements of human communication are equally fundamental to preaching.[5] There is usually a messenger, a message, a channel, decoding, and a feedback mechanism or system. The sender/communicator must have a message and choose what medium or channel they want to use to pass it across to those they wish to send the message. The receivers of the message should be able to understand the message's content enough to respond to it. There should also be a way the two parties conclude, ultimately, that they understand or did not understand each other. This reason is why "communication takes place within social contexts. Within those frameworks for interaction, conventions, styles, codes and standards are culturally negotiated and mediated…."[6]

The implications of this to preaching are multifarious. Preachers construct sermons, but they are not alone in the process. The hearers participate in the constructive process because meaning would eventually emerge through a combination of what information the preacher passes across and the "existing or ambient information in the receiver's field."[7] Communication becomes successful when the sender and receiver arrive at the same meaning as intended by the sender.

Beyond a joint construction of meaning, there is also a shared experience in a preaching communication process. A communication process should aim at replicating the sender's experience in that of the receiver. In the words of J. Randall Nichols, "transmission of information alone is not the endpoint of the process. The information must create in some acceptable form the same phenomenon in the receiver's experience as was present in and intended by the sender."[8]

One more implication is the fact that a communication process shapes people. A relationship develops between the speaker and the hearer and produces a result. The interaction between a communicator and the hearer creates an identity in the hearers as they are consistently exposed to the speaker's message

pattern. The communication process is powerful enough to shape "people's basic expectations about the real world, including, of course, the theological beliefs and values."[9]

Ultimately, however preachers are vastly familiar with the Scripture and its interpretation; yet they must understand the people they preach to and their social contexts. The questions arise: What exists in the receiver's field to help them reach a level of shared meaning with the preacher? In what form is the message being passed across that could resonate with and be acceptable to the hearers? What is the ultimate end after the preacher establishes a long-term relationship with the people in his consistent messages? Who is the preacher expecting them to be in the context of their real world, and what theological beliefs and values would they share?

One of the works that have shaped my research in recent years is that of Robert A. Allen, titled, "The Expository Sermon – Cultural or Biblical." His thesis was simple: "the expository method, as biblical, should continue to provide the basis for sermon preparation while the expository form, as cultural, should be recognized as only one of many forms an exegetically developed sermon can take."[10]

In Allen's usage, form is related to the communication style engaged in delivering God's message. Prophets in the Old Testament used various forms. Jeremiah used visuals extensively, Isaiah used taunt, Ezekiel used drama, and Daniel used prayer at some points. Generally, the inductive form was largely employed as a communication pattern in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus used parables and stories. He was highly inductive but also used deductive methods.[11] Considering the preaching of Peter, Paul and others, "the form which preaching assumed in both Old and New Testaments demonstrated a great variety of methodology."[12]

What then informs these forms? It is the listeners, their communicational paradigm, and rhetorical culture. This must have been the consideration of Gerald T. du Preez when he noted that

> The example of Christ illustrates how He encountered a form of preaching that was not reaching the hearts and minds of the general target group. The preachers of their day were communicating in ways that prevented the target audience from "hearing" religious truth. Of Christ and His preaching it was said: "No man ever spoke like this Man!" And what was His method? "And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them." Mark 4:33,34. And why did He use parables? Because it was a method that was able to speak to the minds and the hearts of His hearers within the culture in which they operated. "Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. By using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to the different hearers.[13]

Jesus knew and understood those he was communicating with and chose the best form in which they could comprehend his message.

It is the preacher's duty in contemporary times to also understand the communication paradigm of their audience. This understanding should inform the expository sermon's form. In Allen's submissions, Japanese and Koreans, for example, hold a speaker more important than his message if he has a good ethos. The Arabs are highly poetic, and poetic passages of the Old Testament impress them more than they would a westerner. Messianic Jews would prefer the word "Messiah" for their worship to the Anglicized word "Christ."[14]

So, form in its sermonic communication sense is not static or constant. The well-known three-points and deductive sermon points is also noted to be a cultural form derived from the age of writing. It is not derived from a biblical impetus or requirement. Allen concluded that

> Preaching cross-culturally then could conceivably be accomplished through story-telling, inductive argument,

debate, drama, generalization, specific examples, narrative preaching, or any number of other styles while at the same time maintaining absolute fidelity to the exposition of the text. "The missionary mandate is to make the Bible clearly understood and to help the national apply the Word of God in his own situation in his own culture."[15]

PREACHING IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

A philosophy of faithfulness to the text of God's inerrant word, properly exegeted and culturally sensitive in its application and delivery, has driven my research and quest for an African Christian Preaching genre. Concluding that all biblical preaching is expository, my working definition of Expository preaching is the incarnational communication of the text of God's word considering its historical, grammatical, and literary intention in a form that is faithful to the text and meaningful to the hearers in their sociocultural context, with the ultimate aim of enhancing total transformation into Christ-likeness.

Discovering and describing a homiletical genre called "African," however, remain a challenging task. One of the reasons for this is that not much research and writing have been done on African preaching, either by Western authors or African scholars. This fact does not mean that preaching has not gone on in the several centuries of Christianity on the continent. Scholarship in the area of homiletics has been low.[16] It is not difficult to comprehend that the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, one of the largest and oldest seminaries in Africa, graduated its first PhD candidate in Christian Preaching in 2017 (just some five years ago), after its 120 years existence.

Nevertheless, we can piece together and study the African homiletical paradigm through the lenses of history, including a few writers who have written from African Instituted Churches, Pentecostalism, and African cultural imperatives. Historically, a number of the early church fathers were Africans. Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, and Origen made significant contributions

that are being studied and appreciated today. However, their Christianity and preaching did not go beyond Roman North Africa. The church was Latin; did not indigenize; and never penetrated North Africa beyond the Romanized population. With the onslaught of Arian Christians and Barbarians and the invasion of vandals and Muslims, nothing significant remained of the church.[17] That generation missed a chance for indigenous Christianity, and perhaps homiletic.

The advent of Western missionaries had a lot of impact on the African church, especially between the 19th and 20th centuries, and the effect endures till today. Then, the preachers in different African communities and churches learned their preaching methods from the white missionaries. On many occasions, however, despite their demonstration of great eloquence, passion, and conviction, there is sometimes little congruence between their text and sermon context.[18] Sometimes, sermons came in the form of three points developed from the text, with a theme supplied and an appeal made at the end. However, something that seems common to all preaching of this period is the element of moralistic preaching that attacks such behaviors as polygamy, drunkenness, immorality, and all sort of vices, whether the text intended such meaning or not. Yet, a sermon must be applied but not at the expense of the text's intended meaning.[19] Today, there is much effort advanced to divorce African theology from its colonial and western leanings.

A very useful lens through which we can see African preaching is the African Independent church movement. This church demonstrates liberty in their worship, which could last several hours. The preacher preaches at the top of his voice, runs up and down between the lines of the worshippers, sings, dances and prophesies. He leads them in intermittent prayers, converses with them during the sermon, and prays for their healing. Kasomo Daniel succinctly puts it that in African independent church preaching,

> Proclamation is lived, danced, acted out with constant interaction between the Bible reader, preacher and

> congregational response… Sermons are interspersed with prophecy, confessions, testimonies to joy or grief, laying on of the hands, faith healing and exorcism. Thus the need of the individuals is shared and carried by the church. Demons are addressed, cursed and expelled by means of numerous symbolic acts. If something is funny, people laugh without in any way marring the seriousness of the matter. [20]

African Pentecostalism also shares many of these characteristics. African Pentecostalism found expression in what it means to be "African" and it thrived. Today, the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa is phenomenal, consisting of over 35 percent of the Christian population in the continent as of 2015.[21] African Pentecostals are masters of multi-text, topical preaching, enriching their pulpit ministries with stories, testimonies, songs, and dialogues. Sermons are interjected with prophecies and end with calls for salvation, healing, and deliverance. A new practice of bringing money before the pulpit while preachers are preaching has recently emerged in Nigeria. They call it a seed offering to connect with the prophetic utterances of the preacher. This trend is a dangerous one in an already financially scandalized church.

A note of caution should also be sounded here. While it is touted that African Independent churches and, at times, African Pentecostal churches should be the face of African Christianity because of their high sense of contextualization, the problem is their hermeneutics. I believe that "A sound hermeneutic produces a sound theology and in turn informs a sound homiletic."[22]

African Christian preaching is nevertheless evolving. Aylward Shorter surveyed African preaching using the Reformation churches, Catholic churches, churches with Orthodox traditions, and African Independent churches. Among his discoveries were that African preachers enjoyed using folktales, proverbs, choric form, drama, and the engagement of other materials from oral tradition to enrich their sermons and

communicate in ways their audience would understand. Shorter noted that the ideal African preacher would use a direct address to hearers, "so that they become participants in the sermon and actors in the biblical story. Congregational participation is achieved in a variety of ways, sometimes through poetry, sometimes through a direct invitation to the congregation to answer a question or complete a phrase, and sometimes through the singing of hymns during the sermon."[23]

Therefore, we may conclude that an African homiletic is a homiletic of celebration and participation. It is a homiletic that is arising out of the communal nature of the African society and an aspiration to engage the word of God in connecting the people to God through salvation and spiritual growth through their communication paradigm. When we put together the African communication paradigm that expresses itself in songs, dance, drama, folktale, myths, and proverbs, an African homiletic is a homiletic of orality. Africans are predominantly oral.

The greatest challenge so far is balancing this communication paradigm's richness with a faithful exposition of the Scripture. For now, the journey looks long, but we are on the path. I teach not less than twenty-five Doctor of Ministry students who have been in the pastoral and other ministries for years and sometimes decades. Their first assignment is usually to provide two sermon outlines, one from the Old Testament and one from the New. At the raw stage of their submission, the majority find it difficult to focus on the text and bring up the issues deeply domiciled in them. They are used to multi-texted topical sermons. When it is time to preach, their experiences in the class now allows them to focus one text, but the rush for application distracts them from the exposition. Each year, however, we are witnessing significant improvement. It was the same story when I handled over one hundred Master of Divinity students yearly before leaving this responsiblity to another colleague. Most of the students approach preaching class with a model of multi-textual topical preaching and low exposition they have seen in their home churches, perhaps from birth. Now, things are gradually changing, more so that in seminary's chapel

presentation, seminary leadership has instituted expository preaching as the norm.

The greatest responsibility we have as African homileticians is to establish a homiletical system that is based on the faithful exposition of the text of the Scripture and yet communicated in the communication paradigm of Africa, which is highly oral.

SITUATING AFRICAN PREACHING IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

In discussing a world homiletic, it is essential to situate African preaching within a global context, however complex that may be. Let us look at these three dimensions.

Opportunity to Preach

It is almost a given that Africans are overtly religious. The indices are not just found in books; it is a matter of everyday observations—churches buildings located on several streets, revival services and other mid-week programs, prayer mountains, and unending vigils. The excess of this is a problem of its own as it gives worshippers the impression that the Christian faith is more of what you express in a worship service than how you live it at the workplace. It also tends to lead to indulgence. However, when preachers use these features as an advantage, they will then have multiple platforms to preach, perfect their preaching skills, and influence people for God and his kingdom. This opportunity contrasts sharply with a place like the United States, where church attendance is rapidly declining.[24]

Audience Receptivity

Africa forms part of the Global South. The global South consists of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Albert Strydhorst has echoed Philip Jenkins and other scholars that "the gravitational center of Christianity is moving from the global North—understood as Europe and North America—to the global

South, or majority world—understood as Africa, Asia, and Latin America—and east word."[25] Estimates show that 75 percent of Christians will come from this geographical entity by 2050. Specifically for Africa, it is projected that the Christian population will be more than a billion in 2050.[26]

The essence of the above statistic is that African preachers will continue to have a receptive audience to their messages, unlike in Europe or America, where reception is declining and where the preacher drop-out and burn-out rates are reported to be prevalent.[27] Barna research indicated that as at the year 2000, practicing Christians in the United States was as low as 45 percent. By the year 2020, it has dropped to 25 percent.[28] In contrast, some of the largest mega-churches in the world today, are domiciled in Africa.[29]

It is to be noted, however, that the global South is also the least developed, "mostly low—(though not all) income and often politically and culturally marginalized."[30] The preacher either makes good use of this situation with the audience, builds them and challenges them to self and national development, or takes undue advantage of the audience to milk them and personally enrich themselves. Sadly, both are happening.

Preachers' Exposure to Training

In several African communities, lay preaching still thrives as many rural churches cannot afford seminary-trained preachers. From the Nigerian experience, there is a surge in enrollment for theological training even when it is considered expensive within the country's economic context. So, the problem is not the availability of preachers, especially for the urban communities; it is the homiletical dimension.

There is an assumption in some quarters that as long as you can preach, then you can teach preaching, even when you do not specialize in it. Preaching or homiletics is part of the curriculum of most (if not all) theological institutions. But many of the teachers do not have the professional and pedagogical skills to raise preachers beyond the levels they are now. Out of

the ten affiliated Bible Colleges of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, only one has successfully engaged a Master's level graduate in preaching as faculty. Other denominations do not seem to fare better. From a recent survey I carried out, not too many theological institutions in Africa offer Preaching/Homiletics at Masters/PhD level.

Therefore, unlike what you have in the United States, homiletic scholarship is at its infant stage. Textbooks written by African scholars on preaching are few. A good number of the few books that have been are written by people from other theological disciplines. In the West are different professional associations for the teaching of homiletics. Examples are the Academy of Homiletics and the Evangelical Homiletics Society. There is also the Societas Homileta. For now, I do not know of any in Africa. Several international journals on preaching and homiletics are also domiciled in the West. There is none that I am aware of in Africa except when other journal titles choose to make preaching in Africa their theme for a particular edition. Preaching conferences and workshops are organized from time to time in Africa, which are very helpful. Yet, such meetings have limited offers, especially since few major in homiletics.

Preaching in Africa has great potential with multiple opportunities, a receptive audience, and a projected favourable future. But for it to be as fruiteful as it promises to be, resources are greatly needed.

TOWARD A WORLD HOMILETIC

Let us tie it all up as we look at what connects us together as homileticians. Whether you preach in Europe, America, Africa, Asia, or any continent, let us ask what changes and what does not? What do we need to know if we would engage a "world homiletic?"

A world homiletic must be biblical

The foundation for homiletics anywhere we find ourselves in the world is that God has spoken through his inerrant, eternal word, and we have no other job than to be his mouthpieces and spokespersons. As David Allen wrote: "The authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture serve as the theological grounds for text-driven preaching."[31] Our duty is to faithfully exegete the text of the Scripture, expose it, apply it and see lives transformed and conformed to the image of Christ.

A world homiletic must be contextual

To contextualize is to plant, water, and nurture the gospel message within a culture in such a way that the recipients do not only feel a sense of ownership of the message they also run with it "without tampering with the biblical root of the message"[32] Making the gospel relevant calls for excellent audience analysis. This task could be at the level of cross-cultural mission and preaching or even in local congregations. Contextualization also calls for a lot of humility. In relation to form and content in expository preaching, as discussed earlier, Robert A. Allen raised some interesting questions we may need to ponder:

1. Am I open to learning from other cultures or have I concluded that the methods I use are the only legitimate way to preach?
2. What kind of preaching should we expect from our missionaries when they return from the field if they have been ardently working to contextualize their communication?
3. Should our training in the area of homiletics, especially in academic institutions we start in other countries, include the possibility that expository content may need to be communicated in some other form than an expository organization depending on the target audience and culture of the potential listeners?[33]

A world homiletic must be globalized

The world has become a global village, and every preacher must be aware of that. In the age of the internet and other communication technologies, plus the rate of international travel and connections in contemporary times, every preacher needs to be conscious of their global location. I did a brief survey of Nigerian Christians who live in Africa and listened to preachers in Europe or America. It was fascinating to note that some people live in Africa and have followed preachers in the United States for over twenty years. Some of them listen to these preachers as often as once a day to once weekly. They all testify that these preachers have affected their lives, theologies, and ministries in one way or the other.

The implication is that someone around the globe is probably watching you on TV, or YouTube or elsewhere on the internet. Someone is listening to your podcast, reading your Facebook messages, and being influenced by your sermons. So, the biblical content of our sermons and the applicability of the principles we develop and share from the Scripture should be as universal as possible. The individuals can then sort out specific applications and adaptations in their different cultures, personal situations, and experiences.

A world homiletic must consider orality

At its very basic level of meaning, orality is a preference for spoken rather than written words. Walter Ong classified oral cultures into primary, residual, and secondary.[34] Primary orality refers to cultures that have not been touched with any knowledge of writing or print.[35] Residual orality refers to those who can read and write but do not use the skills or derive pleasure from reading after leaving school.[36] Secondary orality describes those who are sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices.[37] This group who access information through digital means are also known as "digitoral" because they exhibit the traits of oral communicators.[38]

With statistics showing that 80% of the world are oral communicators—whether at the secondary (digitoral) or residual levels—preachers must consider the engagement of oral elements in their sermon preparation and delivery.[39] For us in Africa, we have no choice. Africa is predominantly an oral society. Some of the implications for preaching in an oral society are that, firstly, we must get back at understanding Scripture as primarily oral before being written. That gives us a sense of preparation and delivery that resonates with many of our listeners. Secondly, we must master the scripture genres and know how to preach them. With most parts of Scripture being narratives, songs, poems, or hymns, genre-sensitive preaching will greatly benefit our contemporary listeners. Thirdly, and most importantly, we must engage in narrative preaching. That is the genius of African Americans. It is researched to be the preaching preference of the postmoderns due to their communication paradigm. Everyone loves stories, and so we must be good storytellers. However, not all scriptures are narrative. There are didactic portions that must be handled. Doctrines must be preached. But like Robert Smith titled one of his books, our doctrine must dance.[40] How to make that happen is a skill we must develop.

A world homiletic must be eschatological

The world is in pain. Laughter is said to have no color. I should add that pain also has no dialect; like laughter, pain is universal. Today, climate change is ravaging the world, economies are failing, and many are dying of hunger. Russia is pounding Ukraine and destroying lives and civilizations. Insurgency, Islamic fundamentalism, and kidnapping put millions in despair every day around the globe. There is only one hope. Cheryl Bridges Johns has rightly observed that,

> there is a real need for Christianity to recapture its eschatological vision and, as a result, for preaching to recapture its eschatological voice, offering both promise

> and judgment. When this occurs, Christian communities will be defined as eschatological gatherings that offer to the world a sign of the coming kingdom. Sunday worship will cease to be in disembodied, existential event; rather, it will be seen as an eschatological event, bringing heaven to earth and calling for the day when all creation will join in praise to God.[41]

CONCLUSION

The world is a large place; God has situated people in different locations and cultures so that they can reach him and enjoy fellowship with him. He has called us preachers and teachers to help people connect with him through the instrumentality of his word. While in our different locations and cultures, we are yet global citizens saddled with the responsibility of discipling the nations. We are called to engage in a world homiletic. A world homiletic must be biblical, contextual and globalized, it must consider orality and must be eschatological. When we are through with this conference, we should all think beyond our current location and, with our understanding of what is at stake in the world, and join Isaac Watts (1719) in singing:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

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HOW TO SPLIT A BILL
IS THERE A TRANSCULTURAL HOMILETIC—FOR ALL PEOPLES, ALL PLACES, ALL TIMES?[1]

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INTRODUCTION

In the Asian culture, when you eat out with your friends, you never split the bill. One person offers to pay for everyone else. This sounds great. But you're also supposed to fight that person for the bill. In the Anglo culture, in contrast, you always split the bill. But if one person offers to pay for everyone, you happily let that person pay. You're not going to fight them.

I am Asian-Australian. I can choose when to be Asian. I can also choose when to be Anglo. So, when an Asian friend offers to pay for the whole bill, that's when I choose to be Anglo. I gladly let them pay.

Culture is everywhere. It affects how we split a bill. It also affects how we preach—for both the preacher and the audience. The aim of my article is to explore how culture affects our homiletics. Is there a transcultural homiletic—one that transcends all cultures. Or will it be necessarily enculturated—with cultural distinctives?

MEET TINA AND TIM

Imagine that you're running a youth group in Los Angeles, California, on a Friday night. This is when Tina walks in. Tina is a 16 year old Asian-American. She was born in Hong Kong but

her parents moved to the USA to give her a better future. Tina's plans are to study hard and get top grades. She hopes to make it into law school at a prestigious Ivy League school on the East Coast.

How are you going to preach to Tina?

You'll probably say something like this. "Tina! You've made study your idol. Stop studying so hard. Enjoy God's creation instead. Better still, give up on law school and go to seminary instead to become a youth pastor like me!"

Later Tim walks in. Tim is a 16-year-old, blonde-haired surfer dude. He was born, bred, and raised on the surf beaches of Huntington Beach, California. Tim's plans are to drop out of high school and pick up a trade. His workday will finish at 3pm and he can surf in the afternoons, every day, for the rest of his life.

How are you going to preach to Tim?

You'll probably say this: "Tim! You've made surfing your idol. Stop pursuing a lifestyle of outdoors and leisure. Get a degree instead. Or better, go to seminary, and become a youth pastor like me!"

Can you see what's happened? We've asked Tina to become Tim, and Tim to become Tina. That's because we worked against their culture rather than with it. Their culture was different from ours, so we automatically reacted against it. Worse, we imposed our culture upon them as if it was the gospel.

This is why we need to be aware of how culture affects our preaching.

CULTURE IS EVERYWHERE

There are three "components" to expository preaching: (1) the Bible; (2) the audience; and (3) the preacher. All three are heavily affected by culture.

We know that the Bible has its own culture. That's why, when preaching, we're forever having to say, "In those days …" For example, we preface our preaching with: "In those days a shepherd was …." Or "In those days a Roman was …" Or "In

those days a fisherman was …" We have to *translate* the Bible's culture into our audience's culture.

Our audience also has a culture. We will explore this in more depth later. But what's less obvious is that we, the preacher, also have a culture. We roll our eyes at the well-meaning, but clumsy, attempts of early missionaries who imposed their own culture upon their audiences. For example, they made their audiences dress in formal Western clothing. They brought organs and made them sing Western hymns. But they only did this because they were unaware of how enculturated their message was. They thought they were preaching the pure gospel. But they were preaching their westernized version of the gospel and imposing both their culture and the gospel upon their audience as if they were the same thing.

BUT WHY CAN'T I JUST "PREACH THE BIBLE?"

The solution would seem to be: "Just Preach the Bible." Forget all this culture stuff. Instead, we should "just preach the Bible." After all, the Bible's message is transcultural—true for all peoples, all places, all times.

This is well-meaning. But it's also naïve. Because it's impossible to "just preach the Bible." First, we have to decide which language in which to preach. Will it be English? Spanish? Swahili? But, even here if we choose English, we have to decide which English translation to use. Will it be the NIV? ESV? NLT? There is no "pure Bible" to choose from.

Second, and this is more subtle, no matter how much we try, the preacher will always preach with their "cultural accent".

What do I mean by this? The analogy I use is this. Because I speak English with an Australian accent, Americans will typically say to me, "Oh I love your Australian accent!" But then they will innocently ask me, "Do I have an accent to you?"

Of course, they have an accent. It's an *American* accent. But here's the thing. The American cannot hear their own accent. Just like a fish is surrounded by water but doesn't notice it, and American speaks with an accent but doesn't notice it. The

American notices everyone else's accents—Australians, Africans, Asians—but not their own.

I even once met a man from California who insisted that movies were made in Hollywood because the Californian accent was neutral. It was the *accent-less* version of English. That's why the whole world can watch movies from Hollywood and not hear any accent! But of course, the whole world does hear an accent. It's just that this man from California can't hear it. To him, the Californian accent is neutral. It's the "normal" way of speaking English.

But we make the same assumptions in Christian ministry. That's why we speak of an *African* theology, or an *Asian* theology, or a *Latin American* theology, but if a Theology comes out of the USA, we simply call it Theology. Or we speak of an *African* Homiletic, or an *Asian* Homiletic, or a *Latin American* Homiletic, but if a Homiletic comes out of the USA, we simply call it Homiletics. Or we call a style of preaching, "Expository Preaching," but fail to acknowledge it as *American* Expository Preaching, as it was the neutral version of expository preaching. It's just the "normal" way you would do expository preaching.

That's why it's overly simplistic to say we can "just preach the Bible." The Bible's message is transcultural. But it will necessarily be enculturated—in the preacher's culture. And it will have to be translated into the audience's culture. So how can we do this?

HOW TO "CONTEXTUALIZE" OUR PREACHING[2]

We need to do four things to "contextualize" the Bible's message for our audience.

First, the preacher needs to be aware that their own culture shapes the way they exegete the Bible's passage. Let's say Tina, the Asian-American, is preaching. She will notice "face" language in the Bible, due to her culture's emphasis on honor and shame. But she may have her own cultural blind spots. She might over-interpret the Christian walk as one of duty, obligation, and

perfectionism, due to her culture's emphasis on authority and hierarchy.

In contrast, let's say a Californian surfer dude like Tim is preaching. He will notice the need for a person to decide for themselves to commit to Jesus, due to his culture's emphasis on individualism. But he will have his own cultural blind spots. He may under-interpret the Bible's call for collective responsibility, as a member of Christ's body, due to his culture's emphasis on freedom and independence.

Second, the preacher needs to be aware that their culture shapes the way they communicate. At a simple level, culture shapes our choice of vocabulary, phrases, metaphors, analogies, and idioms.

But it goes deeper than this. Tina belongs to a "high context" culture.[3] If she was preaching, she uses indirect communication and hint language. She is also event-based rather than time-based. As a listener, she found your talk to be too blunt, too rude, and too brief! If you were serious about your message, why was it only 15 minutes? It should have been much longer in time. In contrast, Tim belongs to a "low context" culture. If he was preaching, he would be informal, casual, blunt, and direct. He's also time-based rather than event based. As a listener, he found your talk to be too formal and serious. You also should've been shorter. You lost his attention after 10 minutes.

Tina's socio-economic group is also abstract-ideational in communication.[4] If Tina was preaching, she prefers to use logic, bullet points, and propositional information. As a listener, she found your talk to have too many stories. Why didn't you get to the point? In contrast, Tim's socio-economic group is concrete-relational in communication. If Tim was preaching, he prefers stories. As a listener, Tim found your talk to be too theoretical. Tim couldn't relate to your talk.

Third, the preacher needs to be aware that their culture shapes the way they apply the Bible. For example, when I was visiting Siberia, almost every preacher had the same application: "You must not drink alcohol." When I was living in the USA, almost every preacher had this application: "You must do your

daily devotions, give money to missions, and tell your friends about Jesus." In Sydney, Australia, almost every application is: "Give up your secular work and go into full time Christian ministry." These might indeed be valid applications. But they're also very shaped by where the preacher is coming from.

Fourth, the preacher is now ready to "enter-and-challenge" the audience's culture.[5] What do I mean by this? As a preacher, we try to *both* enter *and* challenge the audience's culture with our message.

Our message belongs on a spectrum. On one extreme, if our message only challenges their culture, but does not enter, then it is under-adapted to their culture. Our audience can't understand what we say. They are under-informed. Here, we ask them to give up what they don't have to give up; and do what they don't have to do. Our gospel message will be unnecessarily offensive. We have preached legalism instead of the gospel. Paul Hiebert labels this approach "colonialism" and "cultural imperialism".

But on the other extreme, if our message only enters their culture, but does not challenge, then it is over-adapted to their culture. Our audience also can't understand what we say because they are mis-informed. We don't ask them to give up what they must give up; we don't ask them to do what they must do. There will be no necessary offence of the gospel. We have preached syncretism instead of the gospel. Paul Hiebert labels this "uncritical contextualization".

So, we aim for the Goldilocks sweet spot where we both enter and challenge. Our audience is informed by the gospel with its necessary offences. We ask them to give up what they must give up; and do what they must do. We have preached a contextualized gospel. This is what Hiebert calls "critical contextualization".[6]

For example, if we preach a message that says sex is only for procreation and not intimacy, then we have under-adapted our message. We have preached legalism. We have asked our audience to give up something they don't need to give up—sex for intimacy; and do something they don't have to do—only have

sex for procreation. But if we preach a message that says sex is only for pleasure and can exist outside of a committed relationship, then we have over-adapted our message to our present permissive culture. We have preached syncretism. We have allowed them to do something they need to give up—i.e., sex outside of marriage.

We can see how contextualization will affect how we preach on many other subjects such as dating, dancing, smoking, leisure, fashion, and sports on Sunday.

Our instinct might be to say it's too hard—best if we avoid all this contextualization stuff and that we should simply "preach the Bible". We might say that we better err on the safe side and not try to contextualize in case we risk over-adapting our message and preaching syncretism. But the opposite of trying to contextualize is *not* the pure gospel. The opposite of trying to contextualize is legalism—cultural imperialism. The dangers exist for both trying to contextualize and *not* trying to contextualize.

We can't escape culture. So, we have to contextualize. And we should try to do it well. But to do this, we need to know what is culture and how to exegete it.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

According to Kevin Vanhoozer, "culture" is an interplay between a "worldview" and its "texts."[7] A person's "worldview" is what they believe to be true, good, real, valuable, and beautiful. It will also produce "texts" (fashion, songs, poems, art, writings, movies, etc.) that express this worldview. The worldview will also give the interpretive lens by which a person sees the texts. But, in turn, the texts themselves will also impact and shape the worldview.

An example of a "text" might be business shirts. What business shirt will you wear to a job interview? A Westerner, like our surfer dude Tim, will wear a business shirt that stands out. Something with color or a pattern. This shirt shows that Tim is a creative and independent thinker. But an Asian, like Tina, will

wear a white business shirt that doesn't stand out. This shows Tina to be a team-player who will co-operate and not think too highly of herself. If Tina wore a shirt that stands out, her employer might see her as an arrogant up-start who will not be a team-player. Can you see what's happened? It's the same "text"—a business shirt—but different worldviews viewed it through their different interpretive lenses. And different worldviews have different ideas on what's true, good, real, valuable, or beautiful.

Now that we know what culture *is,* how can we read and interpret culture. In seminary, we learn how to read and interpret the Bible. We call it "biblical exegesis". We use tools such as grammatico-historical exegesis to do this. But how do we do "cultural exegesis"? What are our tools?

HOW TO INTERPRET CULTURE

There are three easy ways to interpret culture. First, we can ask what a culture's *views* are on certain themes. Typically, we ask what a culture says about themes such as God, Humans, Evil, Life after Death. This is standard stuff. But I love how Kevin Vanhoozer asks what a culture says about other less typical themes such as Cities, Gifts, Gardens, Youth, etc.[8] For example, on my street we have a variety of cultures, and they have very different ideas regarding Gardens. The Anglos have neatly manicured lawns. The Chinese grow vegetables. The Italians concrete their lawns. Of course, we now need to ask deeper questions as to what the worldview is of someone who neatly manicures their lawns. Or grows vegetables. Or concretes their lawns. This is what cultural exegesis is all about.

Second, cultures exist on a spectrum between "themes" and "counter-themes."[9] For example, where is a culture on the spectrum between: individual or collective; private or public emotions; predictability or chaos; reality as material or non-material; reality as this-worldly or other-worldly; secular or sacred spaces; achievement or acquirement of status; hierarchy or equality; freedom or control; universal big-picture or specifics.

Tina, the Asian-American, comes from a culture that prefers the collective, private emotions, predictability, non-material and other-worldly reality; sacred spaces; acquirement; hierarchy; control; and universal big-picture stories. Tim, the Californian surfer dude, is the opposite! This means that if we preach a highly contextualized message to Tina, then it's going to be highly uncontextualized for Tim. And vice versa.

Third, cultures have a storyline. What is a storyline? Cinderella goes to the Ball is *not* a story. It's an event only. A story needs (1) a mission; (2) bad guys who stop this from happening; and (3) good guys who help the hero achieve the mission. This is a story: (1) Cinderella has a mission to go to the Ball; (2) but her stepsisters stop her; but (3) a fairy-godmother helps Cinderella go to the Ball.[10]

In the same ways we can "exegete" a culture by identifying its (1) mission, (2) bad guys, and (3) good guys. For example, if we exegete Tina's cultural storyline, her mission superficially is to get into Law School; but at a more profound level it's to honor her parents and find security. Her "bad guys" are anything that stop her from studying—leisure, friends, and parties. Her "good guys" are anyone who can help her achieve good grades—teachers, parents, and authority figures.

Similarly, if we exegete Tim's cultural storyline, his mission superficially is to go surfing; but at a more profound level, it's to find freedom. His "bad guys" are teachers, parents, and authority figures. His "good guys" are leisure, friends, and parties! Can you see what's happening! Tina's bad guys are Tim's good guys. And Tim's bad guys are Tina's good guys.

So, now that we know what is a culture and how to exegete that culture, how can we enter and challenge that culture with the gospel?

HOW TO CONNECT WITH A CULTURE

So, now that we know what is a culture and how to exegete that culture, by identifying its storyline, how can we enter and challenge that culture with the gospel?

We can learn from Paul in 1 Corinthians 1. He identifies the storylines of his audience: "Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom" (v. 22). Next, he dissonates it: "the foolishness of God" is wiser and stronger (v. 25). Paul then preaches the gospel—"Christ crucified"—as the only and best way to fulfil the cultural storylines: "Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God" (v. 24).

In the same way, first, we enter the storyline by *resonating* with it. Because of God's general revelation and common grace there must be something true, good, and beautiful in that storyline. For example, we can say to Tina, "It's true that Law can offer financial security. It's good that you want to honor your parents and vindicate their sacrifices for you. It's beautiful that you can be a voice of justice in our broken world." Similarly, we can say to Tim, "It's true that surfing is an expression of freedom. It's good that you maintain your physical and psychological health through outdoors sports. It's beautiful to enjoy God's creation."

Second, we challenge the storyline by *dissonating* it. We either find a deficiency—something is missing; or a discrepancy—something is conflicting—in their storyline. For example, we can say to Tina, "But you won't find security in Law alone. There will always be more exams and qualifications. The goalposts move further and further away. You end up in a bigger pond where you will be the small fish again. You will find yourself more and more insecure." Or we can say to Tim, "But you won't find freedom in surfing alone. You will always have to perform. And you will find yourself trapped in your pursuit for pleasure. You will know what you're free from; but you won't know what you're free for."

Third, we fulfil the storyline with the gospel. We show that the gospel is the only and best way to achieve the "happy ever after" that they're looking for.[11] For example, we can say to Tina, that Jesus promises her the security and honor that she's looking for. She will enjoy a status as a child of God that no law qualification can ever give to her. Or to Tim, we can say that Jesus promises him the freedom that he's looking for. He will be set

free from an empty and self-absorbed life. Instead, he will be part of a bigger storyline that just his own. Here, he will find purpose, direction, and meaning.

This is the aim of a contextualized message. We recognize its deepest longings. We speak the gospel in its language, idioms, and metaphors. We speak the gospel as the only and best fulfilment of this cultural storyline.

CONCLUSION

The aim of my article is to explore how culture affects our homiletics. Is there a transcultural homiletic—one that transcends all cultures. Or will it be necessarily enculturated—with cultural distinctives?

Perhaps the answer comes in John 1:14: "The *logos* became flesh." The *logos* is the universal, transcultural gospel. But it had to come to us as an enculturated person—in a particular time, place, culture, language, and people group—i.e., Jesus, a male, first-century Palestinian Jew speaking first-century Aramaic. On the one hand, this means the gospel is *translatable* into any culture. But on the other hand, it means that it comes to us as an *enculturated* gospel.

In other words, there is a transcultural message of the Bible—the gospel—which is true for all peoples, places, times. But this message will necessarily be enculturated in a particular homiletic. There is no free-floating, neutral homiletic. Just like there is no free-floating, neutral English accent. All English speakers have an accent—Scottish, Irish, Welsh, South African, Kenyan, Nigerian, Australian, American, Hong Kong, Singaporean, Malaysian, Canadian, Columbian, Indian, etc. Similarly, every homiletic comes with an "accent."

In the book of Revelation, the Lamb sits on a throne. But the peoples worship the Lamb *in* their particular tribe, people, and language groups (Rev. 7:9). Perhaps we can add that the peoples will also "preach" the Lamb *in* their particular homiletic.

This means we need to be more generous to those who preach differently from our homiletic. We also need to be more

humble about our homiletic. It might not be as neutral or normal as we think it is. It might be heavily shaped and influenced by our particular culture. What makes it work well in our culture (say to Tina) might be exactly why it won't work so well for another culture (like Tim's).

NOTES

1. This talk/article is adapted from Sam Chan's two books: *Topical Preaching in a Complex World* (Zondervan, 2021) and *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* (Zondervan, 2018).
2. This section is indebted to Jackson Wu's many works on contextualization. For example, *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015) and *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2012).
3. For further clarification of the difference between "high" and "low" context cultures, see Sarah Lanier's *Foreign to Familiar* (Hagerstown: McDougal, 2000).
4. For more on abstract-ideational and concrete-relational thinking, see chapter 7 in my *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).
5. Tim Keller, "Contextualization: Wisdom or Compromise?" talk given at Covenant Seminary Connect Conference, 2004.
6. Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (1987): 104-12.
7. Kevin J. Vanhoozer calls them "worlds" of meaning (worldview) and "works" of meaning (texts) in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 26-7.
8. I believe I must have gotten this list from a class on "Cultural Hermeneutics" that Kevin J. Vanhoozer taught at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, in 2001.
9. Paul Hiebert's appropriation of Morris Opler's "themes and counterthemes," Emmanuel Todd's demography, and Parson's

evaluative themes, in Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 26-27, 63-64.
10. Timothy Keller, "Contextualization."
11. I learnt the idea that Jesus is not just the "happy ever after," but also the far better "happy ever after" than we dared imagine from Sam Hilton, a pastor at Hunter Bible Church, Australia. But I've also recently discovered it from a must-watch talk by Andy Crouch, "The Structure of Story," *Echo Conference*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmH6seCjDTc

HOMILETIC OF BELONGING

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ABSTRACT

Transformation is a major goal of evangelical preaching, but how might people with intellectual disabilities be spiritually transformed through evangelical preaching? One might look to models of disability for answers, but medical models and social models of disability can be problematic for people with ID. Gaps in disability models bring into focus a need that homiletics might address: *Belonging*. The concept of belonging figures prominently among disability and practical theologians like John Swinton, Brian Brock, and Hans Reinders and in the empirical research of Erik Carter. Interacting with their work, the concept of belonging will be explored as a homiletical model that may contribute to the transformation of listeners with intellectual disabilities. The homiletical goal of transformation among people with intellectual disabilities might be served by a homiletical model of belonging in which 1.) through the preaching of counternarratives, preachers contribute to the transformation of non-disabled parishioners by pointing them to the value of friendship with the intellectually disabled and to the inherent worth of people with ID from creation and in the body of Christ. 2.) by preachers knowing these listeners as friends.

TRANSFORMATION: THE GOAL OF PREACHING

To be spiritually transformed is to become more mature in Christ. The apostle Paul writes to the Colossian church: "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ."[1] A primary goal of evangelical preaching is transformation.[2] Haddon Robinson, whose homiletics textbook has sold more than 300,000 copies worldwide, says that New Testament writers believed that God works through the preaching of the Scriptures as "God encounters men and women to bring them to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and to richness and ripeness of Christian character (vv. 16-17).[3]

Preaching plays a role in transforming individuals into believers and it also plays a role in regard to transformation into Christlikeness. Rick Warren, former evangelical mega-church pastor, and considered by some to be one of the "most influential voices in evangelical Christianity"[4] said: "At the end of the sermon, if people aren't being transformed in how they think, feel, and act, I've missed the mark as a preacher."[5] How one defines *transformation* has important implications for people with ID. In particular, an emphasis on the collective nature of spiritual transformation can be helpful to listeners with ID. This corporate aspect of spiritual transformation is often overlooked in Western evangelical churches in favor of a more individual understanding of transformation.[6]

Defining Transformation

James Wilhoit refers to spiritual transformation as Christian spiritual formation (CSF). He defines CSF as the "…intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."[7] Preaching transforms congregants individually, but also forms listeners collectively, as the body of Christ matures and is built up in love. Far too often, preachers think of transformation in regard to the individual rather than the community. Yet in 2

Corinthians 3:18, Paul refers to the transformation of the entire body of Christ into Christ's image: "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed in his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Wilhoit emphasizes that Christian spiritual transformation (CSF) must move beyond individual people. He writes:

> Spiritual transformation must extend beyond the individual to the church, the family, and society. In God's gospel, the outcome is not merely sanctified individuals but a holy people, the bride of Christ. As a means of CSF, the body of Christ is a primary vehicle through which the Spirit of God guides and matures us. Together we hear the Word preached and share the body and blood of Christ, and in this common celebration of the resurrection, we are ourselves raised as a people of God.[8]

A homiletic that takes the transformation of people with ID into consideration thinks of the transformation of both the individual and the body of Christ because the body of Christ must experience transformation in relation to how it connects to people with ID. Malcolm Gill says, "As we respond to the preached Word, God knocks off the rough edges, both individually and collectively, so that we become his temple, his presence in the world."[9] This bifurcation of transformation—of the individual and transformation of the body—is crucial for listeners with ID because their transformation is bound up in relationship. Through the grace of God, the body as a whole must learn to value people with ID as friends.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY: TWO MODELS

To preach toward the goal of spiritual transformation, a preacher must know one's listeners with ID by learning about the culture of disability. In his book, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*, Matthew D. Kim describes culture as "…a group's way of living,

way of thinking, and behaving in the world, for which we need understanding and empathy to guide listeners toward Christian maturity."[10] The culture of disability can begin to be understood through an awareness of the two major models of disability, the medical model and the social model, and how each one affects listeners with ID. Each model makes assumptions about the meaning and implications of disability. In understanding these models of disability, one begins to see that in and of themselves, they are not sufficient to care for people with intellectual disabilities. Gaps left by the medical and social models provide a way to think about a homiletical model of belonging through friendship, in which the church is uniquely equipped to foster, particularly through preaching.

Medical Model: Impairment to be Fixed

The medical model focuses on impairment and its disabling effects in society. Disability is defined in "…predominantly medical terms as a chronic functional incapacity whose consequence was functional limitations assumed to result from physical or mental impairment."[11] This model assumed that "…the primary problem faced by people with disabilities was the incapacity to work and otherwise participate in society."[12]

Critique of the Medical Model

The medical model emphasis on impairment is related to an inability to perform certain tasks in society, the result of which can easily lead to discrimination and an association "…with negative stereotypes which inevitably indicates that disabled individuals are pitiable and pathetic (Payne, 2006)."[13] The medical model makes assumptions about the relationship between impairment and lack of autonomy:

> …the disabled person's autonomy is limited due to the impairment; therefore, if medical professionals cannot cure or rehabilitate the person, then she or he is

> considered as someone who as a consequence has a limited ability to participate in society. Hence, a person's disability may in some circumstances hinder participation, which in turn leads to social exclusion.[14]

The medical model is rooted in capacities and statistical norms whereby people with disabilities are placed into a category which separates them from non-disabled, "normal" people. Their identity is wrapped up in or limited to a medically defined set of criteria. People in this category are seen as deficient, in need of repair.[15] Reynolds describes disability as "…a factor of the cult of normalcy."[16] He says, "An image is cast onto those whose lives disrupt the status quo, manifesting a lack or deficiency of what is construed as standard, ordinary, and familiar."[17] Based on statistical averages, deviation from the norm can be interpreted as "in need of intervention."

Those who have "deficiencies in need of a cure" have decreased societal value in a market economy compared to their able-bodied counterparts. In his book, *Wondrously Wounded*: *Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ*, Brian Brock says:

> Modern views of healing rest on very narrowly conceived presumptions about human life. The phrase "deficiency in need of a cure" is shorthand for the convergence of what has come to be called the medical model of disability and the anthropology of political liberalism. These accounts position disability as the biologically rooted incapacity of an individual to achieve mainstream pictures of economic productivity and aesthetic beauty.[18]

Impairment to be Destroyed

The medical model of disability has been helpful in setting criteria that identifies individuals for often important medical interventions and services. But at the same time, by labeling people as medically deficient, this model contributes to the stigmatization of people with disabilities. This very model can be

used to help people with a variety of impairments, but it can also be used to identify and destroy individuals who are deemed deficient.[19] Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, for example, wrote the 1927 opinion in *Buck v. Bell*, the case that opened the floodgates to widespread sterilization of the "feebleminded." He famously declared, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough."[20] The Nazi Party looked to the American program as a model for their sterilization program, ultimately moving beyond sterilization to the murder of disabled people. The Nazi child "euthanasia" program in the spring and summer of 1939 required doctors, nurses, and midwives to report births of severely mentally or physically handicapped newborns and toddlers up to age three. Later that year, the program was extended to include disabled people of all ages in a killing campaign known as Aktion T4. "The 'euthanasia' program targeted, for systematic killing, patients with mental and physical disabilities living in institutional settings in Germany and German-annexed territories."[21]

Today, a century after *Buck v. Bell*, pre-born babies who do not meet the criteria for normalcy are in a precarious position as prime targets for termination. Pre-natal screening is a product of the medicalization of disability in which genetic abnormalities are screened for and genetic counselors lay out a variety of frightening statistics, possibilities and options for parents.[22] Deviations from statistical norms are seen as defective or lesser. A study published by researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital revealed that as a result of non-invasive prenatal testing, fewer babies are being born with Down syndrome:

> The growth of prenatal screening in Europe has reduced the number of babies being born per year with Down syndrome (DS) by an average of 54%, according to a new study published in the European Journal of Human Genetics…. In research published in 2016, the same team found that 33% fewer babies with DS per year were born in the United States as a result of pregnancy terminations.[23]

As one genetic counselor I spoke with said, "Parents have the right to screen against certain genetic abnormalities."[24] At the very least, the medical model of disability contributes to an ethos of moral ranking of individuals based on capacities and one's right to choose who has value in this world and who does not.

Social Model of Disability

The inadequacies of the modern medical model spurred on a new way of thinking about disability. Michael Oliver is widely considered the principal theorist of the social model of disability.[25] Writing as a physically disabled scholar, Oliver's work relating to disability opened up the field to a wide range of disciplines, authors and publications. Oliver encouraged the involvement of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, and politics to take the issue of disability and the experience of disabled people seriously.[26] He developed the idea of a social theory of disability in response to the medical model of disability.

This theory describes disability as socially constructed. He wrote, "The social model defines disability as the product of specific social and economic structures and aims at addressing issues of oppression and discrimination of disabled people, caused by institutional issues of oppression and discrimination of disabled people, caused by institutional forms of exclusion and by cultural attitudes embedded in social practices."[27] In North America, the social model is closely associated with a minority model of disability.[28]

As an outgrowth of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the activism of the disability rights movement eventually culminated in the anti-discrimination laws of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Disability rights activists continue to advocate for rights in numerous areas of public life, including government, education, and health. According to the social model, individuals with impairments are disabled when physical spaces and social structures prohibit them from full access. In order to be freed from social stigma, people with disabilities must

"…reclaim the authority over my own story."[29] Its values are autonomy, agency, rights, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and independence.

Critique of Social Model

Although these are important values, this theory is lacking particularly regarding individuals with cognitive impairments, many of whom will never achieve full autonomy or agency or have authority over their personal narratives. The theory that was designed to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities ends up excluding them[30] in what Hans Reinders calls a hierarchy of disability "…that assigns persons with intellectual disabilities in general, and with profound intellectual disabilities in particular, to its lowest ranks."[31]

The social model has also come under scrutiny in the last decade for its one-dimensional emphasis on social oppression at the expense of impairments grounded in scientific truths. Proponents of the social model "…downplay the role of biological and mental conditions in the lives of disabled people."[32]

In addition to excluding individuals with intellectual impairments, the disability rights movement of the social model falls short in another significant way. With a focus on gaining access in public spaces and institutions, it has neglected the private sphere of life.[33] It is in the private sphere of life where people have the right to say "no" to befriending someone with a cognitive disability.[34] Rules and laws can be legislated, but morality cannot. People may choose how they feel about others with intellectual impairments and whether or not they want to embrace them as friends on equal moral footing. The disability rights movement has aided in giving rights to people with disabilities, but its rights-centered framework is not sufficient to provide something deeper and perhaps more meaningful to people who have cognitive impairments: friendship and belonging.[35] Swinton writes, "It is not enough that human beings are included within communities, they need to belong."[36] Hans Reinders says "…rights cannot open up spaces of intimacy,

which are the kinds of spaces where humans have their need of belonging fulfilled. Put simply, disability rights are not going to make me your friend."[37]

While many preachers may not be able to articulate the two major models of disability, what they say (and do not say) from the pulpit betrays their ideas about disability and people with intellectual disability. Preachers come to the pulpit with assumptions about disability that are rooted in each model of disability.[38] Sometimes those assumptions are ill-informed or inconsistent. Disability is a problem to be fixed or miraculously healed. Disability is a social justice issue. Some preachers cling to the moral model of disability in which some impairments are seen as punishment from God. Others may view disability as a gift from God to strengthen faith or teach a lesson.[39]

BELONGING THROUGH FRIENDSHIP

Both the medical and social models of disability are inadequate in dealing with intellectual disability in particular. The former can result in stigmatization with disastrous results, while the latter's emphasis on rights and autonomy excludes those who are intellectually impaired. While the social model focuses on inclusion, it is unable to provide a much deeper need: Belonging. John Swinton says, "We can develop protective legislation, but unless people's hearts are changed nothing will really change."[40] The social model fails to move beyond inclusion to belonging. People with ID have rights, but they do not have meaningful relationships. They do not have a sense of belonging. Swinton emphasizes the distinction between inclusion and belonging: "*to be included you just need to be present. To belong you need to be missed*." He continues:

> People need to be concerned when you are not there. The world needs to be perceived as radically different when you are not there. Only when your absence stimulates feelings of emptiness will you know that you truly belong.

> Only when your gifts are longed for can community truly be community.[41]

Eric Carter, Luther Sweet Endowed Chair in Disabilities at Baylor University agrees that belonging is crucial for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities: "People want to be more than merely integrated or included. They want to experience true belonging. But belonging is a hard concept to define. We quickly feel its absence, but describing its presence can be much more challenging."[42] Through interviews and surveys of more than 500 youth with intellectual disabilities and autism, Carter and his team explored the concept of belonging. Ten dimensions of belonging emerged from their research. A person belongs when they are present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, supported, cared for, befriended, needed, and loved.[43] Regarding friendships, Carter asks: "Are individuals with disabilities named as friends?" He continues, "We flourish most in relationship with others. Yet friendships can be so elusive for individuals with developmental disabilities."[44] Findings by other researchers agree with Carter's assessment:

> Despite a desire for friendship, research indicates a number of social relationship disparities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) (Fulford & Cobigo, 2016). Compared to nondisabled people, people with IDD experience more loneliness, have more difficulty forming and maintaining friendships, see their friends less often, and have less close relationships with their friends (Fulford & Cobigo, 2016; Petrina et al., 2014 Petrina, Carter, Stephenson, & Sweller, 2017).[45]

Research undertaken by Carli Friedman and Mary Rizzolo strongly suggests that "Quality friendships can improve every area of one's life." Therefore, Friedman and Rizzolo continue, "…it is critical to promote the development, maintenance, and growth of friendship of people with IDD."[46]

Deficits found in the medical model and social model of disability underscore the importance of belonging through friendship among people with ID. Preaching can enter these gaps with a homiletic of belonging through friendship that creates space for the transformation of people with ID. A culture of belonging is in order in the church, facilitated by preachers who understand, practice, and preach the value of friendship. Preachers encourage a culture of belonging in which transformation might take place through 1.) preaching counternarratives that lift the value of people with ID and are directed toward neurotypical listeners and the transformation of the collective body of Christ and 2.) preaching that truly knows one's listeners with ID because it is rooted in friendship.

Belonging through Friendship & Counternarratives

Friendship can be a transformative act of belonging when a new vision of friendship emerges from the pulpit. People with ID will experience transformation when the larger congregation's understanding of friendship is transformed. When considering intellectual disability, transformation of the body of Christ takes place when a sermon provides a counternarrative to the commonly held view of friendship. Swinton writes:

> One of the strange things about Western friendships is that they are pretty exclusive. If we look at our social circles, many if not most of our friends tend to be remarkably similar to ourselves. We share certain beliefs, do things that we like together, share interests and so forth. The basic approach is based on an intuitive Aristotelian principle of *like-attracts-like*.[47]

Counternarrative Foundations: Imago Dei & Body of Christ

For typical listeners to befriend listeners with ID, they must have a basic understanding of how people with ID are created and what their role is within the body of Christ. Helping to form this

perspective is the task of the preacher. Since preachers play a role in telling the stories of people with intellectual disability, they must hold to a theological anthropology that values all people as image-bearers and an ecclesiology that values every member of the body of Christ as important. The story of loss, suffering, sin, and isolation that often defines people with ID will be rounded out as preachers speak of men and women with intellectual disabilities as image-bearing human beings, who are intrinsically valuable, are crucial to the proper functioning of the Body of Christ, and can participate in and benefit from the experience of loving relationships. These ideas are counter-cultural in our world and in the church. Friendship with people with ID rests on the core belief that they are made in God's image and that they are crucial members of the body of Christ. Preaching counternarratives related to the image of God and the body of Christ form a foundation from which preachers might build a biblical narrative of friendship by "…repairing broken or misleading narratives and as such become a place of rupture and change."[48] Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann calls upon preachers to make use of "prophetic imagination" in order to contradict the "taken-for-granted world around us."[49]

Counternarratives: Transforming the Congregation into Friends

Preaching about friendship provides a counternarrative to the stories told by the world in which friendships between neurotypical people and people with ID are rare. Preaching addresses the felt need of people with ID by providing a new picture of what friendship looks like. In doing so, the congregation might experience transformation as they learn to love people who are intellectually different. Keith Dow writes, "Each of us carries an inclination to love people who are similar to us, yet we struggle to love people we perceive to be radically dissimilar or 'other.'"[50] Through the preached word, the church becomes a transformative place in which the weak are valued and the body of Christ functions as God intended it. Friendships are made and the gospel takes root in love. Preaching can help a

congregation to love as Jesus loved. "Jesus has been the ultimate friend—he gave his life in love for us. Now it is our turn to be Jesus' friend, which means that we love one another as he has loved us."[51] Transformation of people with ID occurs when the neurotypical congregation is transformed into friends as they follow Jesus' command in John 15:12 & 17 to "love each other."

Counternarrative preaching in regard to disability is not outside of the historical parameters of homiletics. Gregory of Nazianzus preached a sermon around 370CE to alter the Roman ethos with its disdain for human difference.[52] He encouraged the congregation to care for the bodies of their neighbors. He then rebuked his listeners for ignoring lepers. Brock says, "In the sermon we see a pastor hard at work planting in his congregation an entirely new vision of human life. Gregory aims to overturn some deep-seated repulsions to human difference in his congregants."[53]

Christine M. Smith identifies a particular form of spiritual transformation that resists prejudice (what she calls radical evil) toward people with disabilities. "If preaching is to be a transforming act," Smith writes, "then the power and integrity of our proclamations will surely be measured by their ability to mobilize communities to resist the reality that confronts us."[54] Smith's three-fold design of weeping, confession, and resistance is instructive for our purposes here. She hopes to elicit a response from her listeners in order that transformation takes place in the world evidenced in the changed lives of people who suffer from a series of "isms."

One of the goals of this paper is to encourage pastors to preach in counternarrative ways that elicit a transformative response from their neurotypical listeners in the form of friendship with listeners with ID. This in turn, can be transformative to people with ID. One example of a counternarrative is related to one's role in the Body of Christ. A counternarrative might be as simple as changing the paradigm from *doing for* people with ID to *being with* people with ID.[55]

PREACHER AS FRIEND

In this paper, I propose preaching for belonging through friendship with the hope of transforming neurotypical listeners into friends as they live into their calling to "love each other." This might be accomplished through the preaching of counternarratives[56] geared toward the collective body of Christ. But preaching that values people with ID also speaks to people with ID as individuals and recognizes that they too are in need of transformation, and like every other member of the body of Christ, they are called to mature in Christ. The transformation of *all* believers is necessary for the church to grow and mature. No person or group of people should be excluded in the goal of preaching.[57] Again, friendship takes center stage.

Professor of preaching at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary, Scott M. Gibson, connects transformation to knowing one's listeners: "Understanding our listeners is key to intentional planning for spiritual development."[58] He writes:

> We want to know our listeners so well that we are moved by what they are experiencing. We want to know them so well we're able to take their spiritual temperature and preach sermons that teach them how they can live lives of obedience and joy in a troubled world.[59]

Transformation by way of discipleship comes to listeners when preachers love their listeners and take time to really get to know them. Friendship is crucial to transformation when it comes to listeners with ID. Preachers and parishioners must know these listeners as friends. The preacher, knowing her listeners with ID as friends, will preach sermons that are more loving and more applicable to their lives. The preacher will be invested in the spiritual development of her listeners with ID. Rather than knowing information about a listener with ID primarily as one who is deficient in intellectual and adaptive capacity, the preacher will know the listener as a person with feelings and faith that needs tending. Through friendship, thick descriptions

of people with disabilities replace thin ones. Matthew D. Kim, exhorts preachers to learn about one's listeners:

> Preaching with cultural intelligence prods us to become more voracious learners about the cultures of our particular people and especially those who sit idly on the margins. To love Others means that we will care for them by interacting with them and getting to know them personally, even when it is difficult.[60]

Kim highlights the insufficiency of doing biblical exegesis without concern for one's listeners. Text and listener cannot be separated. Preachers must be "…valuing the cultural groups embodied in our churches."[61] While his emphasis is not on disability per se, his insight into culture is helpful to homileticians as they exegete diverse groups of listeners. In 2020, Kim wrote *A Little Book for New Preachers* in which he added a section to include people with disabilities, describing them as part of a "least of these" cultural group. He writes:

> I am referring to those who are frequently ignored, marginalized, or ostracized in society and in the church: the mentally and physically disabled and handicapped, those with Down syndrome, autoimmune-disease sufferers, those with chronic illness, the blind, the deaf, the bedridden, the paralyzed, the physically deformed, the limbless, the loveless, the autistic and those on the autism spectrum, the poor and impoverished, survivors of physical and sexual abuse, the displaced, immigrants, refugees, captives, and prisoners, veterans, the depressed and suicidal, LGBTQ, those who have lost a loved one, and others.[62]

Homiletics texts that focus on the listener must move beyond "interacting" with one's listeners and "getting to know them personally, even when it is difficult." When it comes to intellectual disability, the key is friendship. Friendship is a

homiletical imperative for any person with ID, including their families and caregivers.

Transformation of people with intellectual disability requires thick understandings, which "…strive to see the whole of a thing."[63] Thick understandings involve more than "exegeting the listener." A homiletic of belonging encourages preachers to invest in thick understandings of their listeners with ID. Thick understandings come through friendship.

JESUS, THE MODEL OF FRIENDSHIP

Christian Friendship: Sharing Life & Revealing God

Jesus presents a model for friendship in John, chapter 15 where he called his disciples *friends*. As the ultimate friend, Jesus revealed God to the disciples. He says, "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."[64] He revealed God through both word and deed. Gail O'Day writes, "In sharing everything, Jesus 'enables his disciples to participate in the intimacy and trust of the Father, by means of which they acquire that 'openness' (parrēsia) which is the privilege of a free man and a friend….'"[65] Friendship, in this passage, involves an openness and sharing with another person or persons, the content of which is drawn from God. Victor Austin speaks of friendship as "…the intimacy of a common mind."[66] This "common mind" refers to that which Christian friends have in common: God's grace. He says, "…the friends of Jesus share Jesus' mind. Everything his Father has told him—all of that is now known by Jesus' friends. Indeed, that is why they are friends."[67] Although they may not be on equal footing intellectually, all believers hold in common the gift of God's grace. They share grace.

Christian Friendship: Sacrificial

Jesus also explains what friendship is by demonstrating what friendship does. He paid the ultimate sacrifice and laid down his

life for his friends: "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."[68] Austin says, "So to live as friends, to demonstrate that greatest love, which is the willingness to die for one's friends, is what Jesus commands his disciples."[69] O'Day says that the idea of sacrificing one's life was weaved into the fabric of ancient Greek and Roman culture and would have been well known to Jesus' followers. She writes, "Jesus enacted the ancient ideal of friendship—he lay down his life for his friends. Jesus' whole life is an incarnation of the ideal of friendship."[70] At the heart of friendship is sacrifice.

Christian Friendship: Being Chosen

Christian friendship loves others by sharing life and revealing God to them and being willing to sacrifice for them. Jesus also says to his disciples that they did not choose friendship with him: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit…." To be loved is to be chosen by someone else. Hans Reinders argues that people with intellectual disabilities "…are rarely chosen as friends, except by other disabled people."[71] We cannot make someone choose to love us. This idea is counter to the disability rights (social model) movement, which focuses on rights, choice, and inclusion rather than belonging. Reinders says:

> …being loved as the fulfillment of our lives can only be received. The reason why it is important is that being loved and befriended does something for you that rights and choice cannot possibly do. It brings you the invaluable experience of being chosen by someone else…whatever rights and choice can do, they are not going to make me your friend.[72]

In John 15, the disciples' transition from servant to friend happens as Jesus loves the disciples by choosing them, sharing life with them and revealing God to them, and sacrificing for them. People with ID need to be chosen as friends. O'Day says,

> If we take Jesus' commandment to love seriously, and if we long to be called "friend" by Jesus, then the Christian vocation is to give love freely and generously without counting the cost and without wondering and worrying about who is on the receiving end of our limitless love. Because this, too, is how Jesus loved.[73]

Friendship, according to this passage, is an active love that chooses another person for the purpose of forming a relationship that reveals God and is self-sacrificing. Austin says, "The signally important point is to be disposed and ready to love *all* those whom God loves, to want to be friends with God and will *all* God's friends."[74]

CONCLUSION

The sermon is the place where preachers remind *all* of their listeners that God has chosen them as friends through the atonement. The sermon is also the environment in which preachers deliver counternarratives that transform neuro-typical listeners into friends of people who are intellectually disabled. As people with ID receive friendship, they are transformed as friends reveal God to them and spur them on toward Christlikeness. The sermon is the space where people with ID are transformed into spiritual maturity through the Holy Spirit working through the preacher who knows her listeners with ID as friends and values them as image-bearers and crucial members of the body of Christ.

In his book on theodicy and preaching, Thomas Long concludes with an illustration about the daughter of Charles de Gaulle, Anne, who had Down Syndrome. Charles' wife, Yvonne, had often prayed for their daughter to be like "the others."[75] Anne died at age twenty. Standing at her graveside, Yvonne "…was reluctant to leave the grave, reluctant to leave her beloved daughter. Charles rested his hand on Yvonne's arm and said to her, "Come, Yvonne. Now, she is like the others."[76] It's a moving

description of a tender moment. But the words of de Gaulle and the use of the illustration by Long convey ideas about intellectual disability that are theologically and homiletically problematic. The implication of words spoken by both husband and wife is that other children were normal, and their daughter was not. Other children were the standard of what was right. In fact, it would seem like the other children are the heavenly standard because now Anne, in her death, was like *them*. But in heaven, will not everyone be as they are meant to be—*like Jesus*, not like others?

A homiletic of belonging is concerned with the transformation of listeners with intellectual disabilities into the image of Christ. A homiletic of belonging preaches counternarratives that aim at the transformation of the entire body of Christ into friends of listeners with ID. A homiletic of belonging encourages friendship between the preacher and her listeners with ID. All of this contributes to the transformation or spiritual growth of listeners with intellectual disabilities. *So, they will be like Jesus*.

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WHAT'S OUR BIG IDEA? ANALYZING THE ACADEMIC LITERARY CORPUS OF THE EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Over its 25-year history, the scholars of the Evangelical Homiletics Society (EHS) have presented more than 250 papers at its annual conferences and published more than 200 academic articles in its journal. As a whole, what has EHS been writing about, and what has it said? A clear understanding of its past can enable any organization to move responsibly into its future. Using Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) from the field of data science, this paper scrutinizes the entire EHS corpus, describes 17 distinct topics within that corpus, and offers informed suggestions for the society's future inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

In what are scholars of the Evangelical Homiletics Society (EHS) interested? What have they achieved? These are the kinds of questions to ask as this, the 25th year of the Evangelical

Homiletical Society, passes. This special anniversary provides an opportunity to look back and reflect on what EHS has already accomplished, and to look forward to what it may accomplish in the future. This paper is such a reflection. It seeks to answer the question: what have members and presenters of EHS been writing about these 25 years?

Between the EHS annual conference and *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* (*JEHS*), the Evangelical Homiletics Society has created 462 academic papers to date. Organizing those papers together by topic, as members of the society have done from time to time,[1] grants insight into the society and its academic trajectory. Thankfully, the last 25 years has seen the advent of a computer-based process called topic modeling, which is particularly effective in determining the key topics within very large bodies of text. With the assistance of these digital processes, this paper determines both the number and the nature of those topics around which the society's academic work coalesces, and so can present, in broad terms, what EHS has been investigating these past 25 years, and what textual commonalities bind the society's reflection together.

Method – Latent Dirichlet Allocation

A particular process of *topic modeling* was employed to determine, as accurately as possible, the topics present within the EHS corpus. Topic modeling is a computer-enhanced process whereby a researcher determines the topics within a collection of texts. The process achieves this by identifying common terms within those texts. For example, if a topic model was applied to a collection of digital magazines, it might identify "recipe," "cook," and "eat" together in some of the magazines, and "famous," "celebrity," and "scandal" together in others. From those lists of terms, a researcher could identify that the topic of the first group of magazines is "cooking", and the topic of the second group of magazines is "gossip." This is what was needed with respect to the EHS corpus: a series of key topic term lists

from which the topics of discussion within the society could be identified.

The topic model employed for this paper is called Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA).[2] The remainder of this section of this paper outlines the process of employing LDA; the following section presents its results.

First, it was necessary to construct a database of the materials to evaluate. A large spreadsheet was constructed, into which the full text and citation information of every paper presented at the EHS academic conferences from 2002 through 2021 was loaded, as well as every academic article published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* (*JEHS*), from December 2001 (1:1) through March 2022 (22:1).[3] For this study, the body text of each paper informed the analysis.

Next, the computer program "cleaned" these papers—removing anything other than alphabets a-z and A-Z and single spaces—so that what remained was a series of texts containing only individual words separated by a space. The program *spaCy*[4] was utilized to remove *stop words* from these texts. Stop words are a predetermined set of commonly used words, such as "the," "an," "a," and "for."[5] These words are frequent in all English texts, but not correlated to any particular topics, which is why their removal is important to ensure the program's ability to identify meaningful topics.

After the data was cleaned, *spaCy* was also utilized to *lemmatize* the remaining words. Lemmatization is the process of taking words and, using the rules of language, returning them to their root form. For example, every instance in the EHS corpus of "worshipped" became "worship," and every instance of "sinned," "sinning," and "sins" became "sin." Lemmatization is used in LDA because both worshipped and worship refer to the same topic key term of worship, and sinned, sinning and sins all point to the same key topic term: sin.

Following lemmatization via *spaCy*, another program called *gensim*[6] was employed. *Gensim* found *bigrams*, which are words that repeatedly appear side by side in the corpus of texts. When two words appeared more than 15 times together, it was

determined that those words formed a unique unit of meaning, and so the program fused them together for the purpose of the study. Examples of bigrams that were fused together include "big idea," "new homiletic," and "sermon delivery."[7]

Gensim was then used to create a dictionary of all the terms in all of the texts. This helped to identify how common terms were employed across the entire EHS corpus. At this point additional words were excluded from the texts in order to produce deeper clarity: words that appeared in less than 3 documents, as they would be too rare to indicate a topic in homiletics, and words that appeared in more than 65% of documents, as they would be too common to indicate a sub-topic of the same.

Now that the texts were cleaned, lemmatized, bigrams were found, and the most common and most rare words were removed, it was time to run the *gensim* LDA model. The program was instructed to read the entire corpus thousands of times.[8] As the program did this, it learned, refining its understanding of what terms were statistically more likely to appear together inside single papers, as well as between different papers within the corpus.

After the LDA model had run its course, *gensim* generated a list of groups of key terms that it had determined to be identifying markers of individual topics: one group of terms for each topic. For example:

> Topic 1 : "evangelical" + "woman" + "wesley" + "year" + "century"
> Topic 2 : "fear" + "theme" + "pandemic" + "control" + "picture"
> Topic 3 : "black" + "metaphor" + "social" + "theology" + "white"[9]
> (and so forth)

Gensim also produced a list of the most representative papers for each topic it had identified.

Investigating these lists of terms and corresponding lists of papers one-by-one, the next step was to work together to name which topic within the field of homiletics the computer had identified. While the program is able to provide both key terms and representative papers, the topic names did not come from

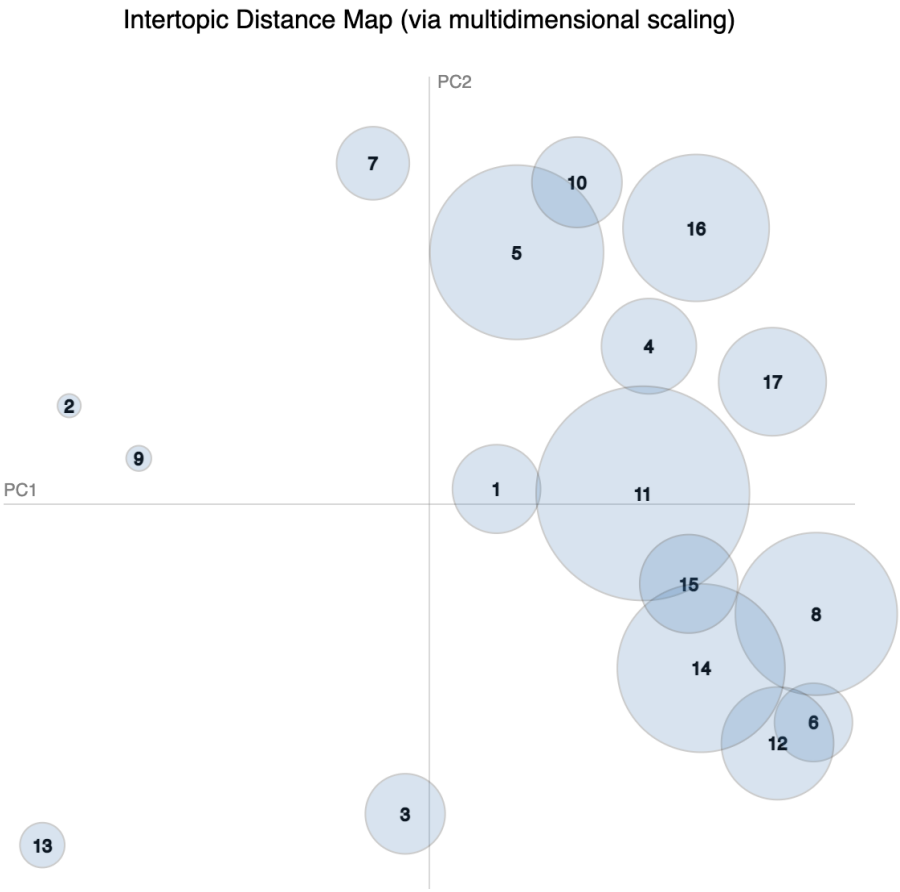
the LDA model—those must be identified by human operators. Although LDA is a computer-driven process, all stages of this analysis require ongoing human input, particularly this last stage because *gensim*'s LDA model requires its operator to identify the number of topics to search for *before* running its processes. This necessitates repeatedly running the program with different topic numbers, until a set of distinct, meaningful topics emerges.[10] This process is aided by reviewing output from a program called *pyLDAvis*,[11] which maps visually the relative closeness of the topics produced by *gensim*'s LDA model. Remarkably distinct groupings emerged when 17 topics were requested of *gensim*'s LDA model.

The final visual representation of the topics found within the EHS corpus is displayed below. *PyLDAvis* produces an "intertopic distance map," which displays a number of "bubbles"—each bubble representing a single topic. The size of the bubble represents the percentage of papers within the EHS corpus that are included within that topic—the larger the bubble, the more papers are located therein. The relative locations of bubbles to one another represents how related these topics are to each other. Relatedness is measured by how many shared terms there are between topics. Within the EHS model, topic 15 has many more terms shared with topics 14 and 11 than any of them do with topic 13, 2 and 9—which is why topic 15 overlaps with 14 and 11 but is far from 13, 2 and 9. A few items to note: because one topic's bubble overlaps with another, this does not mean those topics necessarily share papers, rather, they share many terms with one another. Additionally, because a topic does *not* overlap with another, does not mean these two topics have *no* shared terms. Rather, these two topics are less related—are more distinct—from one another than overlapping topics.[12]

THE 17 TOPICS

Below are the 17 major topic areas around which the first 25 years of EHS publications have converged. The titles given to each topic reflect human (our own) informed consideration, based on

each collection of terms grouped together by the LDA model. The numbering of these paragraphs corresponds to each topic's number on the Intertopic Distance Map and represent no ordering or relationships of the topics beyond that.



1. Church History 2. Fear 3. The Black Church 4. The Worship of the Triune God 5. Psychology 6. Hermeneutics and Speech Act 7. Preaching from the Old Testament 8. From Text to Sermon	9. Illustration 10. Preaching the Psalms 11. Pastoral Ministry 12. Pedagogy 13. Minoritized Cultures 14. The Technological Age 15. Narrative 16. Biblical Insights on Preaching 17. Methods for Biblical Preaching

What follows is a guided tour of the 17 topics representing the roughly 2.7 million published words of the EHS corpus.

1 – Church History[13]

Papers which typify this topic look back historically to reflect on preaching, taking a stance of retrieval towards persons and practices of earlier, usually Protestant, traditions. Many of these papers emphasize the biblical, evangelistic, and/or doctrinal nature of the preaching of the past,[14] some by highlighting a preacher whose ministry exhibited desirable qualities or effects.[15] The terminology used around this topic infers a discussion of Christian history, biography, revivalism, and societal impact. While a select few of these papers investigate minority voices—women preachers,[16] Black preachers,[17] and Korean preachers[18] — the majority of these papers focus their attention on male, white, Western preachers. Almost all of the papers in this group focus their attention exclusively on preaching from the Victorian era to today.

2 - Fear[19]

This small but distinct topic consists of papers which explore the multifaceted relationship between preaching and fear: both godly fear, and the fear that originates from the exigencies of life. Papers in this topic range from preaching and the COVID

pandemic (ca. 2020-2022),[20] to how fear of the LORD inflects the task of preaching.[21]

3 – The Black Church[22]

Another distinct topic in the EHS corpus is this collection of papers that focuses on the practices and experiences of preachers and churches in the Black church. Papers focused on this topic consider preaching in relation to the pastor's role, the relationship between the term "evangelical" and the Black church, the work of specific preachers, and challenges faced by the Black community—particularly racism. The expectation that Christian preaching serves as a prophetic witness against injustice and is a key enactor of social change is a common theme. Interestingly, the concept of metaphor is more prominent in this group than in any other group of papers, which has caused, in the topic model, other papers that only address metaphor and not race to congregate also around this topic.

4 – Worship of the Triune God[23]

This topic of reflection focuses on describing preaching in light of the Christian God and the Church. Many papers in this group describe preaching in light of the Christian worship service, while others' descriptions tend to engage ideas from systematic or biblical theology. Papers which favor advanced Christian theological terminology tend to gravitate here. Though basic Christian theological terms are seen throughout the entire EHS corpus and all its topics, this topic more than others attracts papers which minimize the mixing of theological with non-theological terminologies.

5 – Psychology[24]

Accounts of preaching in this topic focus on psychological states and the desirability of particular sermonic forms to steward those states. Though individual papers in this group, per their titles,

represent a wide variety of reflection, they all tend to favor psychological terms—pain, suffering, trauma, love, personality. They consider the psychological state or traits[25] of the preacher, or the psychological state[26] or development[27] of the preacher's listeners. Papers on trauma-sensitive preaching[28] tend to gravitate toward this topic.

6 – Hermeneutics and Speech Act[29]

Papers in this group of reflection describe the act of Christian preaching as a complex work of hermeneutics or pragmatics. As in papers throughout the EHS corpus, papers around this topic contain basic Christian theological terms, though many papers here use highly specialized terminologies, either imported from other disciplines or created, to bring the attributes of good Christian preaching into a higher definition of focus. One example of this phenomenon are papers informed by speech-act theory, which engage directly the works of John Searle and J.L. Austin and adopt their terminologies into the homiletical discussion.[30]

7 – Preaching from the Old Testament[31]

This group of reflection examines preaching from Old Testament books, specifically how to preach from individual Old Testament texts[32] and books[33] other than the Psalms (much EHS reflection has focused on preaching the Psalms that it forms its own distinct Topic 10). More than any other single topic, papers here tend to use terms directly related to the exegesis of Scripture. Biblical books of special interest to these papers are Proverbs, 2 Samuel, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, which may exist as objects of study in our society due to the unique challenges preachers face preaching these texts.

8 – From Text to Sermon[34]

This group of reflection scrutinizes the processes that make sermons, often examining one process according to a chosen set of philosophical or theological convictions. Topic key words "author" (authorial intent), "authoritative" (the authoritative role of Scripture), and "application" (how should a text be applied) regularly interpolate discussions here. It is around this topic, within its realm of concern for particular processes of constructing sermons from biblical texts, that EHS's discussions of the New Homiletic emerge. It is possible that this indicates that the text to sermon process is where major disagreements exist between the EHS corpus and the New Homiletic, though this hypothesis requires further investigation.

9 – Illustration[35]

This very small but distinct topic considers the nature and use of illustrative material for preaching. The terminological set here is a unique blend of pastoral, psychological, biblical, pedagogical, and narratival terms; this may indicate that a uniquely synthetic discussion has emerged here.

10 – Preaching the Psalms[36]

This topic focuses on rationales and methods for preaching the Psalms. The shared essence of these papers has to do with using the literary forms of this biblical book in the development and delivery of sermons. Papers here often note the applicability of the psalms' language to the emotional realities of the preacher and hearers, and particularly how the literary device of poetic imagery can evoke these. It is perhaps unsurprising the proximity of this topic to the topic "Preaching and Psychology" considering that both topics share an interest in lament, suffering, hope, and song.

11 – Pastoral Ministry[37]

This topic describes preaching in relation to pastoral ministry. These papers are written with the preaching pastor in mind, and the terminology here reflects pastoral concerns, practicalities of ministry, and experiences of preachers in the pastorate. Though collaborative preaching and continuing pastoral education are somewhat common discussions within this topic, the relative ideological breadth and informality of many papers here make it difficult to identify defined areas of advancing homiletical inquiry.[38] Said differently, many of these papers tend to focus more on pastors-who-preach than the preachers-who-pastor, and those papers' discussions of preaching are more attached to the variables of pastoral ministry than to the more defined and established discussions of preaching in other groups of the EHS corpus. There is opportunity here to develop more distinct academic foci around which profitable practical discussions can re-emerge.

12 – Pedagogy[39]

This topic concerns how best to teach preachers, usually at the graduate level. While the imagined reader of papers in other topics might be preachers or pastors, the imagined readers of the majority of these papers are teachers of preaching. A common interest of this topic area is ancient and modern rhetoric, and the use of rhetoric to persuade listeners.[40] John Broadus' work is often explored here.[41] Several surveys of preaching textbooks also appear under this topic.[42]

13 - Minoritized Cultures[43]

This topic of reflection describes the preaching of minoritized cultures other than the Black church, as well as how to preach responsibly about, and to, these minoritized cultures. Cultures represented here include Mexican American, Korean American, and more generally, Asian North American cultures. Reflection on preaching to multicultural groups gravitates toward here, as does preaching to second generation immigrants in the United

States. Because of the heavy emphasis on culture, papers that address more general concerns about culture are also drawn toward this topic group.

14 - The Technological Age[44]

This topic considers preaching's existence within a technological age. These papers wrestle with the usefulness and appropriateness of technology in preaching, and many tend toward an avoidant relationship given the oral and embodied nature of preaching. Papers concerned with communication and media tend to appear in this group. Engagement with communication theory, Marshall McLuhan, and Neil Postman often proceeds here. Both "postmodern" and "technology" are terms unique to this group of papers, and oftentimes both of these contexts are cast as a potential threat to faithful preaching.

15 - Narrative[45]

Around this topic, "story" and "narrative" are by far the terms most likely to appear. There are three ways that the concept seems to be used. The first pertains to preaching narrative passages of Scripture: gospel narratives, Old Testament narratives, and parables. The second relates preaching to a culture that is integrated with, or values, story. The third is preaching in narrative forms. This group is terminologically distinct from Topic 8 likely because it enlists specific terms which already exist in a homiletical discussions of narrative preaching.[46] A curious feature of this topic is that investigation of the New Homiletic tends not to occur here, but in Topic 8, "Text to Sermon."

16 – Biblical Insights on Preaching[47]

This topic is concerned with what Scripture says preaching is; papers here tend to compile discreet insights from all or part of Scripture in order to assemble a biblical definition of good

preaching. Though these papers raise a variety of questions, they all tend to answer those questions using distinct terminology indicative of exegesis and biblical studies. While this topic as well as Topic 4 "Worship of the Triune God" both appear to circle around the question "what is Christian preaching?" the difference between the two lies here: this topic approaches that question from an exegetical or biblical studies perspective, whereas topic 4 favors liturgical, systematic, or biblical theological perspectives.

17 – Methods for Biblical Preaching[48]

This topic is concerned with how to create sermons faithful to the teaching of Scripture. The bigram "big idea" is almost exclusively found within this topic. Alongside discussions of Robinson's philosophy of preaching, this topic draws to itself papers concerned with Christ-centered preaching, text-driven preaching, and preaching the Old Testament in the New—although rather than critically engaging with these methods, the majority of these papers are concerned with teaching and applying these methods. Reflection on moralistic preaching also tends to appear around this topic. It could be hypothesized that papers gathering around this topic presuppose generally the insights of Topic 16, "Biblical Insights on Preaching" and Topic 4, "Worship of the Triune God," and they advance those ideas into methods and practices for good sermon development.

Highlights

In brief, the analyses of the EHS corpus using LDA yielded 17 topics around which that corpus terminologically relates. Yet what unifies this corpus? Does EHS have a big idea? If this big idea exists in a common terminology, perhaps a consideration of the most common terms across *all* the papers may provide some clues that point to the society's central idea to date.

THE BIG IDEA OF EHS

During the data analysis conducted for this study, after the stop words were removed using *spaCy*, and the remaining terms were lemmatized, it became possible to identify the most common, meaningful terms across the entire EHS corpus. These terms were, starting with the most common: God, preach, preacher, sermon, preaching, text, word, church, people, biblical, Christ, life, way, Jesus, and Scripture.[49] From this word list a picture of the society's core concerns emerge: preaching, God, Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the Church.

What might these common terms say about the Evangelical Homiletics Society's academic work? First, they point towards a particular unity of faith. While EHS authors clearly pursue distinct, diverging topic areas within the larger field of homiletics, they appear to remain relatively united around textual patterns which refer to the central tenets of the historic Christian faith. To see such regular and broad textual evidence of authors' faith throughout the academic corpus is notable. If a "big idea" of the corpus of the Evangelical Homiletics Society can be delineated, it likely resides here: EHS members are united in faith in Jesus Christ as He is portrayed in Scripture, and in the prioritization of preaching according to Scripture for the benefit of the Church.

Second, they speak to the society's adherence to these tenets over time. To keep these concerns, of all possible others, at the heart of the society indicates a desire to be faithful Christian scholars, while engaging a wide variety of concepts, disciplines, and lexicons.

Third, they speak of the possibilities for EHS's continued life and scholarship. Though some may review this list of terms and denigrate EHS's identity as an academic society, what is remarkable about these central concerns is the multiplicity of academic lines of inquiry that have proceeded from them to date. To consider preaching, God, Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the Church evidently generates meaningful academic impetus for the discipline, and particularly for EHS's pursuit of reflection.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

More could be said in light of the amount of new data and analysis offered here—and the authors look forward to others engaging with and helping interpret this data. Aware of their limited vantage point and limited space, the authors offer the following five suggestions regarding how EHS might proceed into its future in light of this new data.

Read What has been Written

As the results of the LDA topic model were analyzed, a lack of discussion between papers in the EHS corpus became evident—even between papers that appear to address the same issue. Future contributions will be strengthened by EHS scholars investing more time reviewing existing papers within the corpus, and interacting directly with papers of quality and influence as they write.[50] Citing one another's papers and critically engaging each other's ideas not only brings individuals' writing into clearer focus, it can serve to cohere and multiply the discussions of the entire society. In Christian perspective, reading one other's work is an act of honoring those with whom one shares academic fellowship; for many, it constitutes an act of honoring those who came before. It also saves individuals and the entire academic society from unnecessarily retreading overly worn trails.

This is not a call for more agreement across the society, but for more awareness of one's own position amidst other critically developed options within the current state of the discussion. Echoing the *JEHS* editors' recent pleas,[51] the society would benefit from more direct debate, more assertion of how one position is better than another, more "have at thee, sir," more noble repartees, rebuttals, and even retractions.

Mind the Gaps

A significant area of potential in the EHS corpus is simply to develop untouched areas within existing topics. For example,

- The "Preaching from the Old Testament" topic appears to focus most of its attention on only four of the books of the Old Testament. EHS also has an entire topic dedicated to the genre-sensitive preaching of the psalter. Other books are options.
- Within the "Preaching and Minoritized Cultures" topic there are many other preaching traditions, in and from many other cultures upon which to reflect.
- Within the "Church History" topic a rich, expansive period of preaching history, between Old Testament preaching and Victorian era preaching, awaits scrutiny.
- Very little, if any, reflection within the "Technological Age" topic has grappled with the existence of artificial intelligence technology, and particularly its ability to generate unique, new sermons based on collected existing sermons.
- Within discussions of homiletical theories and methods, the society has often theologically critiqued the New Homiletic, yet theories championed by more theologically conservative evangelicals have mostly been considered from a practical or pedagogical standpoint. EHS has opportunity to turn a more comprehensive critical eye towards all homiletical theories.
- Within Topic 4, which contains reflection on preaching in light of Christian theology, there are other systematic doctrines within theology worth future consideration: Christology, soteriology, theological anthropology, and eschatology, to name a few.

There are more possibilities. If good academic writing begins with finding gaps in the existing scholarship, EHS is ripe with potential. The task now before the society is one of development and improvement of its existing corpus. Future scholars need only mind the gaps, choose their specific aim therein, and fill the body with good insight.

Choose Terms Carefully

Among the society's original stated goals is the intention "...to integrate the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology, [and] to make scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics."[52] From EHS's inception, it has been an integrative academic enterprise, and this LDA analysis confirms that EHS has indeed drawn insights from a variety of disciplines, particularly where terms from other fields appear within the 17 topics.

Such integration has certainly introduced new ideas and specialized terminologies to the EHS corpus, yet how well these ideas and terminologies have been academically probed, and are therefore fundamentally understood by EHS's writers and readers, is a significant question. The authors of this paper hold that the academic work of EHS would benefit from more careful criticism of those terms and ideas introduced into its academic arena from other specialties; this would befit the society's work as both an integrative and scholarly Christian endeavor. Terms have consequences, and the terms chosen to reflect on preaching are no different. Agendas come along with specialized terminologies, and to adopt them without probing sufficiently their histories or intentions is to bypass significant portions of the spirit, responsibility, and joy of academic inquiry. The society has freedom to acknowledge and welcome expertise from all other disciplines—yet the responsibility to understand and illuminate specifically what is being welcomed, and what is not, and for what reasons have yet to be considered. Such investigation, constructed awareness, and informed decision making is how any academic society chooses its terms carefully—and, ultimately, exerts leadership in its field.

Define Terms Clearly

A related but distinct suggestion: terms chosen should be easily understandable, and scholars must not shy away from defining their terms whenever necessary. Many papers in the EHS corpus

miss their potential because they fail either to use understandable terms or to define their terms. The pattern of defining key terms at the very beginning of an academic paper is commonplace among other academic societies—and this should become the pattern for EHS. A good clear definition of what one means when using the term "theology" or "humanity" or "pain," for example, might swing a reader's understanding of the entire paper in an entirely different direction. Moreover, in defining terms specifically, one can realize more about the central argument of one's own paper than one otherwise would.

Remember the Whole Family

The voices, persons, ideas, and experiences of minoritized preaching traditions should be better integrated with academic work throughout all topics pursued by the society. Presently, studies in Black preaching and other minoritized preaching stand as two distinct topics terminologically removed from the rest of the EHS corpus. These topics likely will always exhibit terminological distinctiveness—the uniqueness of other preaching cultures should be acknowledged, and so the use of unique terms necessary to describe them must continue. But the lack of regular engagement with, or even mention of, these groups by the other topics in the EHS corpus is perhaps the most deafening silence within the EHS corpus to date. The reflection of the Evangelical Homiletics Society will not represent preaching in all its fullness, nor even the understandings of preaching present within its own members, until time is taken to seek out resources from, listen to, learn from, and engage with minoritized voices.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this project, the authors of this paper had predictions regarding what core topics would emerge in the analysis of the 462 papers. The general feeling, which turned out to be altogether incorrect, was that there would be about seven

core topics, which would include the topics "the new homiletic," and "big idea preaching." The EHS corpus is, in actuality, multi-faceted, with papers congregating around 17 different topics of study.

What will be the future of the EHS corpus? Will it come to reflect more direct engagement and debate with existing homiletical reflection? Will it serve to develop and sharpen the next generation of homiletics scholars? How many distinct topics will emerge if a similar analysis is done at EHS's 50th anniversary? Or its 500th? How deep and how wide will these topics have been mined by that time? The authors of this paper desire that the Evangelical Homiletics Society of tomorrow be the very best it can be—for better preaching, and for the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Peace be with you all.[53]

NOTES

1. For example, Ken Langley, "Index: Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 18:2 (September 2018): 95-141.

2. David M. Blei, Andrew Y. Ng, and Michael I. Jordan, "Latent dirichlet allocation." *The Journal of Machine Learning Research*. 3 (3/1/2003): 993–1022.

3. The desire to focus directly on the research topics chosen and published by members of EHS informed the following decisions regarding what to include and exclude from the data set:

- In situations where a scholar presented a paper at the annual conference, a version of which was then published in a subsequent volume of *JEHS*, the conference paper was excluded from the data set in favor of the journal article.
- Some articles, though appearing in our academic journal, were not typical academic publications. Many of these were articles written in honor of EHS members who had passed away, and contained a variety of observations and anecdotes, personal and professional, about those members. These were excluded.
- Book reviews were not included in the analysis.

- Likewise, the transcribed sermons which *JEHS* publishes were excluded from the analysis.
- However, transcriptions of keynote addresses given by speakers at the EHS annual conferences were included due to their intended role in probing and directing the research interests of our society's scholars.
- Lengthy appendixes to conference papers, particularly those that included multiple pages of text from outside sources, were excluded from the analysis as well.

4. M. Honnibal and I. Montani, *spaCy 2: Natural language understanding with Bloom embeddings, convolutional neural networks and incremental parsing* (2017) https://spacy.io/
5. A complete list of *spaCy* stopwords can be found at https://github.com/explosion/spaCy/blob/master/spacy/lang/en/stop_words.py
6.. Rehurek and P. Sojka, "Gensim-python framework for vector space modelling." *NLP Centre, Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic* 3:2 (2011).
7. Examples of potential bigrams which were not chosen to fuse together: "leave listener," "line [of] argument" and a favorite of the authors—"Gandalf laugh." Note that if the term "sermon" existed without "delivery," or vice versa, those terms remained independent for the purpose of this study.
8. Specifically, the program was instructed to read 100 papers at a time, 100 times over, and then to move to the next 100 and repeat the process. This entire process was repeated 250 times.
9. This is just a small sample of the groups of terms that *gensim* would print for our evaluation. The numbers in front of the terms indicate the probability of a particular term appearing in a paper of this topic. The terms are ordered from most likely to least likely to occur within a text of each topic.
10. When the topic lists outputted from the model seemed to combine terms, or when representative papers that the model found for those topics clearly belonged to two topics, then the number of topics were increased. Alternatively, when topics appeared to split topic words and papers into two group—words

and papers that were understood should exist together—then the the number of topics were decreased.

11. Carson Sievert and Kenneth Shirley. "LDAvis: A method for visualizing and interpreting topics," in *Proceedings of the Workshop on Interactive Language Learning, Visualization, and Interfaces* (Baltimore, MD: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2014), 63–70.

12. Note that *pyLDAvis'* intertopic distance map is a two-dimensional rendering of what is, in actuality, a multidimensional model. When creating a topic model, there are as many dimensions within that model as there are terms—the EHS model exists on thousands of dimensions. The axes on the intertopic distance map (PC1 and PC2) are representative of two algorithms constructed by pyLDAvis to best compress this multidimensional model into two dimensions to preserve and display as accurate information about the topics as possible, namely, their relative distinctness and size.

13. Topic key terms (these terms will always be given in descending order of their probability to appear in a paper of their assigned topic): 0.025*"evangelical" + 0.012*"woman" + 0.011*"wesley" + 0.010*"year" + 0.009*"century" + 0.009*"society" + 0.009*"doctrine" + 0.009*"whitefield" + 0.009*"early" + 0.008*"holy_spirit" + 0.008*"pentecostal" + 0.007*"movement" + 0.007*"charles" + 0.007*"influence" + 0.007*"history" + 0.006*"female" + 0.006*"theology" + 0.006*"ministry" + 0.006*"spirit" + 0.006*"revival" + 0.006*"minister" + 0.005*"service" + 0.005*"methodist" + 0.005*"england" + 0.005*"conversion"

Representative papers of this topic: Ho Kwon, "George Whitefield's Advice for Creating Community," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX, October 16, 2009) and Arica Heald Demme, "Lament and Hope of a Female Evangelical Preacher," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Waco, TX, November 5, 2021).

14. For example, Kenley D. Hall, "The Great Awakening—Calvinism, Arminianism and Revivalistic Preaching: Homiletical

Lessons for Today," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 12:2 (September 2012): 31-40 and Tom Ward, "Revolutionary Preaching from the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, South Hamilton, MA, October 13, 2006).

15. For example, Joseph Park, "The Impact of John Wesley's Preaching on 18th Century Britain," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, South Hamilton, MA, October 14, 2011) and Ho Kwon, "George Whitefield's Advice for Creating Community," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX, October 16, 2009).

16. Arica Heald Demme, "Lament and Hope of a Female Evangelical Preacher," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Waco, TX, November 5, 2021). The repeated use of the term "woman" in this paper is the reason for its high ranking among key terms in this topic group.

17. Jared E. Alcántara, "Sundays in 'East' New York: 1948-1960," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, South Hamilton, MA, October 14, 2011).

18. David Eung-Yul Ryoo, "Preaching and Worship in the Korean Church," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Deerfield, IL, October 15, 2010).

19. Topic key terms: 0.169*"fear" + 0.115*"theme" + 0.070*"pandemic" + 0.040*"control" + 0.040*"picture" + 0.040*"reality" + 0.031*"section" + 0.026*"care" + 0.026*"covid" + 0.024*"perceive" + 0.023*"trust" + 0.023*"humanity" + 0.020*"response" + 0.017*"pressures" + 0.016*"occur" + 0.015*"pray" + 0.014*"face" + 0.012*"coronavirus" + 0.008*"exigency" + 0.008*"revelational."

Representative papers of this topic: Scott M. Gibson and Daniel J. Gregory, "Patterns of Preaching During a Period of Lament: A Digital Assessment of Selected Sermons Preached from Around the World at the Beginning of the Worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic, (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Waco, TX, November 5, 2021) and Gregory K. Hollifield, "Preaching to Fear: A Biblical and

Practical Reconsideration of Fear, Fear of God, and the Rhetoric of Fear in Preaching," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 17:1 (March 2017): 33-49.
20. Matthew D. Kim, "Preaching in a Period of Pandemic and Prejudice," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 20:2 (September 2020): 15-23.
21. Greg Scharf, "The Fear of the Lord: A Missing Antidote to Homiletical Idolatry?," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Online, October 15, 2020).
22. Topic key terms: 0.043*"black" + 0.023*"metaphor" + 0.021*"social" + 0.020*"theology" + 0.018*"white" + 0.017*"taylor" + 0.013*"african_american" + 0.012*"racism" + 0.010*"ethnic" + 0.010*"justice" + 0.010*"society" + 0.009*"language" + 0.008*"racial" + 0.008*"tradition" + 0.008*"community" + 0.008*"color" + 0.007*"slave" + 0.007*"american" + 0.007*"nation" + 0.007*"political" + 0.007*"race" + 0.007*"history" + 0.006*"bushnell" + 0.006*"religious" + 0.006*"injustice."

Representative papers of this topic: Joshua Peeler, "Color Blind Politics: How African-American Pastors Serve as Examples for Political Engagement From the Pulpit," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX, October 14, 2016); Harry G. Zimmerman, "Black Theological Preaching and How It Relates to the Church," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Wake Forest, NC, October 18, 2019); Jesse L. Nelson, "No Longer Silent: A Practical Theology For Preaching On Racism," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 20:2 (September 2020): 24-29; Eric Price, "Situating Black Evangelical Preaching Within Scholarship on Black Homiletics: William E Pannell As a Case Study," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Online, October 15, 2020).
23. Topic key terms: 0.044*"worship" + 0.023*"creation" + 0.021*"community" + 0.016*"mission" + 0.012*"spirit" + 0.011*"divine" + 0.010*"missional" + 0.010*"believer" + 0.009*"humanity" + 0.009*"relationship" + 0.007*"father" + 0.007*"love" + 0.006*"image" + 0.006*"speech" + 0.006*"holy_spirit" + 0.006*"trinity" + 0.006*"role" +

0.005*"doctrine" + 0.005*"identity" + 0.005*"spiritual" + 0.005*"theology" + 0.005*"jesus_christ" + 0.005*"redemption" + 0.005*"formation" + 0.005*"glory."

Representative papers of this topic: Michael Quicke, "Exploring the Architecture of Community Formation," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX, October 16, 2009); Michael Quicke, "The Neglected Trinity: A Challenge for Preachers," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, South Hamilton, MA, October 13, 2006); Benjamin B. Phillips, "Fellowship of the Triune God: The Divine Context for a Theology of Preaching," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 16:2 (September 2016): 16-28; Nathan Wright, "The Eschatological Redemption of Human Speech: Towards a Biblical Theology of Christian Preaching," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 21:1 (March 2021): 66-85.

24. Topic key terms: 0.010*"love" + 0.007*"hope" + 0.004*"suffer" + 0.004*"pain" + 0.004*"self" + 0.004*"right" + 0.004*"let" + 0.004*"sin" + 0.003*"character" + 0.003*"problem" + 0.003*"suffering" + 0.003*"matter" + 0.003*"leave" + 0.003*"stand" + 0.003*"story" + 0.003*"image" + 0.003*"face" + 0.003*"personal" + 0.003*"kind" + 0.003*"care" + 0.003*"death" + 0.003*"hand" + 0.003*"space" + 0.003*"talk" + 0.003*"crisis."

Representative papers of this topic: Kyle Lincoln and David Cook, "The Call to Bless and not to Curse: Naming Mental Health Problems and Framing 'Now' and 'Not-Yet' Hope Horizons in Our Preaching," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Waco, TX, November 5, 2021); Austin B. Tucker, "What Do You Mean 'Truth Through Personality? 'The Phillips Brooks Definition of Preaching in Historical Context," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Wake Forest, NC, October 15, 2004); Matthew D. Kim, "Preaching To People In Pain," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 22:1 (March 2022): 12-33.

25. Alex Kato, "Reinstating Sincerity: From Calvin to Sartre to Hipsters to Paul," (paper presentation, The Evangelical

Homiletics Society Conference, New Orleans, LA, October 12, 2018).
26. Matthew D. Kim, "Preaching To People In Pain," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 22:1 (March 2022): 12-33.
27. Kyle Lincoln and David Cook, "The Call to Bless and not to Curse: Naming Mental Health Problems and Framing 'Now' and 'Not-Yet' Hope Horizons in Our Preaching," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Waco, TX, November 5, 2021).
28. Rodney Palmer, "Trauma-Informed Preaching in an Age of Idols," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Online, October 15, 2020).
29. Topic key terms: 0.018*"genre" + 0.017*"meaning" + 0.014*"language" + 0.014*"theory" + 0.013*"hearer" + 0.012*"content" + 0.011*"reader" + 0.010*"rhetorical" + 0.010*"effect" + 0.009*"speaker" + 0.009*"speech_act" + 0.009*"intention" + 0.009*"speech" + 0.009*"homiletical" + 0.009*"audience" + 0.009*"illocutionary_act" + 0.008*"literary" + 0.008*"sentence" + 0.008*"action" + 0.008*"proposition" + 0.008*"discourse" + 0.007*"express" + 0.007*"literary_form" + 0.007*"process" + 0.007*"feature."

Representative papers of this topic: Duck Hyun. Kim, "Reframing the Hermeneutical Question as Part of Its Homiletical Responsibility: Making Extensive Use of the Speech Act Theory," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 16:1 (March 2016): 30-46; Duck Hyun Kim, "An Alternative Biblical Epistemology and Consequently Its Homiletical Praxis Using the Speech Act Theory (SAT) for a Homiletic Performance from Text to Sermon," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Louisville, KY, October 16, 2015); Daniel Gregory, "The Pentathlon Preaching Principle: A Proposed Method for Bridging the Gap Between Text and Sermon," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 17:2 (September 2017): 19-34.
30. Duck Hyun. Kim, "Reframing the Hermeneutical Question as Part of Its Homiletical Responsibility: Making Extensive Use of the Speech Act Theory," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 16:1 (March 2016): 30-46.

31. Topic key terms: 0.031*"king" + 0.021*"david" + 0.014*"woman" + 0.012*"wisdom" + 0.012*"speech" + 0.011*"sin" + 0.011*"voice" + 0.010*"proverb" + 0.010*"fear_lord" + 0.009*"sexual" + 0.009*"samuel" + 0.008*"memory" + 0.007*"bathsheba" + 0.006*"wife" + 0.006*"sex" + 0.006*"sound" + 0.005*"send" + 0.005*"movement" + 0.005*"proverbs" + 0.005*"seminarian" + 0.005*"chapter" + 0.005*"solomon" + 0.004*"ecclesiastes" + 0.004*"speaker" + 0.004*"murder."

Representative papers of this topic: Dave Bland, "A Hermeneutical Foundation for Preaching Proverbs," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Chicago, IL, October 10, 2014); Winfred Omar Neely, "The Wife of Uriah the Hittite: Political Seductress, Willing Participant, Naïve Woman, or #BathshebaToo?: The Preacher as Sensitive Theologian," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 20:1 (March 2020): 51-63.

32. Karen L.H. Shaw, "Wisdom Incarnate: Preaching Proverbs 31," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 14:2 (September 2014): 44-53.

33. Dave Bland, "A Hermeneutical Foundation for Preaching Proverbs," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Chicago, IL, October 10, 2014).

34. Topic key terms: 0.013*"theology" + 0.009*"authority" + 0.007*"application" + 0.007*"author" + 0.007*"meaning" + 0.006*"interpretation" + 0.005*"pericope" + 0.005*"passage" + 0.005*"homiletical" + 0.005*"homiletic" + 0.005*"understanding" + 0.004*"evangelical" + 0.004*"biblical_text" + 0.004*"hermeneutic" + 0.004*"historical" + 0.004*"interpret" + 0.004*"reader" + 0.004*"contemporary" + 0.004*"perspective" + 0.004*"history" + 0.004*"kuruvilla" + 0.004*"divine" + 0.004*"individual" + 0.004*"language" + 0.003*"emphasis."

Representative papers of this topic: Abraham Kuruvilla, "Preaching as Translation via Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 9:1 (March 2009): 85-97; Charles B. Kuthe, The Prodigal Preacher: The Misuse of Typology with Regard to Authorial Intent," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Wake Forest, NC, October 15,

2004); Timothy J. Ralston, "Back to the Future: Classical Categories of Exegesis, Application and Authority for Preaching and Spiritual Formation," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 3:2 (December 2003): 33-51.

35. Topic key terms: 0.214*"illustration" + 0.039*"vulnerability" + 0.029*"story" + 0.022*"illustrate" + 0.021*"illustrative" + 0.018*"disjunction" + 0.016*"illustrations" + 0.016*"biblical_text" + 0.014*"material" + 0.011*"personal" + 0.009*"perspective" + 0.009*"randolph" + 0.008*"vulnerable" + 0.008*"haddon" + 0.008*"eyed" + 0.007*"confirmation" + 0.007*"transformational" + 0.006*"calvins" + 0.006*"gods" + 0.006*"tell_story."

Representative papers of this topic: Shawn D. Radford, "The Sermon as Illustration: Confirming Biblical Texts as Concrete Expressions," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, St. Louis, MO, October 14, 2005); Craig Brian Larson, "Grafting in the Third Person Illustration," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Deerfield, IL, October 18, 2002); H. Jared Bumpers, "John Broadus, the New Homiletic, and Illustrations: Using Biblical Narratives as Illustrations to Promote Biblical Literacy," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Louisville, KY, October 16, 2015).

36. Topic key terms: 0.045*"psalm" + 0.015*"lament" + 0.014*"lord" + 0.012*"hope" + 0.011*"covenant" + 0.010*"psalms" + 0.009*"psalmist" + 0.008*"israel" + 0.007*"unction" + 0.007*"praise" + 0.007*"prophet" + 0.007*"anoint" + 0.007*"jeremiah" + 0.006*"judgment" + 0.006*"promise" + 0.006*"king" + 0.006*"psalter" + 0.006*"old" + 0.006*"prayer" + 0.006*"david" + 0.005*"spirit" + 0.005*"song" + 0.005*"poetry" + 0.005*"disaster" + 0.005*"faithfulness."

Representative papers of this topic: John V. Tornfelt, "Preaching the Psalms: Understanding Chiastic Structures for Greater Clarity," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 2:2 (December 2002): 4-31; Larry Overstreet, "Emotional Subjectivity in Teaching/Preaching the Psalms," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, La Mirada, CA, October 12, 2007); Heather Joy Zimmerman, "Location is

(Almost) Everything! A Case for Preaching the Psalms in Light of Their Literary Contexts," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Online, October 15, 2020).

37. Topic key terms: 0.009*"pastor" + 0.007*"ministry" + 0.005*"listen" + 0.004*"share" + 0.004*"year" + 0.004*"challenge" + 0.004*"topic" + 0.004*"member" + 0.004*"spiritual" + 0.003*"student" + 0.003*"leader" + 0.003*"group" + 0.003*"personal" + 0.003*"engage" + 0.003*"community" + 0.003*"teaching" + 0.003*"service" + 0.003*"pulpit" + 0.003*"model" + 0.003*"encourage" + 0.003*"opportunity" + 0.003*"individual" + 0.003*"prepare" + 0.003*"grow" + 0.003*"relate."

Representative papers of this topic: Kent Walkemeyer, "Recognizing and Overcoming Obstacles to Collaborative Preaching," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX, October 16, 2009). Kenton C. Anderson, "Homiletical Insights Gleaned from the ACTS 'Preaching Pastor Survey'," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8:2 (September 2008): 26-31. Kenneth L. Swetland, ""The Intersection of Preaching and Pastoring," part of forum on "Preaching and Pastoral Ministry"," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8:2 (September 2008): 16-18.

38. Because also of their general nature, a number of the forum discussions published by *JEHS* also congregate around this topic.

39. Topic key terms: 0.036*"student" + 0.013*"homiletic" + 0.012*"broadus" + 0.011*"rhetoric" + 0.008*"persuasion" + 0.008*"dissertation" + 0.008*"class" + 0.008*"survey" + 0.007*"rhetorical" + 0.007*"audience" + 0.006*"theory" + 0.006*"professor" + 0.006*"course" + 0.006*"style" + 0.006*"school" + 0.005*"homiletical" + 0.005*"classroom" + 0.005*"textbook" + 0.005*"learning" + 0.005*"lecture" + 0.005*"imitation" + 0.005*"effective" + 0.005*"teacher" + 0.005*"list" + 0.005*"seminary."

Representative papers of this topic: Calvin Pearson, "Composition Pedagogy Increases Effectiveness in Homiletic Pedagogy," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Chicago, IL, October 10, 2014). Chris

Rappazini, "What Has Been Written: Quantitative Studies On Homiletical Textbooks Used In Seminary Classrooms," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 19:2 (September 2019): 27-45.
40. Calvin Pearson, "The Forgotten Pedagogy of Imitation: How Imitation in Ancient Rhetorical Pedagogy Informs Modern Homiletics," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, South Hamilton, MA, October 13, 2006).
41. Mark M. Overstreet, "John A. Broadus, the 'Lost' Yale Lectures, and his Enduring Legacy of Powerful Preaching," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 8:1 (March 2008): 100-119.
42. Chris Rappazini, "What Has Been Written: Quantitative Studies On Homiletical Textbooks Used In Seminary Classrooms," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 19:2 (September 2019): 27-45.
43. Topic key terms: 0.130*"culture" + 0.094*"cultural" + 0.040*"generation" + 0.035*"korean" + 0.026*"group" + 0.024*"americans" + 0.022*"korean_american" + 0.022*"american" + 0.021*"identity" + 0.020*"asian" + 0.020*"ethnicity" + 0.019*"minority" + 0.018*"second_generation" + 0.016*"majority" + 0.011*"race_ethnicity" + 0.010*"christians" + 0.010*"member" + 0.010*"community" + 0.010*"non" + 0.009*"racial_ethnic" + 0.009*"ethnic_group" + 0.008*"difference" + 0.008*"society" + 0.008*"family" + 0.008*"english."

Representative papers of this topic: Matthew D. Kim, "A Bi-Cultural Homiletic: Korean American Preaching in Transition," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 6:2 (September 2006): 38-65; Matthew D. Kim, "A Blind Spot in Homiletics: Preaching that Exegetes Ethnicity," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 11:1 (March 2011): 66-83; Jose G. III. Izguirre, "Preaching to a 'Culture Within a Culture': Shaping Rhetorical Strategies Targeting Generations of Mexican-Americans in the United States," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 13:2 (September 2013): 18-29.
44. Topic key terms: 0.011*"communication" + 0.009*"culture" + 0.009*"audience" + 0.007*"medium" + 0.005*"image" + 0.005*"oral" + 0.005*"language" + 0.004*"speaker" +

0.004*"information" + 0.004*"postmodern" + 0.004*"technology" + 0.004*"process" + 0.004*"knowledge" + 0.004*"value" + 0.004*"belief" + 0.004*"influence" + 0.004*"age" + 0.004*"reality" + 0.004*"self" + 0.003*"style" + 0.003*"model" + 0.003*"communicate" + 0.003*"engage" + 0.003*"worldview" + 0.003*"society."

Representative papers of this topic: Michael Quicke, "Technologizing of the Word — Flight, Fight, or Befriend?," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, New Orleans, LA, October 19, 2001); Jeffery D. Arthurs and Ben Jackson, "Preaching in the Electronic Age," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, New Orleans, LA, October 19, 2001); Andrew Curry, "How the Image Changes the Message: Recalling Neil Postman's Critique of Televised Religion and Relating it to the Surge of On-Screen Preaching Driven by the Covid-19 Pandemic," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Online, October 15, 2020).

45. Topic key terms: 0.055*"story" + 0.044*"narrative" + 0.015*"character" + 0.014*"imagination" + 0.014*"parable" + 0.011*"edwards" + 0.009*"structure" + 0.009*"disciple" + 0.007*"scene" + 0.006*"contemporary" + 0.005*"reality" + 0.005*"inductive" + 0.005*"plot" + 0.005*"deductive" + 0.005*"ricoeur" + 0.005*"dialogue" + 0.005*"narrator" + 0.005*"identity" + 0.005*"biblical_narrative" + 0.004*"adult" + 0.004*"film" + 0.004*"shape" + 0.004*"figure" + 0.004*"hearer" + 0.004*"event."

Representative papers of this topic: Glenn Watson, "The Sermon in Three Acts: The Rhetoric of Cinema and the Art of Narrative Biblical Exposition," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 7:1 (March 2007): 54-75; J. Kent Edwards, "Stories are for Adults: Equipping Preachers to Communicate Biblical Narratives to Adult Audiences," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 7:1 (March 2007): 4-16; Jeffrey D. Arthurs, "Genre Sensitive Preaching of Parables," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, St. Louis, MO, October 14, 2005).

46. Papers in this topic may represent, more than any other particular group of papers, the EHS corpus engaging and building upon homiletical reflection from scholars in the Academy of Homiletics.
47. Topic key terms: 0.029*"paul" + 0.011*"spirit" + 0.008*"lord" + 0.007*"prophet" + 0.006*"luke" + 0.005*"proclaim" + 0.005*"holy_spirit" + 0.005*"sin" + 0.005*"john" + 0.005*"rebuke" + 0.005*"cor" + 0.005*"letter" + 0.005*"hearer" + 0.005*"ministry" + 0.005*"new_testament" + 0.005*"peter" + 0.004*"acts" + 0.004*"authority" + 0.004*"father" + 0.004*"jesus_christ" + 0.004*"spiritual" + 0.004*"apostle" + 0.004*"judgment" + 0.004*"believer" + 0.003*"kingdom"

Representative papers of this topic: Larry Overstreet, "A Pauline Theology of Preaching: Part 1," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Wake Forest, NC, October 15, 2004); Greg Scharf, "Was Bullinger Right?," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Wake Forest, NC, October 15, 2004); Shinchan Jeong, "Understanding the Letter to Philippians as a Secondary Form of Preaching," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Louisville, KY, October 16, 2015).
48. Topic key words: 0.027*"application" + 0.016*"passage" + 0.012*"old_testament" + 0.010*"big_idea" + 0.008*"law" + 0.008*"calvin" + 0.008*"audience" + 0.008*"explain" + 0.007*"exposition" + 0.007*"sin" + 0.007*"theme" + 0.007*"structure" + 0.007*"specific" + 0.007*"new_testament" + 0.006*"expository_preach" + 0.006*"method" + 0.006*"reference" + 0.006*"expository" + 0.006*"covenant" + 0.006*"outline" + 0.005*"obedience" + 0.005*"author" + 0.005*"verse" + 0.005*"imperative" + 0.005*"robinson."

Representative papers of this topic: C.J.H. Venter, "Expository Preaching: A Re-Evaluation for Today," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Deerfield, IL, October 18, 2002); Eric Price, "What is Moralistic Preaching? A Survey of Definitions and a Proposal for Preaching the Imperatives of Scripture," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Fort Worth, TX,

October 14, 2016); Brian Jones, "Teaching Students the Applicational Power of the Big Idea," (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Vancouver, BC, October 17, 2003).

49. These terms appear across the corpus with the following frequencies: God: 13869 times, preach: 10020, preacher: 9692, sermon: 9270, preaching: 6453, text: 6400, word: 6152, church: 5705, people: 5246, biblical: 4179, Christ: 4125, life: 3963, way: 3875, Jesus: 3438, Scripture: 3268. These terms do not appear within the individual topic term lists, since, as stated earlier, any term found in more than 65% of papers needed to be removed following lemmatization as those terms were too common to indicate a sub-topic within this corpus.

50. Some exceptions to this pattern include Timothy S. Warren, "Exploring Precursors to and Benefits of Abe Kuruvilla's 'Pericopal Theology,'" *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 15:1 (March 2015): 40-59; Jesse L. Nelson, "Anointed to Preach: A Response to Richard P. Bargas's paper presented at the 2013 annual conference, 'The Holy Spirit in the Pulpit: Attempting to Define Divine Unction,'" (paper presentation, The Evangelical Homiletics Society Conference, Wake Forest, NC, October 18, 2019); Russell St. John, "Big Ideas and Bad Ideas," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 20:1 (March 2020): 26-50.

Statistically speaking, it seems that the likelihood of a paper winning the Wilhite Award increases if it directly engages prior scholarship within the EHS corpus, and moreso if it proposes genre-sensitive preaching from the Psalms.

51. Scott M. Gibson and Gregory K. Hollifield, "Wanted: Catfish For Our Think Tank," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 22:1 (March 2022): 5-11.

52. These goals are found on the inside cover of *JEHS* journals, above the society's statement of faith.

53. Thanks are owed to Jonathan Gerber, Ph.D. for general advising on the data science aspects of this project, to Fr. Adam Gosnell for reading an earlier version of this paper, and to all scholars of EHS, past and present, on whose work this paper depends.

THE CURE FOR CONCEIT

Philippians 2:5-13

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed that there's often a big difference between what we want our reputation to be and what our reputation actually is? It's true of us as individuals, and it's also true of the Church. In the first few centuries of the Church's history, Christians were called atheists. Cannibals. An incestuous cult of "brothers and sisters." But in the second century, the great Christian apologist Tertullian said that he thought if a pagan were to bump into a group of Christians on the street, he would exclaim, "See how those Christians love one another and how they are ready to die for each other!" You see, there's a big difference between what Tertullian hoped the Church's reputation would be and what the Church's reputation often was to an outside perspective.

If you were to approach a stranger on the street today and ask him to describe the Church, what do you think he would say? Do you think he would applaud us for our love for one another and our allegiance to the Gospel? Probably not. What you would probably hear is something like this: the Church is full of hypocrites. Christians do not care about the poor or the sick or

the oppressed, only power. All they do is fight amongst themselves about things that don't matter!

FACING THE FACTS

We have to face the facts: all of those things are true at times. We *are* shaped by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and transformed by his grace. But we *are also* selfish, divided hypocrites. And this tension is the very fact that the Apostle Paul hoped to address in his letter to the Philippians.

Just prior to where our reading begins this morning, Paul implores his beloved brothers and sisters in Philippi to "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." Even in prison, Paul has caught wind that the reputation he wants for the Philippians is not matching up with what their reputation actually is. We learn early on in Philippians chapter 2 that these Philippians, like the rest of us, are sick. When we're left to our own devices, we fight and argue and nitpick each other to death, often about things that don't matter that much. We see the people who disagree with us or stand in our way as threatening, even if they sit two pews in front of us on Sunday mornings. And the reason we do this, Paul says, the reason that we are constantly at odds with each other and ourselves is because we're prone to what most translations call "conceit." Paul is saying that the threat to the Church's reputation isn't that we have differences of opinions or priorities or points of view. No, the threat to the Church's reputation is conceit. But "conceit" is something quite a bit more than simply being full of yourself or being cocky and arrogant—the literal meaning of the word Paul uses here is to be "empty of glory." And what does a glory-empty person want to do? They want to become *full* of glory! So they'll pursue whatever means necessary to fill their glory-cup—they'll scratch and claw and steamroll and argue until the cows come home if that's what it takes.

I witnessed this on display a few months ago when I was with my 18-month-old son at the Children's Museum. In every room at the museum, there is a "baby area" full of plush toys that

won't give you a concussion. If you know anything about my son, you know that this is the area I'd like for him to stay in until he's about 25. Anyway, David sat in the baby-area and watched his big sister play in the much bigger, much more dangerous, much more fun big-kid area. And I watched as David used another 18-month-old as a stepstool to hoist himself out of the baby area and into the big-kid area. This is conceit. David was so conceited, so hooked on his own agenda, so hungry for big-kid glory that he used another kid as a ladder to reach his goal.

So, what's the cure to this sickness the Philippians and David and the rest of us have? Well, Paul tells us: have the mind of Jesus. And what does it look like to have the mind of Jesus? Again, Paul tells us: the mind of Jesus is shaped by utterly unselfish humility. The cure to the sickness of conceit is humility. Let me say that again. The cure to conceit is humility. And the only way to truly wrap our minds around what humility looks like is to look at Jesus.

So, Paul puts Jesus's humility on display for the Philippians and on display for us, so that we can see how humility cures conceit. So, if you have your Bibles, let's look at this text together, starting in verse 5:

Paul says, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." Jesus bore the *form* of God so completely that the author of Hebrews tells us that if we want to know what God is like, we can look at the Son. Jesus is *like* God in every way, but he did not consider this "equality with God" as "a thing to be grasped," or, in other words, a thing to be exploited or taken advantage of.

During the long season of lockdown, Charles and I spent a lot of time watching Netflix. One of the shows that we watched during this time was *The Crown,* which is a slightly fictionalized account of the British royal family. Talk about exploiting your status. In one episode, the Queen of England schedules individual lunches with each of her children to determine which one is her favorite. And you watch as it dawns on her in each progressive scene that all four of her children are conceited brats.

And this goes way, way back through all the royal bloodlines, all the way back to the first King—Adam—who was given the authority to govern over the Garden of Eden. In his desire to "be like God, knowing good and evil," Adam exploits his status through selfish ambition and conceit, and the rest of us have followed in his footsteps ever since. But Jesus, Paul says, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Although Jesus knew his true reputation as an equal to God, he embodied humility in his refusal to exploit it.

Let's read on, starting in v. 6, "He did not count equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." Jesus was the one person who ever lived who was entitled to all the glory the world could possibly offer, and he was the one person who ever lived who is said to have emptied himself of glory. Jesus emptied himself, submitting to a life as a frail human being, and a life of a slave. And we human beings really are slaves, aren't we? We're enslaved to things like our appetites and our aging process and our disordered passions and the weather. And yet the one who was in the beginning with God embodies humility by *descending* from the highest possible glory for us and for our salvation.

And in v. 8, Paul shows us just how far down Jesus descended for us: "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." I can imagine that Paul's audience in Philippi would shudder at hearing this verse. There is no greater humiliation and no greater shame than to be executed on a Roman cross, hung out as a spectacle to be mocked and tortured in front of a jeering crowd. Jesus surrendered his power and reputation to the point of death on a cross.

But it is in that very shame, that very humiliation, that Jesus's true glory is on full display. It is in the humility of the cross that Jesus secures salvation for those who turn to him in faith—the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. And so, Paul writes in v. 9, that in response to Jesus's humility, "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on

him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

It isn't a conceited, glory-hungry lord who is exalted to the right hand of the Father, and it is not hard for us to imagine what a conceited, glory-hungry lord looks like. But it is the humble Lamb of God who is exalted—the one who intentionally emptied himself of glory, revealing that the way to glorification is the way of humility. And having made this beautiful, poetic, and compelling case that humility is the cure for conceit, Paul turns back to the Philippians in v. 12: "Therefore, my beloved…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In order to abandon conceit, to abandon our selfish agenda, to abandon our disordered desire to be approved of and magnified and exalted, we are to live out our salvation before a watching world by taking on the very mind of Christ and humbling ourselves. But that command should terrify us—it *should* cause us to fear and tremble—because we know that we are sick! And at times, the cure of humility seems so far-off and unattainable that we fear we may be sick and conceited forever.

But thanks be to God, Paul ends this admonishment by reminding us that the cure to our sickness rests outside of ourselves—we can only imitate Jesus's humility if we have Jesus's mind. But this is not something you are responsible for conjuring up in yourself. By God's grace, through faith, you have been freely given the mind of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now, does this mean you'll never experience the temptation of conceit ever again? I can say from personal experience that it absolutely does not. But God is continuously at work in you, establishing the humility of our Lord Jesus, who loves you and who humbled himself for you.

V. 13, "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." It is God's *good pleasure*, my friends, to work in you, giving you both the desire and the ability to imitate Jesus, because he loves you. And so, when you find yourself turning away from conceit, from insisting on your own

way, from scrounging around for fading, temporary glory, it is God at work in you. It is God's good pleasure to cure you from the sickness of conceit through the humility of the cross.

CONCLUSION

In the end, the reputation given to us as sons and daughters of God in Christ Jesus is far superior to any reputation we could achieve by our conceited quest for glory. In the end, it is not a power-hungry dictator who rules the day, it's a servant-king, who rode a donkey into Jerusalem and died the death of a criminal for the sake of those who yelled, "Crucify him, crucify him!" And it is he, and he alone, who can bring life where there is only death, light where there is only darkness, and humility that cures the sickness of conceit. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.

ABOUT REV. BREE SNOW: I spent the first twenty-two years of my life in the self-titled "small town masquerading as a big city," Jackson, Tennessee. When I was one week old, I was baptized at St. Mary's Catholic Church. As the Book of Common Prayer states, at that moment I was "sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever." My life has been defined by this easy yoke. I graduated from Union University in May 2015, married Charles in June 2015, moved to Phoenix in August 2015, and learned that we were expecting our sweet and gregarious daughter (Nora Rae) in December 2015. I am glad to say that life has slowed considerably since. We began attending Christ Church Anglican shortly after I started seminary in 2017 and were confirmed into the ACNA in April 2018. In 2020, Charles and I welcomed a beautiful boy (David Charles) into our family. By God's grace, I was ordained as a Transitional Deacon in the Diocese of Western Anglicans in June 2022 and hope to be ordained to the Presbyterate within the next year. I will graduate with my MDiv from Phoenix Seminary this December.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., former president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary used to quip, "I'm not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I work for a non-profit organization." I stand before you today not as a prophet, but more as a prompter, someone who's at the side or even out of sight reminding people of things they already know.

Twenty-five years ago, the first Evangelical Homiletics Society was held on the Hamilton, Massachusetts campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. We were a smaller group then, maybe about twenty-five persons—men and women looking to set a new direction for evangelical homiletics.

Ten months before that first founding meeting of our society, Keith Willhite and I bumped into each other at an Academy of Homiletics meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico. We proceeded to map out a plan for an organization that more appropriately met our needs theologically—and would open the door not only to professors of preaching in seminaries but also those who taught homiletics in Bible Colleges, as well as pastors who taught preaching adjunctively. We shared this vision with a

few others who were with us at the meeting, including Timothy Warren, Endel Lee, Grant Lovejoy, and others.

Keith Willhite (1958-2003) and I divided up the work and contacted professors of preaching in evangelical seminaries and Bible Colleges, setting our sights on gathering in October of 1997 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Desiring wise guidance, we enlisted the distinguished evangelical leader, Dr. Vernon Grounds (1914-2010), at that time Chancellor at Denver Seminary as one of the plenary speakers for that inaugural meeting. He set the tone for the gathering speaking on "Some Reflections on Pulpit Rhetoric."[1]

My intention for these few moments is not to bore you with the lore of the long ago and far away beginnings of our society. Instead, as a prompter, I want to remind us of what and who we are as a society as we look to the future.

Let me remind ourselves of who we are:

> The Evangelical Homiletics Society is an academic society formed for the exchange of ideas related to the instruction of biblical preaching. The purpose of the Society is to advance the cause of biblical preaching through the promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching; to increase competence for teachers of preaching; to integrate the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology; to make scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics.[2]

This statement was carefully crafted in 1997 by those who attended the first meeting—and it is the guide-star for our future as well. This purpose statement will shape my promptings to all of us as we consider the life and work of our society in the coming years. As we look back on twenty-five years, we look forward to God's intended future for us, and I am here to remind us of who we are as we set our sights on the future.

PROMPT ONE: WE ARE AN ACADEMIC SOCIETY

Our commitment as a society is to scholarly engagement for the field of homiletics. We are scholars—who are also practitioners. We are called to be thinkers, occupying ourselves with critical study in the field of preaching. Additionally, our connection to educational institutions is vital for credible academic impact in the development of homiletics. Who is going to wrestle with the issues of biblical interpretation, theology, culture, congregational studies, technology, psychology, sociology, medicine and so much more as it relates to preaching—if we do not?

Therefore, the call for us is to find ways to continue to develop and deepen our scholarship—as demonstrated in our conference themes, speakers, conference papers, journal, and publications of our members, including masters and doctoral level research. Let me remind and encourage our members to push each other toward academic excellence.

For those members who are pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy degree, there is an already established incentive toward academic excellence through the Emerging Scholars Grant. Not only is there financial incentive associated with this award, but publication in *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* is part of this recognition.

The Evangelical Homiletics Society Board has adopted a list of initiatives that will be implemented over the next few years, including a research grant and a thinktank for research fellows. Another initiative is a distinguished dissertation in preaching award as well as a distinguished doctor of ministry thesis project in preaching. The intention is to promote the scholarship in homiletics to which we claim we are committed.

We are an academic society and if we are going to make a difference in the field of homiletics, we want to remind ourselves about our task as we engage our best thinking in and for the field of homiletics.

PROMPT TWO: WE WANT TO PROMOTE THE EXPLORATION OF THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY AS IT RELATES TO HOMILETICS

Continued engagement in the areas of biblical interpretation and preaching is a hallmark for this society that we want to continue. One encouraging expression of this engagement with biblical interpretation and preaching is the collaboration that has taken place between the members of the society's Biblical Genre Study Group. So far, the study group has produced three publications: Kenneth J. Langley's *How to Preach the Psalms*, Jared E. Alcántara's *How to Preach Proverbs*, and Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *How to Preach Narrative*.[3]

As indicated in the Nathan Wright and Alison Gerber paper presented at this year's conference, our scholarship in the area of preaching biblical books has been limited. Although we have spent a healthy amount of time exploring a few biblical books, including Psalms, Proverbs, 2 Samuel, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, let me challenge members to engage in the intersection of homiletics in the remaining books in the Old and New Testaments. Consider the potential yield of rich scholarship that would result if we put our minds to occupying our efforts in this area of scholarly and practical advancement.

Not only are there biblical vistas to explore, but also theological frontiers to investigate. The Wright and Gerber paper demonstrates that the study of theology and homiletics has not been a strong area of emphasis for our society. Certainly, there are theological categories and hermeneutical lenses through which we do our work. But it might be the case that we have not specifically focused our attention on a robust encounter with homiletical theological projects. As a society, we want to push ourselves into this vista. There is much that can be said about the theological contours in evangelical homiletics. Perhaps it is time for us to explore more intentionally this area of inquiry.

PROMPT THREE: WE WANT TO DEVELOP CAPABLE TEACHERS OF PREACHING

For the professor of homiletics, there is yet more to explore in the area of pedagogy than what we have studied as a society. We have touched the hem of the garment when it comes to the examination of pedagogy. Yes, we have engaged with modern and ancient rhetoric, have examined one or two teachers of homiletics, and even surveyed preaching textbooks.

It is apparent, however, that the topic of pedagogy (andragogy, if you prefer) is ripe for examination. How are instructors of preaching to function as competent teachers when one does not know basic educational philosophy behind the task of instruction? What does good pedagogy look like? What does it mean to teach a skill? How does one teach a skill? Are there particular aspects from the field of education that will help in teaching homiletics from which we can discover that would benefit one's teaching? What are the areas of comparative study of teaching homiletics that will make instruction meaningful and rich?

These and other angles beg for exploration and expansion for our society. We have the opportunity to make significant contributions to educational pedagogy if we put our minds to it, enriching the classroom experience and deepening the scholarship of this particular angle of educating students.

To encourage the expansion of the investigation of pedagogy, the society, is intending to introduce an award for the best paper on pedagogy at our yearly meetings, to put front and center the importance of teaching. Additionally, the board is exploring an excellence in teaching award to be given on occasion to members of the society. Beginning this year, a Pedagogy and Preaching Study Group was initiated to further the examination of the task of teaching preaching.

Instruction is a hallmark component of our society, and we want to push the boundaries of this important aspect of our DNA.

PROMPT FOUR: WE WANT TO ENGAGE WITH VARIOUS FIELDS OF INQUIRY TO MAKE BETTER THE PREACHING TASK

In an editorial in the March 2022 edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society,* Gregory K. Hollifield and I set out to remind ourselves as a society that although we have made advances in our scholarship in these last twenty-five years, we want to commit ourselves "to be an engaging, thoughtful, biblical, intellectually-stretching think tank that makes a difference in the teaching of homiletics, the theology of homiletics, the intersection of various disciplines with homiletics, the practice of homiletics—and so much more. There are vistas of potential research for established scholars as well as burgeoning student-scholars in this ever-expanding field of homiletics."[4]

The thoughtful paper presented at this year's conference by Nathan Wright and Alison Gerber on "What's Our Big Idea?: Analyzing the Academic Corpus of the Evangelical Homiletics Society," reveals some of the strengths and opportunities for further study for our society—in our conference themes, papers written and presented, in the study groups we develop, in the articles published in the journal.

The seventeen topics presented in this paper reveals areas where as a society we have placed our scholarly attention—and this study conducted by Wright and Gerber challenges us to consider ways we can make advances in our scholarship by engaging areas of inquiry into which we as evangelicals might be best to speak—and possibly need to speak. The areas the authors of this paper call our society to consider include expanding the study of preaching and biblical books, various culture preaching traditions, an expansion of historical studies in preaching, preaching and technology, among others.

Such studies do not exclude the practical places of inquiry necessary in the preaching task. Ours need not simply be a "how to" approach only, but also asking the question, "how come?" We want to dig further into the layers of why and how in the

application of homiletics so that we might ultimately assist the church in the task of preaching. But it takes hard work. Careful thinking. Diligent research. And, a willingness to explore areas that might not be immediately apparent.

PROMPT FIVE: WE WANT TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD OF HOMILETICS

This last prompt is the obvious ultimate restatement of what I have been advocating in this brief gaze into the future—we have the capacity to continue to advance our position as contributing to the wider field of homiletics, on various levels.

Let me be quick to say that over the last twenty-five years members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society have been prodigious in the writing of books—on any given area of homiletical research. These contributions are immense and are not to go unnoticed, even suggesting that a study be conducted on the books Evangelical Homiletics Society members have produced since our inception. Additionally, a study of the contributions that members have made to *Preaching Magazine*, PreachingToday.com, and other publications is worth considering. Such studies would demonstrate and document the wide impact of our society in publishing and in the church.

In recognition of book publication inside and outside our society, I am pleased to introduce the Evangelical Homiletics Society Book of the Year Awards, under the supervision of the Book Review Editor of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*. This is yet another board initiated prompt to engender further advancement of the field.

We gather around a collective commitment to make significant contributions to the field of homiletics.

We gather around a common commitment to a well-considered duty to advance our discipline, the field of homiletics.

We gather around a shared commitment to an evangelical expression of Christianity as conveyed in our faith statement.

We gather around a mutual commitment to scholarly engagement that will be rigorous and adventurous—all the while keeping connection to the church constantly in view.

We gather around a collective desire to make a difference in the teaching of our students which will ultimately have an impact for Christ in the church at large.

CONCLUSION

Let me bring my time with you to a close with a few reflections. First, all glory goes to our gracious God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for what he has done in our society these past twenty-five-years. We have much for which to be thankful. We have grown from a handful of charter members at the beginning to over four-hundred strong, from all over the world. Can we and should we expand our tent pegs to include more homileticians from across the globe? Definitely yes. This year's conference, I trust, is only the beginning.

Second, as for members of our society, we can celebrate that we have seen increased inclusion of men and women of various ethnicities and from different denominations and expressions of evangelicalism. But we do not want to rejoice too much, for we have more work to do to encourage women and minorities to feel welcome and provide pathways for engagement and expression.

Third, we want to hold firmly to our commitment to the gospel, to our evangelical distinctives as we have done so till now and on into the future. This dedication demonstrates our unique perspective and responsibility.

Keith Willhite and I, and those who gathered around this idea of an evangelical homiletics professional society, would never have imagined where we are today. Thank you all for your commitment to the purposes of this society. Thank you for your

investment in your students and congregations. To the elder statespersons of this organization, thank you for your dedicated engagement in scholarship all these years, and to those who have joined this sojourner along the way, thank you for willingness to carry forward the purposes and principles of our beloved society, which is in all of our hands.

These past twenty-five years have been remarkable for us as a society. The growth that has been prompted in scholarship, the meaningful relationships, the impact of the society upon our respective schools and churches, and upon the guild of homiletics gives us much for which we can be thankful. The next twenty-five years, I trust, will see continued expansion on all levels.

Are there challenges? Of course. Haddon Robinson used to say, "for every silver lining there's a cloud." Theological education is experiencing tectonic shifts on all levels, not the least of which preaching and practical theology in some institutions. Some schools are reducing faculty in our field. But there are bright spots that demonstrate that all is not stormy—and, we can leverage the opportunity to speak into this conversation, if we are willing.

When the society celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, I will be an old man of ninety—if I live that long and the Lord tarries. For now, I want to say that it has been my privilege to walk with you all this far in the homiletical journey. Being part of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is one of the most treasured portions of my life. You all are like family to me, a special breed of scholars who have made a difference in the lives of your schools, in the lives of your congregations, in the lives of students, in the lives of fellow homiletical sages, and beyond our guild to the wider guild—and you have made an immeasurable difference in my life, in my thinking, living, and scholarship as well, and I thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity to prompt you this afternoon, to invite you to join me to push our discipline even further. For I am confident that you will continue to do that for each other now, and into the future.

NOTES

1. Vernon C. Grounds, "Some Reflections on Pulpit Rhetoric," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 1:1 (December 2001): 4-14.
2. Stated on the Evangelical Homiletics website and in the society's journal. See: https://ehomiletics.org
3. Kenneth J. Langley, *How to Preach the Psalms* (Dallas: Fontes, 2021); Jared E. Alcántara, *How to Preach Proverbs* (Dallas: Fontes, 2022); Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *How to Preach Narrative* (Dallas: Fontes, 2022); and Andrew C. Thompson, *How to Preach the Prophets* ((Dallas: Fontes, 2023).
4. Scott M. Gibson and Gregory K. Hollifield, "Wanted: Catfish for Our Think Tank," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 22:21 (March 2022): 8-9.

THE SIDES OF PREACHING

1 Timothy 4:11-16

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever worn anything inside out? Sometimes we'll put on a sweatshirt inside out because we like it that way, or it has paint or spots on the outside, so we wear it inside out. At other times, we wear articles of clothing inside out unintentionally.

That happened to my sister, Jeanine. She got herself dressed for a day of grocery shopping and general errand running. She didn't realize until she got home later that day and looked at herself in the mirror that her blouse was inside out. Over the course of the day she ran into her former mailman, Scott, at the grocery store. She saw some neighbors and other friends—all the while wearing a blouse that was turned inside out. "Everybody could see the raw edges of the blouse because it was turned inside out," she detailed. "I didn't know when I dressed myself in the morning that in the afternoon, I'd find that I had made my rounds with a blouse that was inside out."

Inside out and outside in—that's how we live our lives, and that's how we live our lives as preachers, isn't it? People—even our listeners—can see who we are on the outside and who

we are on the inside. They can see the raw edges of our lives or the smooth seams of God's grace in how we live and who we are.

This was Paul's message of encouragement to Timothy as he was eager to navigate life as he served as preacher at the church in Ephesus. Paul reminds Timothy that church at Ephesus wasn't an easy church to pastor. There were heresies and resistances that Timothy would have to engage with wisdom and grace. Paul was reminding Timothy that as their preacher, the church was exposed to his inside and outside self.

We may not realize it for ourselves, but we have—our preaching has—an outside and an inside feature to it. We see this displayed in the text this morning. Please turn to 1 Timothy 4:11-16, that's 1 Timothy 4:11-16. As I read the text, try to find with me the outside and inside dimensions of preaching. That's 1 Timothy 4:11-16:

> Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

What does this text tell us about the sides of preaching? It tells us that preaching is outside in.

PREACHING IS OUTSIDE IN

Paul tells Timothy that people are watching him. At the front end (vs 12) and at the back end of this passage (vss 15-16) Timothy is told to be an example to those who are watching him—and is commanded to preach what he's been taught. Paul even tells him

that who he is has an impact on those who hear him preach (vs 16).

Timothy is to be an example to those watching him (vs 12). He is to be an example in everyday speech—observed by those looking from the outside in. He is to be an example in his conduct, his life—scrutinized by those who are looking from the outside in. He is to be an example in love—in his personal life—watched by those who are looking from the outside in. He is to be an example in faith—his personal faith—seen by those who are looking from the outside in. He is to be an example in purity—sexually—which has public consequences—seen by those who are looking from the outside in.

As an example of faith in Christ, Timothy is to show that who he is and what he preaches is different from those who are trying to undo the Ephesian church with their heresies. Earlier in chapter 4 Paul outlines the silly myths and heresy that are infecting the church—food, marriage, myths, deceptions. Timothy is to lead in the reading of Scripture, in preaching, and in teaching (vs. 13). Through his example and preaching, Timothy is to show a distinct contrast from the troublemakers in the Ephesian church and the pure gospel of God.

Timothy is to be careful with the gift given to him all the while demonstrating to the church his progress—his spiritual maturity—because it's an outside in public journey (vs 15). Why?

People are watching us. The community is watching us. You may not think that people in your community know who you are—oh, but they do.

I served in a little mountain community of 1,200 people. They knew who I was. Walking down the sidewalk I caught the eye of townspeople who said to me, "Hello pastor." I wasn't their pastor, but these folks knew that I was the pastor of First Baptist Church. It got really personal. I went into the drugstore one day and Marie was unpacking a box of merchandise to shelve as she sat behind the counter. She looked up and saw me enter the store and said in loud voice that seemed as if she was on a loudspeaker as others were milling around the store, "Hello Scott! Your deodorant is on sale!" It suddenly occurred to me that I was being

watched even to the point of her remembering the brand of deodorant I used.

The church where we preach or serve is watching us. The congregation encounters you not only on Sunday morning, but in your office, at ballgames, or in the grocery store. They see how you act and interact—they watch your life and the way you live. They are looking for a person who demonstrates a maturing model of faithfulness in Christ as it is tested in the relationships inside the church building or out in the community. They square your life with what you teach.

Our students and colleagues are watching us. In the classroom or in the faculty meeting, students and colleagues are watching us. Students, faculty and staff members see you in full display every day as you engage with them. They ask, "Does what he or she teach match up with how he or she lives?" You might not think it matters how you conduct yourself in public—but it does. Preaching is outside in. If preaching is outside in, we also see from this text that preaching is inside out.

PREACHING IS INSIDE OUT

Paul tells Timothy that he is to watch himself. The elements that shape the contours of his life in speech, life, love, faith, and purity stem from inside him, his character (vs 12). Timothy's publicly viewed self is only supported by private self-diligence. Paul reiterates this in vs 16: "Watch your life closely" or, "guard yourself." Paul knew that the personal world of the preacher could have catastrophic consequences on Timothy's public world.

Timothy's confidence is to be in who God has called him to be and not shaped by what others might think of him, even the elders (vs 12). Timothy was called by God to teach and preach—confirmed by the elders who laid their hands on him, a tradition practiced by rabbis (vs 14). He has the gifts to perform his task as pastor (vs 14). Paul was reminding Timothy to watch himself because preaching is inside out. Preaching goes from the inside to the outside.

Nurturing an inside life that's consistent with our outside self is always a challenge. In a culture that models sloppy speech, considers wrecked lives as virtuous, understands love as sex, celebrates faith in oneself, and laughs at purity—where are our models, our heroes? I mention three.

First, John Stott scholar, author, and pastor at All Souls Church, London, was single all his life. He displayed in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity that preaching is inside out. His ministry was without controversy for he endeavored to model Christ.

Second, Robert Smith pastor, author, and professor at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, has been a faithful husband, father, much beloved pastor and professor. He displays in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity that preaching is inside out. Through his living, writing, and teaching Robert Smith serves as an example of Christ.

Third, Marnie Crumpler, senior pastor of Grace Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is a faithful wife, mother, and beloved pastor. She displays in her speech, life, love, faith, and purity that preaching is inside out. She led her church through a tremendously difficult time as they moved from one denomination to another and serves as an example of Christ.

Yet, on the other hand Mark didn't have a handle on himself—he didn't watch himself. Mark started out as a youth pastor. Almost from the beginning he thought he was an exception to the traditional path to training for pastoral ministry. His pride got in the way, and he thought he could elbow his way forward to ministry without the usual educational pathway. He thought that getting to know one of his female youth group members was innocent—till he got her pregnant and was forced to leave the church and moved from one coast to the other. Even there he didn't learn his lesson. Watching himself wasn't something he took seriously.

Once, when preaching on sexual temptation from the pulpit at yet a different church, Mark carelessly said, "When I look at some of you women in the congregation I lust after you."

Soon, the leadership called a meeting and Mark was fired. He then founded his own church, but his troubles didn't stop there. In the end Mark wrecked the life of a young girl, his own two marriages, and the lives of hearers in at least three churches. Let me assure you, preaching is inside out. What we see from this text and what it's underscoring for us is this preaching is outside in and inside out.

PREACHING IS OUTSIDE IN AND INSIDE OUT

This outside-inside feature of preaching is wrapped up in Paul's final words. He tells Timothy, "Watch your life and your doctrine closely (vs 16)." The inside and outside nature of preaching is considered in one's conduct and one's teaching—and the impact it has on one's hearers. Paul underscores that if Timothy is diligent in tending to his life and preaching, he will persevere and his listeners will persevere, too (vs 16). What one preaches is clearly connected to the character of the preacher and is directly connected to one's listeners.

We are to be examples—types—models—molds—into which others can press their faith. Paul told the Corinthians to "follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). He tells the Philippians the same thing (Phil. 3:17). Paul tells Titus "in everything set an example by doing what is good" (Titus 2:7). Jesus reminds his followers to "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven."

Like it or not, preaching is outside in and inside out. Not only is it the case that our listeners are watching us and we are to watch our lives, but we also don't want to avoid the fact that the Lord is watching us.

Our lives are scrutinized by the Sovereign Lord. Every word will be judged (Matt. 12:36). All will appear before the judgment seat of God (2 Cor. 5:10). The Lord is watching us (Jer. 1:12).

After I came to faith in Christ at age fourteen, I was discipled by a country Baptist church that had evening Drive-In

Church services during the summer months. One Sunday evening a gospel group stood before the lined-up cars with the loudspeakers filled with the piano player's tune. Then the base singer belted out: "He's got his eye on you; he's got his eye on you; hears what you say, sees what you do; he's got his eye you." The Lord watches us. Our hearers watch us and we are to watch ourselves—which makes for wholistic preaching. Preaching is outside in and inside out.

CONCLUSION

Yes, preaching is outside in and inside out. No matter if your life is on display with your sweatshirt, blouse or shirt turned inside out, or outside in, our hearers are watching us and we are called to watch our lives.

It's the same today as it was when the church was being formed, as preachers we're called to be an example—an example, a model for Christ, and by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit we can.

Preaching is outside in and inside out.

BOOK REVIEWS

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Called to Preach: Fulfilling the High Calling of Expository Preaching. By Steven J. Lawson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 978-0-8010-9486-6, 203 pp., $18.99.

Reviewer: *Nicholas B. Marnejon, Community Christian Fellowship, Edmonds, WA.*

Lawson opens with a bang when he states, "Preachers are not made—they are born" (13). Depending on one's theological and ecclesiastical beliefs, disagreement might begin with the opening sentence, but it gets one's attention. Grabbing the reader's attention is what this book does.

Lawson is passionate about preaching and seeks to remind his readers about the dire need for strong preaching today. "In every generation, the church of Jesus Christ rises or falls with its pulpit" (9). Members of this Society would concur. Lawson continues: "[T]his book is a serious look at the Scripture itself and consults the giants of church history to answer questions such as: Who should preach? What should preaching look like? How should we prepare our sermons? How should we deliver them to honor God?" (11) That is a lot of ground to cover in two hundred pages. Lawson does so, albeit at an introductory level.

The first three chapters cover the who and the why of preaching, emphasizing the call of preaching, the proclamation of the word, and the exaltation of the Lord. Chapters four and five overview the steps to preparing sermons. Chapters six

through eight discuss the act of preaching and how to get better at it. The book closes by reminding preachers to pursue personal holiness and choose the narrow path of preaching, the one laid out in this book.

The strength of *Called to Preach* lies in its breadth and Scripture-centeredness. Lawson covers the essentials of preaching, including some minutiae, even going so far as to encourage modern preachers to improve their craft by transcribing the sermons of great preachers. Readers will enjoy his word-by-word walk through many of the key pastoral texts in the New Testament.

The book's deficiencies, if one might be so bold to call them that, result from its overall tone. This is not a comprehensive reference work. In its attempt to cover so much ground, it leaves out details that would be helpful to new or non-seminary trained preachers. For instance, in the chapter on sermon preparation, Lawson encourages preachers to secure study tools like commentaries, Bible dictionaries, systematic theologies, and so on (76). Unfortunately, no specific recommendations are given. Lawson does say that those who have been to Bible college or seminary probably already have these tools. But what if the reader hasn't? Given the nature of the book, one would think that an audience of new or "repentant" preachers would benefit from a list of recommended sources. Similarly, the inclusion of a sample sermon outline would have been useful in Lawson's discussion, especially since it seems that he encourages the writing of the outline as one manuscripts, not before (101-2).

Secondly, though his use of Greek is to be appreciated, Lawson comes dangerously close to some root-word fallacies and verb tense issues (185, 189). This would not be a real problem if it were not for the fact that he utilizes the understanding of Greek words and tenses to support his case.

Lastly, though filled with powerful quotations about preaching, his sources are hardly "the giants of church history"—unless the reader's idea of giants be confined to the Reformed, post-Reformation section of church history. No John

Chrysostom? Gregory of Nazianzus? Augustine of Hippo? A few quotes from these giants would have helped even out the book.

So, how does the homiletician utilize this book? It would probably fit in a first-year preaching course, introducing nascent preachers to the weighty responsibility of preaching. One might also give it to a hungry disciple who is feeling "called" to preach, perhaps affirming or contesting that calling.

Preaching the Manifold Grace of God: Theologies of Preaching in Historical Theological Families, *Volume 1*. By Ronald J. Allen, editor. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-7252-5961-4, 360 pp., $41.00.

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

In *Preaching the Manifold Grace of God: Theologies of Preaching in Historical Theological Families*, Ronald J. Allen curates the first volume in a two-part series on theologies of preaching and their impact on practice. Allen has authored or co-authored more than forty books along with nearly one hundred book chapters and articles. In 2019, Allen retired from Christian Theological Seminary (Indianapolis, IN) where he taught preaching for thirty-seven years (1982–2019). This two-volume publication along with other forthcoming projects show Allen's ongoing commitment to maintaining an active ministry of writing about preaching.

Taken together, the two volumes feature thirty contributions from homileticians. The second volume, which will be reviewed in a future issue of this Journal, contains eighteen essays on theologies of preaching in "contemporary theological movements" in the twenty-first century (xi). The volume reviewed here, volume 1, contains twelve essays that explore theologies of preaching from a historical-theological perspective: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican/Episcopal, Wesleyan, Baptist, African American,

Stone-Campbell, Friends, and Pentecostal traditions. Each essay follows a similar structure: tracing historical developments, considering core ideas in the tradition, connecting ideas to contemporary practices of preaching, exploring promising themes for the future, and evaluating the strengths and limitations of the tradition represented. Eleven of the twelve essays link themselves to denominational movements. One essay on African American preaching names a "particular history that transcends the boundaries of the other theological families" (x).

In his introduction, Allen lays out four interrelated goals for readers. First, preachers must understand that, whether they are conscious of it or not, "[p]reaching is a thoroughly theological act" that impacts how they understand God, the sermon, texts, listeners, and responses from listeners (ix). Theology touches every aspect of preaching theory and practice. Second, diversity of interpretation produces multiple theologies of preaching rather than one singular theology of preaching. "There is no universal theology of preaching," Allen writes. "Instead, there are multiple approaches to the theology of preaching" (ix). These theological differences impact the preparation, delivery, and reception of sermons. Third, many of today's preachers suffer from "historical amnesia" concerning their theological heritage. They do not excavate their theological identities in such a way as to link them to their homiletical practices. Allen hopes both volumes will lead to preachers "becoming more aware of their distinct heritages and thinking critically about aspects to preserve as well as dimensions that are better set aside" (xi). Fourth, as churches coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic gather once again to strategize about preaching in the future, their commitments to the careful excavation of their historical-theological locations, critiques of practices that are no longer fitting to the times, and ideas for reimagining the future can contribute to "the renewal of God's transforming purposes through the church" (xiv).

As a result of reading this book, pastors who learned to preach in a church with a strong denominational identity and attended a seminary with a strong denominational affiliation will

benefit from learning more about their history and heritage. They will better understand why they and their communities do what they do. Also, pastors with various knowledge gaps in their understanding of denominational preaching will benefit from the rich diversity of traditions represented, especially the contributions on smaller Protestant denominations and non-Protestant traditions. For instance, the book helped the reviewer close knowledge gaps on Stone-Campbell preaching in Protestantism and Orthodox and Catholic preaching in the wider Christian tradition.

Some readers may struggle with reading a 300-plus-page book that centers on denominational histories, ideas, and patterns in preaching if they do not also maintain a special interest in studying the histories, perspectives, and possibilities for twelve historical theological families. They may lose interest. Perhaps they would benefit most from treating the book as a reference text rather than reading it from cover to cover. Other readers that do not identify strongly with a denominational-theological home, especially those coming from non-denominational settings, might struggle to navigate the landscape if their traditions, experiences, and theologies are not as clear-cut or easy to trace. That stated, most (if not all) readers will come away from reading this volume with new knowledge about an ecclesial tradition that is unfamiliar to them.

This book helps preaching pastors close knowledge gaps, locate themselves theologically, understand different preaching traditions, and deepen their knowledge of homiletical history. It also helps preaching professors coach their preaching students better because it highlights connections between students' denominational identities and their patterns in preaching. In addition to its pedagogical benefits, the book in its entirety or selections from the book serve as a helpful resource in homiletics courses on hermeneutics, the history of preaching, or the theology of preaching.

Oil Enough to Make the Journey: Sermons on the Christian Walk. By Jack R. Lundbom. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-6667-0045-9, 198 pp., $27.00.

Reviewer: *Mark Drinnenberg, Retired Pastor, McHenry IL.*

Oil Enough to Make the Journey is a collection of thirty-two sermons preached across Jack Lundbom's long career as a pastor and professor in the Evangelical Covenant Church. These messages, delivered in various settings across America and abroad, span the years 1965-2010. They are arranged in five categories: Walking with a Hidden and Revealed God, Understanding the Christian Walk, Being Faithful in the Christian Walk, Stages of the Christian Walk, and Walking with Wisdom.

Each chapter consists entirely of one sermon and its biblical text. The sermons are topical in style. Lundbom's approach is certainly not expository. Rather, he pulls a devotional or applicational thought from the text and summarizes the whole text so that his focused thought is seen in its context. The bulk of each sermon consists of its illustrations, at which Lundbom is a master. His uses of history, contemporary culture, world events, personal experiences, and biblical cross-references are engaging, informative, and repeatedly serve to set up his conclusions, which are often quick and to the point.

Theologically, Lundbom is fairly solid but does say a few things that some readers might find troubling. For instance, he makes a reference to "Second Isaiah" (126), which suggests a view of that book that is often held by people on the theological left. While such a view (if it is his view) would not necessarily say anything about his faith, it might raise a few evangelical eyebrows. In another instance, he refers to God's *worrying* "not a little about our faith in his ability to vindicate and to save" (110), which seems a weak view of God (though his intended meaning may be merely anthropomorphic). Also, he speaks of Jesus

knowing "his limits" when "he does not try to turn stones into bread or jump off the temple roof" (121), as if Jesus refrained from doing those things because he lacked the ability rather than because He was adhering to the Scriptures ("It is written…"). Does this suggest a view of Jesus as being less than God? Not necessarily, for elsewhere, Lundbom states that "the babe in the manger is at once a human child and the God of all creation" (38).

One of Lundbom's comments about the Bible's inerrancy may or may not be concerning. He says disparagingly, "I have met some who argue that because the Holy Spirit inspires Scripture there can be no imperfections in the biblical text" (16). He follows this up with, "Such people know nothing about ancient texts and their history of transmission" (16). It could be that he agrees with a common evangelical view on inerrancy that, while the original documents of Scripture (though we do not have them) are inerrant by virtue of their inspiration by the Holy Spirit, subsequent copies do contain some differences because of the transmission issues Lundbom raises. If he agrees with such a view, a clarification would be helpful so that his disparaging comment might not cause readers to doubt the trustworthiness of their Bibles. It should be noted that Lundbom does handle the Scriptures as if they are the authoritative word of God. For instance, a sermon from Revelation 3 states, "The message of Revelation comes through John…but the speaker is really the resurrected and glorified Christ, who addresses the seven churches from the heavenly throne" (65).

In a sermon titled "Love Is Something You Do," Lundbom states: "Today the common gospel is 'If it feels good do it,' or 'What feels good has to be right.' But this [sic] not the gospel taught in the Bible…. For Jeremiah, as for other prophets, loving God was doing what he least wanted to do—preaching what people did not want to hear; exposing himself to danger, persecution and death; suffering shame; and more" (90). In a sermon from Matthew 11:28-30, Lundbom declares: "How important to know that we are owned by a benevolent master and beholden to him. How important to read the Bible and study it. It is not enough to be able to quote a verse from here or there.

One must read the whole Bible, which takes time and work" (48). Good stuff!

Lundbom's sermons are easy to read. Each is 3-6 pages long and builds to a single application. As such, they are well-suited for use in one's devotions. The book could also be assigned in homiletics courses to provide examples of topical, well-illustrated sermons that differ from the oft-used format of proposition, multiple main points, conclusion.

Preaching by Heart: How a Classical Practice Helps Contemporary Pastors to Preach without Notes. By Ryan P. Tinetti. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-6951-4, 114 pp., $19.00.

Reviewer: *Rock LaGioia, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN.*

This book is written for preachers who are tired of tolerating a certain "interloper" in their pulpits. Ryan Tinetti explains how to evict the "villain" in *Preaching by Heart*. Who is this interloper? The preacher's notes. What is this villain's crime? Interrupting the intimate connection between preacher and hearer. How can this villain be evicted? By plundering the ancient treasures of classical rhetoric and addressing the issue of memory.

Preachers have devised different ways across the years to help them deliver their sermons, requiring greater or lesser degrees of memory. Preaching from the page eliminates the need for memory altogether in that God's herald read directly from a manuscript. Preaching from the hip is speaking impromptu with little or no preparation. Preaching from the head involves reciting a manuscript from memory. Tinetti recommends a fourth approach—preaching by heart. Preaching by heart is "proclamation in which the central message of the sermon becomes so internalized by the preacher that he or she can stand before the people of God and proclaim it without notes as an authentically Spirit-prompted utterance" (6).

The tool that Tinetti promotes for preaching by heart is the memory palace (also known as the method of loci). This mnemonic technique enabled classical orators and patristic preachers to speak persuasively without notes. How does the technique work? "First, the speaker thinks of a familiar location, or Place: a childhood home, workplace floor, or even a neighborhood block… Second, the speaker associates or 'translates' the various and sundry points, arguments, or sections of the oration…into concrete Pictures… Finally, the Pictures are arranged throughout (or along) the chosen Place" (16).

In Part 1 of his book, Tinetti offers an overview of classical rhetoric and a detailed explanation of the memory palace. Here he summarizes the five canons: 1) discovery – gathering sources and arguments for the sermon; 2) arrangement – structuring ideas and experiences in the message; 3) style – employing ornamentation and orchestration in language in order to engage the mind and heart; 4) memory – the process of learning the message by heart so as to deliver it without notes; and 5) delivery – speaking effectively and persuasively. He proceeds to explain the concept of the memory palace and how it functions in an oration's delivery.

Part 2 applies the canons and memory palace concept to sermon preparation. Sketching out a weekly process, the author recommends discovery for day 1, arrangement for day 2, style for day 3 (when the preacher sets out the sermon's essential content in rough outline fashion and with universal language), the creation of the memory palace on day 4 (which involves picking a Place and furnishing it with potent Pictures), and delivery in day 5. In the final days and hours leading up to their sermons' delivery, preachers are encouraged to review repeatedly in the theater of their minds the Place and Pictures of their palace until they are ready to preach by heart.

In his concluding chapter, Tinetti provides an example from John 14:1-3. Believing that "a single message can be preached in a variety of ways" (66), he suggests that possible themes arising from his text include the scandal of particularity, the hope of heaven, and peace in the midst of uncertainty—"to

name only a few themes" (98). He finally settles on a fourth theme, the church triumphant. Given this theme, the author suggests several possible sermon structures, including compare/contrast between the church militant and the church triumphant and cause-and-effect (the idea being that belief in the church triumphant leads to hopeful grieving, grateful praying, and joyful receiving of holy communion). Ultimately, he decides to employ the four pages structure popularized by Paul Scott Wilson.

Tinetti's approach to choosing themes and structures certainly gives rise to a number of troubling questions. Did the biblical author not have a primary theme and subordinate themes in mind? Are preachers free to implement any structure they desire? Does the inspired text not have its own inherent structure? What criteria is used in making these choices? Setting those questions aside, if the reader is looking for a proven method for removing that troublesome interloper identified by Tinetti and increasing the intimate connection between preacher and hearer, *Preaching by Heart* is a helpful resource.

Shouting Above the Noisy Crowd: Biblical Wisdom and the Urgency of Preaching. Edited by Charles L. Aaron Jr. and Jamie Clark-Soles. Eugene, OR.: Cascade, 2021. 978-0-5326-0280-1, 132 pp., $20.00.

Reviewer: *Charlie Ray III, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

Shouting above the Noisy Crowd is a collection of essays and sermons in honor of Alyce M. McKenzie, Professor of Preaching and Worship at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. McKenzie, an ordained United Methodist elder, has published numerous works on preaching, focusing especially on the proclamation of the Bible's wisdom literature and the use of humor in preaching. The purpose of this festschrift

is to honor McKenzie's mission to "enable and persuade the world to heed the cry of Woman Wisdom" (ix).

Collected works are always difficult to summarize quickly. In the first essay, Ruthanna Hooke argues for the subversive nature of Woman Wisdom and calls on Christian preachers to "enter into the busiest places of our common life and to demand attention for their proclamation of the Christian witness" (11). Dwayne Howell mines the book of Proverbs for "suggestions on how to deal with personal bias in the development of our worldviews" (20), while Luke Powery addresses how rightly to preach political sermons—claiming, "the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed is a political act" (26).

Wesley Allen Jr. discusses pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity, contending that the Bible's wisdom literature can help modern preachers adapt their preaching to reach people who embrace these different worldviews. Eunjoo Mary Kim's "Preaching and the Wisdom of God" presents a method of preaching impacted by the wisdom tradition in which "interdisciplinary studies with the social sciences, interfaith dialogue, and the critical analysis of human experiences help the preacher engage in conversation with the ancient formula of the *kerygma*" (59). David Jacobsen outlines an abductive model of preaching that he feels would help preachers address moments of crisis and trauma more effectively; while John Holbert cautions preachers not to be simpletons, scoffers, or fools, but to recognize both their shortcomings and strengths in preaching, speaking authoritatively when possible, but humbly refusing to claim "a wisdom and knowledge we do not have" (81). The next three entries are a collection of sermons on Psalm 87 by Carolyn Sharp, on Psalm 24 by Alma Tinico Ruiz, and on Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and James 3:13-18 by Beverly Zink-Sawyer. The final essay, by Nancy Kasten, addresses the role of wisdom in the choices people make related to social media.

Authors on biblical wisdom often cite Proverbs 26:4-5 and the contrasting approaches to wisdom found in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes to show that the application of biblical wisdom

requires a sensitivity to the location and context of its application. Wise preaching must balance the objective nature of biblical truth and the contextual application of this truth to varied situations.

At times, the authors in this volume handle this balance well, encouraging preachers to preach humbly but with authority. Holbert, for example, declares: "Lady Wisdom would not have us silent, but wise…. If we are called to speak of subjects that are beyond our natural ken…, wisdom bids us to be aware of what little we do know, and then demands that we study hard to become more alert on that subject" (81). Powery likewise argues for an authoritative, if nuanced, political preaching. Though political preaching can be controversial, "Just as the body of Jesus cannot be parceled out, the gospel is non-bifurcated as well; it is one and whole, encompassing the whole of life, including the political realm" (26). Just as Jesus was willing to "engage the polis, the public square…, his life is a challenging call for our preaching of the gospel to do the same" (28).

At times, however, the authors' varied perspectives lead to subjectivity and a lack of clarity. Wesley Allen argues against an authoritative preaching of God's word and for a "conversational homiletic" that offers a sermon "as a contribution to the ongoing matrix of conversations that is the church (and society) as opposed to making an authoritative declaration from above" (48). He argues that this approach will be more effective in reaching a post-modern audience and offers Jacob Meyers as one example of this kind of preacher. Myers maintains that as modernity dies with its privileged hegemonies, so too must "preaching and homiletics that have grown out of and contributed to that hegemony die, even to the point of forsaking any priority assigned to the oral medium of proclamation that is by definition preaching" (49). This approach to preaching seems a far cry from the authoritative preaching of Paul to the Athenians!

The final line in the book encourages readers to be "vigilant in our resistance to binary thinking, and open in compassion to the diversity of human experience in God's ongoing work of creation" (110). But how does this rejection of

binary thinking square with the two ways of wisdom represented by Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly (Prov. 9) or the way of godly wisdom and "worldly" wisdom of James 3:13-18?

Some of the language in this book is simply ambiguous, without a clear definition of biblical terms. For example, Ruiz writes, "In our effort to provide for our immediate needs, or as often happens, for our wants and desires, we have tried to dominate the land and control and exploit the fruit it provides" (92). While Christians should certainly stand against dominating and exploiting the earth, the underlying issue is often a disagreement over what constitutes subduing the earth and what constitutes dominating it. We need wisdom to answer these questions, but wisdom does not negate the need for serious biblical inquiry into these topics. Ironically, in a book devoted to preaching wisely, too little emphasis is given to searching God's word for the wisdom only He can give.

Readers of this work will be challenged both to preach the Bible's wisdom literature and to preach it wisely. But they will do well to remember that wise preaching does not negate the authoritative proclamation of God's word.

Preaching the Gospel: Collected Sermons on Discipleship, Mission, Peace, Justice, and the Sacraments. By Ronald J. Sider. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-8601-6, 142 pp., $20.00.

Reviewer: *James Rodgers, Facility Ministry, Gilberts, IL.*

"Provocative title," thought this reviewer before cracking open the book. Is the gospel about serving the earthly needs of people, namely, meeting them where they are? Is the gospel about leading them to a faith relationship in Christ? Those who believe it includes both elements may value Ronald Sider's *Preaching the Gospel: Collected Sermons on Discipleship, Mission, Peace, Justice, and the Sacraments*.

Sider's resume is impressive, with extensive credentials as a pastor (Mennonite), scholar (professor emeritus at Palmer Theological Seminary), leader, activist (social and political), evangelist, and writer (approximately forty books). The title is explained on the back cover: "This collection of Ron Sider's sermons and speeches delivered in his lifetime of global ministry capture the essence of his theology, ethics, and mission. It moves from stirring personal occasions (his sermon at his dad's funeral) to challenging calls for racial and economic justice (his influential, prophetic speech in apartheid South Africa in 1979)." The collection of fourteen sermons is divided into four parts: one—"Following Jesus in Faithful Discipleship," two—"Holistic Ministry, Justice, and Peace," three—"Baptism, Ordination, and Holy Communion," and four—"Finishing Well."

While the book's organization is topical, in order to capture the essence of his ministry, the specific selections also paint transparent biographical strokes, inviting readers into Sider's life and heart. The opening sermon was preached at the funeral of Sider's dad. While not an exposition, it was enjoyable reading. Chapter three about Uncle Jesse is not even a sermon, but rather a most memorable article from *Moody Monthly* and by itself is worth half the purchase price. The last section contains only one sermon, "Living and Dying in the Resurrection," but is an appropriate singular reflection on meaningful living. "My dad told me that the evening before my mother died, he was sitting beside her holding her hand. Suddenly my mother said, 'I think I will go and be with Jesus.' Fighting back tears, dad told her, 'Yes, you do that.' And the next day mother died resting in the assurance that she was moving to a wonderful future in the presence of her risen Lord" (142).

While gifted in many areas, Sider will probably be best remembered as a social activist (though one of his book titles challenges the term, *I Am Not a Social Activist: Making Jesus the Agenda*). He was the founder of Evangelicals for Social Action and his book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, sold over 500,000 copies. His sermon in chapter 7, "Words and Deeds in Apartheid South Africa, was his

plenary address to the South African Christian Leadership Assembly in Pretoria, South Africa on July 14, 1979. He delivered that message to approximately five thousand South African Christians from almost all the races and denominations there to challenge the issue of apartheid. While it is a topical sermon, it is certainly biblical with extensive Scripture and suggests expository nuggets.

Interestingly, Sider's definition of the gospel is presented in his message "Why Are We Buying the New Property?" The chapter reveals no details about the property or proposed building. Rather, Sider explains his dual focus in the gospel: "But if the gospel is just forgiveness of sins, then it is a one-way ticket to heaven and we can live like hell until we get there. People can accept the gospel and not change at all how they behave" (82). Additionally, "But we will never suppose that all people need is a better job. They also need Jesus. They need the risen Jesus to forgive their sins, live in their hearts, and give them the power to say no to destructive lifestyles" (86).

Sider was an outstanding story teller, and God gave him engaging experiences to relate. The strong biographical tones in his messages suggest Sider viewed life through providential eyes. This is not a collection of expository sermons, and in this reviewer's opinion they should not be evaluated through just a homiletical grid. That would miss Sider's point. Rather, these sermons stimulate the reader to consider the both/and of the gospel message.

On July 27, 2022 Sider moved into "a wonderful future in the presence of [his] risen Lord" (142), meaning that this book was published a scant year before his passing. It is a fitting concluding work to summarize his life through his message. Reflective readers will find provocative grist for their own lives and messages. While not a model for expository preaching, this volume provides extensive input for practical theology as a whole.

A Biblical Study Guide for Equal Pulpits. By Young Lee Hertig. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022. 978-1-6667-1216-2, 115 pp., $18.00.

Reviewer: *Caroline Smith, Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

Developed out of a project funded by the Louisville Institute, this collection of studies edited by Young Lee Hertig is designed to lead the reader through a critical process of decentering maleness from the pulpit in order to help the church flourish. The project, "Imagining a More Equal Pulpit," considered how male dominated pulpits create a distorted and masculinized Christianity in Asian American and Latino/a churches. This study guide reconsiders passages from the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament, providing an exegetical tool and thoughtful questions, to create a resource for pastors and leaders seeking to transform the church. It could be useful in the preparation of sermons or adapted for leading Bible studies.

Hertig describes the experiences of women, especially women in Asian, Asian American, and Latinx congregations, who have been discriminated against and marginalized. She says that many of these women have had to leave the churches that have loved, supported, and encouraged them prior to the time that they received God's call to ministry. She explains that for transformation of a masculinized Christianity to occur in the church, it must begin in the pulpit both by hearing women's voices as well as by women receiving the support and collaboration of men.

Following the foreword and introduction are seven chapters, each of which serves as a study guide to a particular passage (or passages) of Scripture designed to provoke thought and encourage an alternative reading of the passages. The first chapter, "Two Mothers, Two Promises" by Kay Higuera Smith, considers the biblical matriarchs Sarah and Hagar as archetypes of Israel and divine promises of a prophetic future.

Gale A. Yee's study, "Cast Your Burden on the Lord: Praying the Psalms," focuses on the neglected laments found in the Psalms. She considers laments through the framework of injustice and oppression, while giving a specific reading from the perspective of victims of domestic violence.

Eunny P. Lee's chapter, "Valorous and Wise: Women Who Build Up the House of God," considers Ruth and the woman of Proverbs 31as equal partners of the household. This is considered from both a private and public perspective. Lee suggests that embracing the gifts of women will make our houses of worship that much stronger.

In the fourth chapter, Sophia Magallances-Tang considers chapter eight of Song of Songs in her study "Listening for Your Voice; Let Me Hear It: The Prophetic Feminine Voice in Songs 8." She suggests utilizing the *prophetic orthopathos* when interpreting Song of Songs and explains that this is the process by which the interpreter invites the Holy Spirit to help her embody the divine pathos of the text in a way similar to that of the Hebrew prophets. This is done with the goal of transforming suffering into hope.

Janet H. Ok's "Pulling Up a Seat at the Leader's Table" explores the use of space and how women utilize the space they occupy. She looks specifically at Mary and Martha, comparing the way they respond to Jesus in their space. Ok offers concrete suggestions for leaders seeking to establish a more equal pulpit in their own space.

Hertig contributes a study of her own, "Mordecai and Esther: Intercultural Negotiation of Power Dynamics," in which she considers the partnership of Mordecai and Esther that led to a transformation of the power structure under the king. She maintains that these types of partnerships including men and women are necessary in order to transform power systems today.

Hertig's study sets the stage nicely for Neal D. Presa. Presa is the only male contributor to the collection. His essay, "A Call from an API Male Conspirator," offers a male presentation of an egalitarian hermeneutic of two passages frequently used against women fulfilling their call to ministry. Presa makes a call for gender justice from the pulpit.

Hertig's book is helpful for preachers and leaders seeking to establish equal pulpits. It is designed to encourage readers to reconsider various passages of Scripture by offering exegesis and insightful questions. It is not a book for certain genders or ethnicities only, because the creation of equal pulpits will require that we all work together.

Embodied Hope: A Homiletical Theological Reflection. By Veronice Miles. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-5326-9986-3, 268 pp., $34.00.

Review: *William Andrew "Ted" Williams, Galilee Baptist Church, Zachary, LA.*

How should preachers utilize and proclaim hope in the face of seemingly hopeless situations? Veronice Miles engages that question throughout *Embodied Hope: A Homiletical Theological Reflection*.

In the first section of her work, comprised of the introduction and chapters 1–3, Miles lays out the corporate experiences of despair prevalent within our culture, specifically (but not exclusively) with an eye toward the challenges faced in the Black community. For her, the primary root of despair is a flawed view of the *imago Dei* and the events of Genesis 3 (16). Ultimately, instead of humanity being fallen, Miles writes that embodied hope affirms in the midst of despair that we can have *shalom* through "the always-speaking voice of God's Spirit assuring us of God's presence, power, and fidelity and calling us toward loving, just, and restorative action" (19). To this end, she spends the next few chapters laying out how despair pervades society.

In the second section, made up of chapters 4–6 and the epilogue, Miles transitions to define the role of preaching in changing the narrative from despair to hope. The final chapter concludes with an overview of social justice and civil rights

movements in the United States serving as evidence for the prospect of change (177–214). As the unit closes with the epilogue, Miles pens what in many ways summarizes her work. "The consciousness of good entails more than the acknowledgment that evil exists. It also entails cognizance, wokeness, intentional awareness of that which promotes the good.…[W]e pray that our sermons will embolden individuals and communities to envision and work toward a qualitatively better state of existence for all creation…" (222).

In itself, the book's main thrust is noble, inspiring, and in many ways biblical; Christians should seek the good of others and to live peaceably with all. Yet the primary approach Miles advocates misses the mark because she misidentifies the primary root of the problem—sin. Throughout her work, Miles writes often of salvation yet peculiarly omits reference to sin, as this reviewer now recalls.

The merits of Miles's work lie mainly in her interdisciplinary work. Her identification of language associated with despair (particularly chapters 2 and 3) and the power of disrupting that despair (chapter 5) offer points of contemplation. Nonetheless, most evangelical readers will find the work lacking because of their different presuppositions.

Old Made New. By Greg Lanier. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. 978-1-4335-7783-3, 174 pp., $17.99.

Reviewer: *Ryan Boys, Green Pond Bible Chapel, Rockaway, NJ*.

Greg Lanier's *Old Made New* is designed to be a "thorough but accessible introduction to how the NT engages the OT, aimed at a broad array of Bible readers" (15). Lanier's work successfully hits this mark. The book consists of two parts. First, Lanier proposes a methodology for how to study a potential OT citation, quotation, or allusion. Second, he traces three major themes

found in how NT authors quote the OT: articulating the gospel, the fullness of Jesus, and the identity of the church.

Lanier starts his work by outlining a user-friendly, three-step process for studying how an OT passage is used in the NT. Here, he explains how to "identify the passage, double click the OT, and listen to the remix." He explicitly states that this is a simplified and more realistic process to use than the nine-step process found in Greg Beale's *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*. In this reviewer's opinion, Lanier's trimmed down approach is ideal for seminary students and busy pastors. He offers several helpful asides along the way, like how to know if a given reference is indeed an OT allusion (24) and tips for looking up OT quotations in the Septuagint (27).

The second major section, consisting of three chapters, develop three themes that Lanier believes reflect how NT authors understood and applied OT texts. In these chapters, he uses many specific textual examples and helpfully applies his three-step analysis for each. By the end of the book, the reader should have no doubt about how to use Lanier's method.

The first theme he identifies is how the OT articulates the gospel as salvation "accomplished in history (past, present, future) and brought to bear on the repentant sinner" (42). He points out that NT authors understood the OT as revealing the plan of salvation which culminates in the work of Christ.

The second theme is "understanding the fullness of Christ's person and work, in both his divinity and his humanity" (68). Here, readers find his treatment of more familiar Messianic prophecies as well as concepts such as OT perspectives on the Messiah as prophet, priest, and king. He offers a particularly helpful treatment of Psalm 22 as setting up a pattern of both Messianic suffering and vindication (97-99).

The final theme is bearing "witness to the church's identity, mission, and conduct" (104). This is the most controversial aspect of Lanier's work, as it does not fit within a dispensational reading of the OT. Even so, Lanier is up front about his theological position and suggests that

dispensationalists will find the chapter "illuminating" (104). He does affirm both discontinuity and continuity in how the NT sees the OT fulfilled in the church; he does not posit full-blown replacement theology. Readers may not agree with every aspect of this chapter, but they will find many helpful textual examples to consider—especially his treatment of the way the OT law is used in the NT (119-125).

On the whole, Lanier's *Old Made New* is an excellent primer on how the NT makes use of OT citations, quotations, and allusions. It is perfect for seminary students and pastors who need an efficient way to exegete NT texts where the OT is in play. Lanier acknowledges that his three major themes don't cover every way the OT is used by the NT. Nonetheless, they do provide a good starting point. Readers may also find helpful the inventory of NT uses of the OT in an appendix which identifies whether a passage is cited, quoted, or alluded to. While this work will not replace larger commentaries on the NT use of the OT, it is a needed streamlined treatment of the topic.

The Pastor's Bookshelf: Why Reading Matters for Ministry. By Austin Carty. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 978-0-8028-7910-3, 182 pp., $19.99.

Reviewer: *Brian Carmichael Sr., Memphis College of Urban and Theological Studies at Union University, Memphis, TN.*

Austin Carty advocates for pastors becoming "pastor-readers" in his work *The Pastor's Bookshelf*. A pastor-reader is one who sees the benefit of reading various types of literature for personal growth and community connection. Carty distinguishes this type of reading for personal formation from reading "to become smarter or to absorb new information" (15). Testifying that the books he has read "helped reshape my vision of the good life and helped prepare me to minister to others in more thoughtful, knowing, and nuanced ways" (21), Carty points to personal

experiences and individuals who have impacted him to make his point.

The author divides his work into three units. The first defines the pastor-reader. In the second, Carty demonstrates why a pastor should consider becoming a pastor-reader by showing its effect on his ministry. The final section provides vital insight into what modifications are indispensable for a minister looking to become a pastor-reader.

One of the strengths of this book is its practicality. Carty offers a workable plan for busy pastors wanting to transition into becoming a pastor-reader by covering everything from what-to-read to how-to-read it. Given the rise of digital books, the writer points out the dangerous habit of skimming and advises against it.

Readers will appreciate the direct connections provided between what the author read and the impact that content had in the performance of Carty's ministerial duties. Another strength of this work is the personal and scientific evidence it offers to establish the benefits of general reading. Lastly, readers will appreciate the author's sensitivity to cultural issues and his vulnerability.

Unfortunately, in his quest to highlight the benefits of general reading, Carty fails to mention the potential dangers of being shaped by ideas found outside God's word. Although he answers the questions he anticipates in opposition to his thesis, he would have done well to buttress his arguments with Scripture. He needed to prove that general reading is a *biblical* discipline of engagement.

Carty's work is valuable for those struggling with guilt over reading anything other than biblical and theological tomes. As he states at the onset, the message contained in this book may not be for everyone, but it is an excellent resource to show how reading widely can add insight to a pastor's ministerial duties.

Chasing After Wind: A Pastor's Life. By Douglas J. Brouwer. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 978-0-8028-8187-8, 238 pp, $22.00.

Reviewer: *Kevin Koslowsky, Faith Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, DE*.

Douglas Brouwer reflects on forty years of pastoral ministry using a title derived from his grandmother's favorite book of the Bible, Ecclesiastes 2:11, "all was vanity and a chasing after wind" (6). His personal memoir, *Chasing After Wind*, wrestles with the disillusionment he felt throughout his ministry. Brouwer was born and raised in a Dutch Reformed home, attended Calvin College, but pursued ordination in the mainline Presbyterian Church. His final chapter, using the book's title, reads like a warning to younger pastors. He admits, "I kept coming to the conclusion that I…spent a lot of my life chasing after wind, that in the end my work didn't add up to much" (218). The final page of this engaging memoir wraps up his theme, "soon after my ordination, I lost my way, got caught up in my career and nearly always followed my ambitions more than my call" (224).

Brouwer follows a chronological order from his upbringing through his education and then to each of his pastorates. Princeton Theological Seminary shaped his goal to begin as an associate pastor of a large church, then become a senior pastor in a medium-sized church, and move onto increasingly larger churches. By that measure, Brouwer's ministry was successful as his career hit its stride in churches of 1,700, 2,200, and 2,800 members. His disillusionment resulted from his mistake of putting "my career ahead of my vocation" (80).

Brouwer admits he was closest to fulfilling his ministry goal of leading people "to the point where they could experience the holy" (158) in small churches at the beginning and end of his career. He was able to serve without interest in his career advancement then because he was just beginning to wrestle with

a call to ministry as a seminarian at a small church in Iowa, or he had already accomplished the big career goals by the end of his ministry as he willingly stepped into a small church in Zurich. Brouwer's memoir is most salient when he highlights the danger inherent in pastoral ministry—that a pastor may be unable to separate who he is from the job he does. He describes the pastoral frustrations common in ministry: complaints about parking and programs. He captures well church members' fears of a growing church when they realize, "They used to know everyone" (117).

Readers of this Journal will pause with interest at Brouwer's stated preaching goal: "to take an important question…and then wrestle with it until it yielded truth" (22). Sadly, the memoir offers little other help for the preacher. Brouwer concedes that he always thought of himself as a writer instead of a preacher. "I wouldn't recommend my method of sermon preparation on any new preacher" (66). Even his lifelong commitment to preaching from a manuscript would be a hindrance to most preachers.

The biggest weakness of Brouwer's memoir, from an evangelical reader's perspective, is his criticism of evangelical doctrines. He repeatedly demands Christians grow beyond their childhood faith in order to pursue "intellectual curiosity" (22). Brouwer summarizes the value of a seminary education: "what I learned in Sunday School needed to be dismantled and rebuilt on a stronger foundation" (42). He had to learn to think "in some grown-up ways" about biblical texts (53). Brouwer specifies the "homophobic sentiments" of evangelical faith as most egregious (16). He claims that his theological stance since seminary has been "that gays and lesbians should be welcomed fully and without condition in the Christian church and that ordination should be open to them" (57). The theme of sexual orientation arises so frequently it becomes a secondary theme alongside his disillusionment with his career.

Brouwer's writing, perhaps a weakness in his oral sermons, makes his memoir an engaging account of a pastor's life. His mainline, ecumenical approach to theology weakens the book's value for evangelical pastors. Sadly, the only solution

Brouwer seems to offer to combat his disillusionment with the church is retirement. Perhaps one of his childhood Sunday School teachers would be able to offer him a greater hope. The theological anchor of a believer's union with Christ would help heal his disillusionment. Every pastor needs a Savior who can deal with the pastor's inadequacies. The call to pastoral ministry is valuable, even when it feels like a chasing after wind, because the Savior has called pastors to proclaim the gospel. Jesus Christ gave His life for His church.

The Peoples' Sermon: Preaching as a Ministry of the Whole Congregation. By Shauna K. Hannan. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2021. 978-1-5064-6693-4, 220 pp., $19.99.

Reviewer: *Gary R. McLellan Jr., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

In *The People's Sermon*, Hannan writes from the perspective of an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She argues that preachers should include church members in the preparation, proclamation, and evaluation of sermons. She makes her case for this preaching philosophy in the first three chapters. Thereby, Hannan challenges traditional preaching philosophies in favor of a conversational approach that "seeks a partnership between preacher and congregation…so that the essential conversations of God's people are nurtured" (16). She supports her view by citing the apostles' sermons in Acts, Jesus' sermons in the Gospels, and Jesus' conversations with individuals as evidence that the preaching event should be dialogical instead of monological (23-39). Hannan suggests this model of incorporating lay people into the preparation and delivery of messages would increase biblical literacy and engagement (62-68).

The author provides steps to implement this preaching style in the final four chapters. First, she offers exercises the

preacher could employ with a group of people in preparation for the sermon, such as having others share their questions and observations of the Scripture passage (85-94). Second, Hannan provides examples of sharing the pulpit with the congregation, like allowing members to give illustrations, engaging members through kinesthetic learning, and leading members through applications like meditation (100-118). Third, she suggests the use of formal feedback and provides the template for a feedback form in Appendix C (144-152.)

Two strengths in this book stood out. First, Hannan writes in a logical manner and challenges the reader to think critically about including the congregation in the preaching process. The first two chapters challenge preachers to develop and evaluate a philosophy of preaching, and each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion. Hannan's most provoking question came when she asked, "In this plugged-in era of instant gratification, why don't we skip the prompt for reflection altogether and just post a quick interpretation of the pericope on Facebook?" (21). Second, she provides several helpful exercises to include the congregation in preparing, delivering, and evaluating sermons. Many of these practical applications have been provided in the summary above.

Two glaring weaknesses mar the book. First, Hannan neglects the historical-critical method of exegesis in favor of subjective interpretations based on the reader's circumstances. She references a parable in Matthew 20:1-16 and asks the reader what the meaning of the text would be to people living in urban, rural, prison, and foreign populations (11). Hannan seems to shift authority in the preaching event from God to the individual in the congregation (6-16). Second, the author expresses a view of human sexuality and marriage antithetical to the biblical worldview held by conservative, evangelical Christians. She advocates sharing the pulpit with "an LGBTQ+ person proclaiming Jesus's acceptance of us" (119).

While Hannan's argument to include members of the congregation in the sermon process has some merit, her theological foundations and exegetical methods prove faulty.

The practical exercises she provides are helpful, but these can be found in other practical preaching books and Christian education resources. Overall, this title might be helpful for academic research regarding congregational participation in preaching, but other sermon helps will better equip the preacher practically.

Real People, Real Faith: Preaching Biblical Characters. By Cindy Halvorson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022. 978-1-5064-6966-9, 126 pp. $18.99.

Reviewer: *Rob O'Lynn, Kentucky Christian University, Grayson, KY.*

Preachers should love Scripture and preaching from Scripture. They are naturally drawn to their favorite portion or portions of God's word. Some are drawn to the rhetoric of the prophets or Paul. This reviewer looks for excuses to preach from Psalms and a ready-to-go series from the Gospel of Mark. Whatever their favorite portion of Scripture, preachers cannot ignore that most of the Bible is in story form, or narrative. These passages do not begin with "Once upon a time" or close with "and they all lived happily ever after," yet they are powerful and captivating stories that reveal God and God with us. The problem is that, despite their training in exegesis and homiletics, many preachers struggle with even simply retelling the good story that lays before them. This is a shame because the Bible makes it very clear that God loves a good story, especially one where God changes a life. This is the thesis of Cindy Halvorson's new book.

Real People, Real Faith is the tenth volume in the ongoing "Working Preacher" series from Fortress Press. This series continues to provide immediate and rich training in the practices of preaching, focusing on topics like leadership and contextualization, as well as preaching from specific books like Jeremiah. The goal of the series is to provide preachers with tools that they can use in real time with those who gather together to receive the bread of life. Halvorson's book is no different. From

the first paragraph of the preface, it is clear that she loves Scripture, loves preaching, and loves preachers. In the opening line of chapter one, she admits that the preacher's relationship with Scripture is "complicated" (1) and that preaching is difficult yet can be done well—harkening back to long-standing admonitions from authors such as Barth, Craddock, and Long.

We preachers must be honest about our challenge, Halvorson argues. However, it is not just because developing sermons week-in and week-out is challenging. It is because we are preaching to real people about real people. When we preach about Noah, Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, or Melchizedek, we are preaching about characters in stories that we believe actually trod this earth. They survived catastrophes, were asked to make sacrifices, and brought a joyful noise to God above—much like people bending their ears to hear our sermons.

Chapter one focuses on the relationship between heart and mind, between emotion and logic. The goal of preaching is not to share knowledge nor to avoid bored stares, rather preaching should seek to change hearts and minds so that hearers might follow Christ more faithfully. Chapter two focuses on how to read stories well. In this chapter, Halvorson offers a process of "reading" (simply reading to read), "in-depth study" (spending time in exegetical and language study), and "percolating" (thinking intently about the meaning of the text). The next three chapters focus on the narrative's context, characters, and storyline. The final two chapters discuss how to connect listeners to God through narrative preaching, drawing from Halvorson's own doctoral research on preaching and discipleship. The concluding appendix provides a sample sermon.

Overall, this is a solid work on narrative preaching and how preaching connects to discipleship. It is full of illustrations from the author's own ministry, which adds to the validity of her concepts. If this reviewer has any criticism, it would be that Halvorson did not engage with narrative and storytelling resources as much as she might have. However, that is a minor

quibble that should not take away from this book's many strengths.

Preaching the Truth as it is in Jesus: *A Reader on Andrew Fuller*. By David E. Prince. Peterborough, ON: H & E Publishing, 2022. 978-1-77484-034-4, 255 pp., $17.99.

Reviewer: *Tony A. Rogers, Southside Baptist Church, Bowie, TX.*

David Prince inspires and instructs readers in the ways of Andrew Fuller or, better yet, *The Truth as It Is in Jesus* in his most recent work. Here he guides readers through the life of Fuller—Baptist pastor, theologian, missiologist, and apologist—as he strived "to defeat global unbelief in Jesus Christ" (1).

Prince is Senior Pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church (Lexington, KY) and Assistant Professor of Christian Preaching at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He blogs on all things preaching/pastoring-related at "Prince on Preaching" (davidprince.com). His motivation for writing on Fuller is "that [Fuller] addresses everything with the sober-minded clarity of a working pastor… He treats each subject as having concrete implications for week-by-week gospel preaching, congregational worship, pastoral care, and church governance (2).

Prince's book consists of four robust chapters of essays and sermons by Fuller. Each chapter begins with an introduction to its emphasis. Early on, the author quotes Fuller's warning that "[w]e may preach about Christ himself, and yet not preach Christ" (3).

Chapter one, from which the title of the book is taken, takes an excerpt from Ephesians 4:21—"were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus"—as the basis of Fuller's ministry. Fuller claimed, "The content of the teaching is Christ, and all other truths are rightly understood only when their meaning and application is mediated through Christ" (5). This is the golden link in the chain of evangelical truth (27).

Chapter two, "Preaching Christ," introduces "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation" as the theological engine of the Baptist Missionary Society and every aspect of Fuller's life and ministry, especially his preaching (29). Fuller saw sinners responsible for trusting in Christ for salvation, and as being instructed, implored, and invited throughout the Scriptures to do so (31, 100).

Chapter three, "Preparing Sermons to Preach Christ," is the most informative section, providing both homiletic grist and Fuller's preaching philosophy. Primarily a pastor and preacher, all else flowed from Fuller's calling as a shepherd of the word in a local church (99). He "was concerned with the process of preparing sermons because he believed preaching was an act of spiritual war." Therefore, "the manner of preaching should provide evidence that the preacher knows that he is engaging in spiritual battle, and that eternity hangs in the balance" (100-101).

The closing chapter, "Preparing the Preacher to Preach Christ" is the most inspiring, providing principled and practical advice for both the pulpit and pew. Readers are informed that faithful ministry in the sight of God includes: 1) gospel friendships; 2) a passionate love for Christ's church to the ends of the earth; 3) being a Christian first and then a minister; and 4) having a busy, joyful, gospel spirituality (182-193).

Highlights of the book include, first, Fuller's (and Prince's) emphasis on the preacher— what he should be and what he should do. Preaching is not performance; the preacher is a herald of good tidings (111). Preachers are warned against ministry callousness, because they can learn how to "fake it" (193). Next, there are Fuller's gospel-preaching imperatives concerning "the truth as it is in Jesus:" 1) we must preach this truth; 2) we must understand and know this doctrinal truth; 3) we must see apologetics as explaining and defending this truth; 4) Christian living is walking in this truth; and 5) the missionary aim is to direct attention to this truth (7-14). Every sermon is a gospel errand (32-34). Finally, the book is rich in helpful homiletical insights, theological precision, and contemporary relevance. His approach to "the truth as it is in Jesus" enabled Fuller to confront

the error of his day and will equip readers to do the same today (5-6). Like Haddon Robinson maintained in his article "The Heresy of Application," Fuller believed that "[t]he preacher is to call hearers to apply their lives to the testimony of the story of Scripture and not merely isolate and abstract truths in an individualized way" (105).

Prince's homiletical and pastoral biography will inspire preachers and laypersons alike. John Ryland wrote of his friend Fuller, "While others admired his zeal and diligence, he was perpetually bewailing his lukewarmness, and constancy, and inactivity; and dreading lest he should prove an "'idol shepherd,' who fed not the flock" (181). May today's pastors who read Prince's book likewise aspire neither to shepherd poorly nor starve their flocks. As Prince and Fuller show, Christ will answer every end of preaching (54). Therefore, to quote Fuller again, "Preach Christ, or you had better be anything than a preacher" (52).

Expository Preaching in Africa: Engaging Orality for Effective Proclamation. By Ezekiel A. Ajibade. Bukuru, NRA: HippoBooks, 2021. 978-1-8397-3214-0, 249 pp., $24.99.

Reviewer: *Jesse L. Nelson, Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, Panama City, FL.*

In *Expository Preaching in Africa,* Ezekiel A. Ajibade, a former pastor with fifteen years' experience and current lecturer for Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, provides a persuasive argument for using orality as a medium of biblical proclamation (expository preaching) in the African context. As a native of Nigeria, Ajibade's affinity for expository preaching was developed in a three-fold manner: his matriculation at Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (former branch campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), his experience as a fellow at the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching in

Memphis, Tennessee, and his engagement with students during his lectures on preaching.

The purpose of his book is to demonstrate how orality can be a resource for developing a biblical and African methodology of expository preaching. Though Ajibade believes his work can be used in the ongoing debate over inductive versus deductive approaches to preaching, he considers the adaption of preaching to culture to be its primary focus and contribution. He also hopes to encourage African preachers to employ the method of expository preaching versus topical preaching. Ajibade makes his argument for adaptation and expository preaching throughout the book's eight chapters.

Chapters one and two discuss various homiletical theories, including the expository approach. This discussion is based on the definition and propositions of biblical preaching as asserted by Haddon Robinson in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*. Ajibade affirms and elaborates on Robinson's theoretical propositions, along with Paul Scott Wilson's thoughts on homiletical theory. Afterwards, the author explains the concept, form, and content of expository preaching. Here, he uses Bryan Chapell's definition as found in *Christ-Centered Preaching*. For Ajibade, expository preaching has four primary distinctives. It emphasizes a central theme or proposition, is based on sound exposition, is text-driven by its very nature, and is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

After summarizing and explaining the debate over the concept of expository preaching, Ajibade encourages the reader to focus on its ultimate goal, that is, life transformation. The author concludes chapter two by articulating the advantages and disadvantages of expository preaching, the differences between inductive and deductive sermons, and how expository preaching can be an inductive-deductive bridge to enable preachers to utilize both sermonic forms respectively or in conjunction with one another.

Chapter three provides an in-depth yet summative history on Africa in the history of Christian preaching. The author identifies nine periods of Christian preaching there, from the

Early Period with Origen and Augustine to present day. Ajibade notes how Africa is often overlooked or omitted in scholarship regarding the history of Christian preaching. For example, some authors attempt to distinguish North Africa, of which several church fathers were natives, from sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the church fathers are appreciated for their homiletical and theological contributions while discussion of their cultural and ethnic identity is avoided.

When discussing orality and gospel communication in chapter four, Ajibade notes that Africans are predominately oral in nature and culture. He describes orality as being when verbal expression dominates a society because it lacks the technology to produce written or print communication in mass. He argues that orality and expository preaching are not mutually exclusive but maintains that a preaching method can be developed which appreciates Africa's orality without neglecting the literary components of the society.

Chapter five focuses on orality and the contextualization of expository preaching in Africa. The author considers Africa to be a paradoxical melting pot that contains ingredients from all parts of the world. Ajibade elaborates on this idea by describing two contextual paradoxes: religiosity and religious plurality. He concludes the chapter with an extensive list of oral resources one can employ to contextualize expository preaching, including songs, drama, proverbs, poems, folktales, and storytelling.

The focus in chapter six shifts from African contextualization to the author's perspective on the contextualization of preaching in the Korean, African-American, and Ghanaian culture. He selects these three groups because of their relation to Africa. For example, Ghana is a country on the African continent. African-Americans are descendants of the African culture. Ajibade believes Asia shares in the work God is doing through world missions.

Two sample sermons in chapter seven affirm the book's assertion that narrative and storytelling are the best sermonic forms for communicating with oral listeners. The first sermon illustrates a narrative plus lesson method of narrative preaching.

This sermon is classified as a village oral expository sermon and delivered in the vernacular of the audience. The second sermon is an African oral expository sermon with a segmented narrative. This sermon explains a story scene by scene with lessons after each explanation. It includes numerous oral elements referenced earlier in the book.

Ajibade argues for contextualization throughout the book; however, he cautions the readers about the dangers of contextualization in chapter eight. Two dangers are obscurantism and syncretism. After discussing these dangers, he reminds the reader that orality is the medium of communication and biblical proclamation is the message that is communicated. He also warns the reader to be mindful of the elements that are questionable or compromise the intended message.

The concluding chapter summarizes and restates key arguments presented earlier, including four assertions on expository preaching and African orality, recommendations to African preachers and theological institutions, and ideas for further research.

Throughout his book, Ajibade provides a viable argument for African orality and the contextualization of expository preaching. His extensive research undergirds his assertions. Although he focuses on orality and expository preaching, his work could be used as a resource on the study of deductive versus inductive sermons. Additionally, it might be referenced when addressing methodology and sermonic form for preaching the narrative genre in general and narrative expository preaching in particular.

Ajibade mentions three groups that demonstrate skill in adapting their preaching to culture, that is, Koreans, African-Americans, and Ghanians. He describes how they contextualized a method of preaching to their culture, but he does not specifically identify how they contextualized expository preaching within their culture. For example, he identifies several characteristics of contextualization in African-American preaching, including rhythm, the hum, call and response, and

celebration. However, he does not explain how expository preaching is wedded into African-American preaching.

Though the book says much about the philosophy of expository preaching, it offers little about its practice. Despite its intention to encourage African preachers to adapt an expository methodology, it does not include an extensive expository preaching "how-to" for African preachers. Considering the cultural similarities the author noted between African and African-American preaching, including a list of African-American expository preaching resources and links to internet online sermons for African preachers to consider would have been helpful.

Expository Preaching in Africa is an excellent resource for understanding expository preaching in the African context. Though Ajibade's book is not a "how-to" for expository preaching, he does include extensive detail on contextualizing one's expository methodology. In the classroom, this book could be a primary text on preaching in a cross-cultural context and contextualization. It might also serve as a supplementary text for courses on expository preaching, postcolonial preaching, and decolonizing preaching. Pastors could use the book as a resource when preparing to deliver sermons during international mission trips, especially on the African continent. Finally, it might also be utilized when training missionaries for preaching and teaching in oral cultures.

When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse. By Chuck DeGroat. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020. 978-0-8308-4159-2, 192 pp., $18.00.

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

Chuck DeGroat has written a well-studied and immensely helpful book that paints a textured and at times macabre portrait

of the sin of narcissism that has come to plague the church and its leadership. *When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse* is an eye-opening self-check for any preacher. In an age of "look-at-me" social media platforms and uncritical followers—and leaders—DeGroat pulls the curtain back on the state and definition of narcissism and its infection in the church today.

DeGroat observes, "I became convinced that narcissism was not only a growing reality but a misdiagnosed one, especially in churches. Indeed, within churches a narcissist might even be described as charismatic, gifted, confident, smart, strategic, agile, and compelling. He was selected to plant the church, to lead the ministry, to teach the class. He was quickly let off the hook when a spouse reported emotional abuse" (6). He continues, "Ministry leaders and churches today are obsessively preoccupied with their reputation, influence, success, rightness, progressiveness, relevance, platform, affirmation, and power" (7).

The author demonstrates his expertise in the pages of the book. DeGroat's educational background, research, and professional experience fill in the contours of this examination of narcissism and its impact on the church and its leaders. The author shows that the principles of identifying and dealing with narcissism can be applied not only to churches, but also to denominations, parachurch organizations, and may I add, schools, colleges, and seminaries—faculty, staff, and administration.

There are nine chapters in the book, in addition to an introduction and an epilogue. DeGroat begins the introduction with the statement, "When we experience narcissism personally and relationally, the toxic effects are painful and crazy-making" (3), underscoring that "narcissism is about control" (4). In chapter one, "When Narcissism Comes to Church," DeGroat claims "hiddenness is the breeding ground for narcissism" (16), meaning that the narcissist has a lot to hide—things in the past all the way to the present—a "profound shame" (19). Yet, as

DeGroat observes, "The frightening reality of narcissism is that it often presents in a compelling package" (19).

In chapter two, "Understanding Narcissism," DeGroat reminds readers, "For starters, it is important to remember that narcissism exists along a spectrum from healthy to toxic" (36). The following chapter, "The Nine Faces of Narcissism" offers a helpful presentation of the various expressions of narcissism. DeGroat observes, "Those who are drawn into the gravitational pull of narcissism may even enable the narcissist by letting him off the hook for his behavior" (43-44).

In chapter four, "Characteristics of the Narcissistic Pastor," DeGroat explores common traits that often encourage or foster a narcissist. He notes, "Too often narcissistic pastors are rewarded for their charisma" (84).

Chapter five, "The Inner Life of a Narcissistic Pastor" extends the discussion from the previous chapter, demonstrating the contrast between a narcissist's inner and outer lives. DeGroat states, "In my qualitative research over the years, I've gathered dozens of stories heard over two decades of ministry. I'm particularly struck by the theme of shame and rage among high-profile, evangelical celebrity pastors—mostly men who've written books and have prominent platforms, who write blogs and record podcasts, all the while enslaved to an ignored shadow. Some of these men have experienced well-publicized falls from grace, but others are still quite active and adored. Often people will say to me, 'I never knew *he* was capable of that'" (91).

Chapter six, "Understanding Narcissistic Systems," traces the infection that narcissism can have on a system. Here, DeGroat helpfully warns, "Removing a narcissistic staff member does not necessarily remove the narcissistic infection. More often than not, sepsis has set in. You can't see it, but it lurks among the in-between relational spaces, in anxious bodies, and in flawed structures. It shows up in our inability to be personally and organizationally honest, to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of a church system, denomination, or a network of churches. It shows up in our unwillingness or inability to take intentional steps toward systemic healing" (103).

Chapter seven, "The Gaslight is On," focuses on spiritual and emotional abuse. DeGroat remarks, "Respected celebrity pastors are navigating scandals involving adultery, abuse, gaslighting, plagiarism, financial malpractice, and more. The collective false self is powerful, and it covers a mountain of hidden rage and shame" (115).

Chapters eight, "Healing Ourselves, Healing the Church," and nine, "Transformation for Narcissists (Is Possible)," speak to the healing that can take place for both the church and the one who leads the church. The book closes with an epilogue reminding readers about Jesus Christ's self-emptying that is detailed by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5-11.

This book is a must-read for preachers, seminary and Bible college professors, students, and those who may not think that they reflect any of the characteristics of narcissism. DeGroat's work is instructive and convicting, well developed, and well researched.

James: An Exegetical Guide for Preaching and Teaching. By Herbert W. Bateman IV and William C. Varner. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-4542-2, 317 pp., $33.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Brad Baxter, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

James: An Exegetical Guide for Preaching and Teaching is the fourth title in the Big Idea Greek Series, following *Ephesians* by Benjamin I. Simpson, *Philippians* by Thomas Moore, and *John's Letters* by Bateman and Aaron C. Peer. Each volume in this series was written for the purpose of assisting pastors, professors, and students in their synthesis of New Testament Greek grammar and syntax. In particular, Bateman and Varner wrote this commentary on the letter of James in order to increase "a pastor's or teacher's understanding of James's literary structure, his use

of clauses, his syntax, and his writing style with this single intention: to identify the big Greek ideas in James" (21).

What sets this commentary apart from other commentaries on James's epistle is how Bateman and Varner divide the text for comment at the clausal level. Based on the Nestle-Aland[28] Greek text, the authors determined that James's letter can be divided into 203 independent clauses and 155 dependent clauses. "The clausal outlines," write Bateman and Varner, "make it possible for pastors to visualize the relationship clauses have to one another in order to trace James's flow of thought and ultimately his big idea" (21). The authors admit that their commentary is not designed for the task of translation. Rather, it is intended to be a "grammatical-*like* commentary with interlinear-*like* English translations of the Greek text that provides expositional commentary-*like* comments to guide a pastor and teacher in their sermon and teaching preparations" (26).

For each section of James' letter, Bateman and Varner offer the "Big Greek Idea," which is meant to assist pastors in formulating their own homiletical idea for the text when preparing to preach or teach. Next, the authors highlight the structural overview of that particular section, followed by the clausal outline for each subdivision. They then use the clausal outline to explain the grammar and syntax of the section in commentary form. Interspersed throughout their comments are "Lexical Nuggets," "Grammatical Nuggets," "Semantical Nuggets," and "Structural Nuggets" that delve deeper into the Greek text.

This reviewer found this commentary on the Greek text to be exegetically precise yet refreshingly accessible at the same time. After reading it, the reviewer judged the stated goal of Bateman and Varner to be substantiated—to help "increase confidence in understanding and appreciating James as plans are made to preach and/or teach this letter" (26). For those who are planning to preach or teach James' letter in the near future, this commentary will serve them well in their exegetical and expository tasks.

John Through Old Testament Eyes: A Background and Application Commentary. By Karen H. Jobes. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 978-0-8254-4508-8, 374 pp., $23.00.

Reviewer: *Matthew Love, Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

Karen Jobes' commentary on the Gospel of John is one of the newer installments in the recent *Through Old Testament Eyes* commentary series, edited by Andrew T. Le Peau. Presently, the series includes a work on Mark and forthcoming volumes on Matthew, Galatians, and Revelation. Jobes is Professor Emerita of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College and Graduate School.

This work, representative of the series, aims to achieve "Aha!" moments for its readers regarding the difference that an awareness of the Old Testament makes when reading the New. "The New Testament writers were Old Testament people" (9), and, therefore, it is impossible for modern readers to adequately understand the New without understanding the Old. The main part of each volume is a running commentary on the biblical text, which generally goes verse-by-verse. In addition, summary sections titled "Through Old Testament Eyes," "What the Structure Means," and "Going Deeper" offer broader reflections on larger sections.

The great strength of Jobes' commentary is its offering of a highly accessible, focused, and text-by-text linkage between John and the Old Testament. This means that the reader does not have to sift through an excess of extra materials in another, longer commentary to find these linkages. Sometimes less is more. The work is scholarly but also conversational. The author incorporates bits from her personal experience as well as relevant, current illustrations to drive home her points. She also includes questions for reflection, sprinkled throughout. Her

commentary, like John's Gospel itself, is thoroughly Christocentric and theological.

The drawbacks of this work are the antipodes of its strengths. Because of its particular focus, there are various matters that are left untouched—such as a comparison of John with the Synoptics, a literary analysis of the Gospel, or the history of its interpretation. (Jobes herself acknowledges these limitations [14].) This means that Jobes' handy volume will need to be bolstered and balanced by other commentaries and resources.

Overall, the book is well done, enlightening, and enjoyable. In the present day, when biblical literacy has waned even among many clergy, preachers and teachers can hardly assume that their people know even the most basic storyline recorded in the Gospel of John, much less his deft and masterful use of the Old Testament. But understanding John's use of the Old Testament is essential for understanding what he has written and for understanding his Christ. A commentary like Jobes' is as valuable today as ever, for if the Old Testament is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," then readers would do well to read the New Testament through Old Testament eyes.

Preaching Life-Changing Sermons: Six Steps to Developing and Delivering Biblical Messages. By Jesse L. Nelson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-4695-5, 143 pp., $16.99.

Reviewer: *Jason Poznich, Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO.*

Early in his preaching life, Jesse Nelson realized his primary objective for preaching. Rather than inspiring, informing, or instructing his listeners, he wanted to preach for life change. His short book on this topic develops a simple, practical six-step process that preachers or preachers-in-training can use to write and deliver life-changing sermons.

The six steps Nelson elucidates (seek the Spirit, select the Scripture, study the Scripture, structure the sermon, speak in the Spirit, share the Savior) can be found in a typical primer on preaching methodology. What makes Nelson's contribution to the landscape of homiletical literature valuable is not what he describes as his primary objective nor the process he outlines. Instead, two distinct characteristics of *Preaching Life-Changing Sermons* make it a valuable contribution to bookshelves already filled with introductory works on preaching.

First, as Nelson notes, there is likely a "cultural gap" (11) in the homiletics section of many of our personal libraries. Too few American homiletics texts include insights from African-American expositors. As an African-American preacher himself, Nelson ably shares insights and examples from a selection of African-American preachers. Some of the preachers he cites, like Tony Evans, Robert Smith Jr., and H. B. Charles Jr., are familiar names in preaching circles. Others are less well known. Second, while most introductory preaching books are written with the typical Bible college or seminary student in mind, Nelson writes with the layperson in view.

Preaching Life-Changing Sermons could certainly be used in a basic homiletics course at the undergraduate, or possibly graduate level, but it will be of greater value in the local church. Churches wanting to raise up and train homegrown preachers will find Nelson's short, simple process invaluable. Pastors could use his work as a textbook to equip laypeople with the skills needed to preach life-changing sermons in their own local churches.

Experienced preachers who read this book will discover few methodological earth-shattering insights; however, most will be able to pan a nugget or two of gold. Personally, this reviewer found Nelson's comments about transitions and keyword identification helpful enough to incorporate in the homiletics courses he teaches at the undergraduate level. At the top of each sermon outline, Nelson states that he includes the sermon title, text, subject, main point of the text, life-changing principle (big idea), purpose of the sermon, a keyword, and a

transition sentence into the body of the sermon. In the phrase, "I want to share three reasons why…" the word "reasons" serves as the keyword. Beginning preachers often struggle with clarity and cohesiveness in their messages. Encouraging them to identify the keyword to be used throughout the message and to develop their transitions should increase both clarity and cohesiveness in the message.

Readers from different ecclesiological, theological, or homiletical traditions may have minor qualms with some of the finer points in the final two chapters. For example, as Nelson encourages preachers to seek the Spirit, he essentially equates an Old Testament anointing of a king or prophet with being filled with the Spirit in the New Testament. Some traditions would "amen" such an equation, while others would question it. Similarly, in his final chapter, he states, "expository preaching is Christ-centered" (93). Many advocates of some version of Christ-centered preaching will likely affirm this statement, while those who adopt another homiletic, like a theocentric homiletic or Kuruvilla's christiconic homiletic, will likely balk. Furthermore, he suggests that all sermons should end with a gospel invitation. While this fits some ecclesial traditions, it does not fit others.

Nelson concludes with a few appendices that provide sermon outlines and manuscripts. One appendix includes eight brief sermon outlines from a series on 1 Corinthians 12-14, while another includes three manuscripts and two semi-detailed outlines of sermon structures mentioned in the book. The manuscripts are helpful, but the outlines from 1 Corinthians 12-14 would be more helpful if they had been fewer in number yet more robust in details. Regardless, laypersons wanting to learn how to preach and pastors looking for a tool to equip lay leaders how to preach will find a valuable aid in Nelson's *Preaching Life-Changing Sermons*.

Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By Adam Copenhaver and Jeffrey D. Arthurs. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-5836-1, 335 pp., $29.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Christian Schmitt, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (graduate).*

Intended for weekly preaching rather than critical reflection, the present volume follows the familiar Kerux format. Each of the dozen-and-a-half pericopes' exegetical, theological, and homiletical ideas are asserted, together with "preaching pointers," before verse-by-verse exegetical remarks. After a theological summary, the authors submit the text to Haddon Robinson's three-question developmental framework while providing a brief but impressively broad catalog of plug-and-play supporting material. Throughout the text, diagrams, photographs, sidebars, and rich word-pictures abound, helping preachers—and audiences!—absorb the authors' commentary.

The authors' efforts to distill a concise preaching cookbook meet with remarkable success. Colossians' dense, poetic style can complicate the process of unit delimitation and the extraction of 'big ideas,' yet each preaching idea provides a complete and well-suited summary of the pericope. There is also an occasional helpful awareness of alternate delimitations for series preaching (for example, 45, 92, 241). The preaching ideas are crisp and witty: the Hymn to Christ, for example, receives the preaching idea, "Christ is above all, he has done it all, and now we have it all—so don't move at all," and the virtue list (3:12-17), "Only Jesus can dress you for church." The supporting material, on the other hand, varies in quality. At times, certain ideas are needlessly illumined (the concept of a foundation, 92) while others on the same page beg for additional attention (eschatological inauguration). Some pericopes seem to defy the authors' attempts at illustration (107-110). Nevertheless,

preachers will appreciate the more-than-occasional gem scattered throughout both the exegetical and homiletical discussions. The unexpected invocation of the well-regarded "Invictus" to show a "hard heart that needs to be reconciled to God" (95) is one example. As another creative example, Odysseus' and Jason's strategies to defeat the Sirens proxy believers' attempts to "resist capture by false teaching" (144). Much of the supporting material—interviews, congregational activities, object lessons—might appear gimmicky to more traditional preachers not used to "Creativity in Presentation," but repackaging it for a staider presentation is a simple enough task.

The exegetical comments are astute, clear, and theologically measured, commending this commentary to preachers from a wide variety of traditions. In many cases, however, the preaching idea asserted for the passage poorly incorporates the totality of these comments, especially those more tangential. The commentary's Robinsonian homiletic, then, seems to unduly constrain Pauline richness and preacherly imagination. The introductory attention given to Colossae as a diverse but "diminished town of relative unimportance," for example, prompts a sermon encouraging small-town Christians about the relevance of their faith and ministry (41-42, 70) in the midst of their neighbors. Similar "little idea" sermons would be well founded, in the biography and character of Epaphras (57-8), the danger of being "unwitting enemies of God" (87), or the relationship of suffering to proclamation (101, 245, 254). While it is impossible to fault the authors either for exegetical perception or homiletical direction, it is unfortunate to see ideas which would make for faithful, focused sermons remain homiletically undeveloped. The attribution of multiple preaching ideas to a single pericope may represent a significant break from Robinson's "big idea" model, but the authors' treatment here of complex Pauline texts nudges poignantly in that direction.

Another desideratum may be further attention to the realities of post-Christendom preaching. To the authors' credit, Colossians and Philemon primarily address believers, and their

proofs and applications, insofar as they address believers "unstained by the world," are agreeable if not insightful. Furthermore, extended sidebars intend to make Paul's teaching on household and economic submission (237-40) palatable. Together with the broader exegesis, the reader is left with a nuanced and balanced preparation for a challenging sermon. This reviewer wishes only that such sensitivity to hostile audiences—or at least audiences deeply formed by hostile cultures—could have suffused the entire effort, not merely this particular cultural controversy. He is particularly concerned that the proofs of the preaching ideas will tend to fall short among many contemporary Western audiences. Some assume their conclusion (for example, that vertical reconciliation is necessary, 92-93); others avoid making any argument at all (for example, that learning and community short-circuit false teaching, 122). Attention is never given, moreover, to the challenge that an accurate reading of Paul may not represent moral goodness; the obvious example is the letters' purported gradualist abolitionism (42, 235). In other words, the authors' preaching ideas are sometimes *proven*, but never *justified*, the latter of which is often the more important pastoral consideration.

Despite its few methodologically-rooted shortcomings, Arthurs and Copenhaver have produced a solid intermediate-level resource for pastors and preachers. They have plenty to glean from this volume.

A Contemporary Handbook for Weddings and Funerals and Other Occasions: Revised and Updated. Edited by Aubrey Malphurs, Keith Wilhite, and Dennis Hillman. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 978-0-8254-4665-8, 449 pp., $23.99.

Reviewer: *Gary L. Shultz Jr., First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, FL.*

Three weeks into my first full-time pastorate, the chairman of the deacons passed away suddenly. It was the first funeral I ever

officiated. In my advanced expository preaching class in seminary, I had put together a funeral sermon, but it seemed entirely inadequate for the occasion before me. I tried not to panic as I looked through my resources, began contacting professors and mentors for help, and looked up sample funeral sermons online. Somehow, by the grace of God, I managed to piece together a service and a sermon. When I recently read the revised edition of *A Contemporary Handbook of Weddings and Funerals and Other Occasions*, I could not help but recall my earlier experience and only wish that I had owned this book at the beginning of my ministry.

As the title promises, this book is a compilation of resources for weddings, funerals, communion services, baby dedications, baptisms, holidays, ordinations, church anniversaries, and state of the church addresses. It contains outlines of services, sample services, messages, brief articles of advice, lists of additional resources, and even a section of classic Christian poems to use on different occasions. The first edition of the book came into being after the manager of the Dallas Theological Seminary book center approached the editors and told them of how often he received requests for resources for weddings, funerals, and other ministry occasions. Those editors subsequently sought out resources that had been used in fruitful ministries that they believed were adaptable for different contexts. The resources came from dozens of different people actively involved in ministry, primarily pastors and seminary professors. This current edition of the handbook is the third iteration of the book, thoroughly revised to be as relevant as possible for ministry today.

For those pastors who do not have mandated liturgies for weddings and funerals, this book is a one-stop shop of ministry ideas and helps. Young pastors early in their ministry will find helps for conducting these services in almost any circumstance imaginable. Even experienced pastors will find plenty of material that is helpful and though-provoking, aiding in the task of keeping these services fresh and meaningful in the midst of busy ministries. Preaching and practical ministry professors should

have this book near the top of their lists when it comes to recommending such helps to their students. While the section on "other occasions" is not as detailed, primarily due to the number of different occasions it references, it is also worth consulting when those ministry occasions arise.

There are a number of resources on the market today that outline services and offer sample messages, especially for weddings and funerals. What makes this book stand out is its breadth of topics, the consistent biblical focus of its contributors, the adaptability of the material, and the balance of contemporary relevance with traditional resources. Perhaps the only weakness is the lack of depth in the "other occasions" section, which could profitably be developed into a separate book length treatment. I have already recommended this book to other pastors, particularly younger ones, and recommend it to the members of this academic guild as well.

The Preacher's Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities. By Kate Bowler. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019. 978-0-6912-0919-7, 368 pp., $29.95.

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

In *The Preacher's Wife*, author Kate Bowler explores the roles of pastors' wives and women preachers in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. She notes that her study engages "the public lives of America's Christian female celebrities" (5). With particular emphasis on the twenty-first century, Bowler explains that her study "tells the story of women's search for spiritual authority in an era of jumbotrons and searing stage lights" (5).

For the most part, the book is well-researched. Bowler bases her study on "materials drawn directly from megachurches, parachurches, publishers, television networks,

and music producers—as well as over a hundred personal interviews with Christian celebrities and industry veterans…" (5). Bowler argues that the public lives of Christian women "were shaped in large part by two powerful forces: first, the complementarian theologies that prescribe a limited set of feminine virtues and capacities; and second, the industries that sustained their careers, which had their own rules about leading women" (5). Bowler's study includes white, black, Latina, and Asian women.

The book is divided into five chapters, including a helpful introduction which sets the context for the book. The first chapter, "The Preacher," provides a curious mixture of contemporary perspectives on women preachers and an historical overview of women preachers and the history of women's ordination. Bowler links the contemporary visibility of women preachers to the practice of self-promotion (49)—not a problem necessarily particular to women preachers in the past or today. She seems to focus more on women preachers in mainline churches, while her section on "conservative seminaries" appears to be less developed and not as well-researched.

Chapter two, "The Homemaker," seems to reflect more clearly the "preacher's wife" theme of the book. Here Bowler provides a helpful picture of evangelical women and the various aspects of their roles as the preacher's wife. From Dorothy Patterson to Ruth Graham, Bowler details the ways in which, as wives, these women demonstrated the unique difference that they play in ministry.

In chapter three, "The Talent," Bowler details the rise to celebrity of several minister wives. Through these examples—from Tammy Faye Bakker to Twila Paris—Bowler demonstrates the move of women from backstage to centerstage. The chapter covers women who became co-preacher/pastors, as well as gospel music and contemporary Christian music stars.

Chapter four, "The Counselor," addresses the place evangelical women have taken in the shift to a counseling culture and the growth of addressing mental health. Bowler notes, "If we scan the horizon of Christian megaministry, we see that what

was once the occupation of priests and psychologists had become women's work" (155). Bowler explores the advantages and the pitfalls of exposing one's personal life, including Kay Warren's memoir as she discussed "her own molestation and her subsequent sexual experimentation" (191).

In chapter five, "The Beauty," Bowler details the notion of physical attractiveness and its impact on preachers' wives and women preachers, with the force for change being felt more by women than men. She observes, "But the change in visual signals applied much more to women in ministry than to men. For males, the shift came largely in the form of better-tailored suits than previous generations had worn: preposterous comb-overs and impressive bellies would never keep men from religious stardom. As the secular marketplace was allowed to dictate how women presented themselves, beauty would come to play a defining role both in the content of their messages and in how they were presented" (193).

In her conclusion, Bowler circles back to her original thesis. "As we have seen in each chapter, the heights to which Christian celebrity women could rise depended on their ability to master the rules of complementarianism and capitalism, finding financial stability without appearing to be theologically overreaching" (243).

This reviewer closes with a few observations. First, at times, Bowler seems to lose sight of the promise given in the title of her book. Throughout its pages the book presents a mixture of preachers' wives, women preachers, music celebrities, and others that, at times, seems out of focus. Second, occasionally Bowler appears to lose sight that the Christian faith is not based on business decisions. Granted, her observations are about how some women made their decisions—that they were based on financial gain—but a gentle reminder that money does not drive mission or call would have been helpful. Third, one might have expected a little more on the need for theological education for women—or at least an effort to distinguish between the women who were/are cited in the book who experienced theological training and what kind of difference, if any, that theological

education made. Fourth, when discussing early evangelical women and their ministry struggles, Bowler ignores some of the foundational writings on the topic. For example, Leonard I. Sweet's important work, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism* (Temple University Press 1983), was not mentioned nor quoted. Additionally, noticeably absent was Janette Hassey's *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century* (Zondervan 1986). Both books are published doctoral dissertations on this very subject. In spite of the foregoing criticisms, Bowler's book is a fascinating read and well worth the time.

Preaching for Culture Change: How the Communication Techniques of Preachers, Rabbis, Companies, and Linguists Can Transform the Culture of Your Church. By Jason Esposito. Self-published, 2022. 978-0-5783-7812-1, 197 pp., $17.99.

Reviewer: *Jeffrey Arthurs, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA.*

Preaching for Culture Change tackles an aspect of preaching that is neglected in both evangelical homiletics and in the New Homiletic. We might call it "corporate application," or "transformation of the community." In the evangelical world, with our values of personal holiness and individual accountability to God, our homiletic tends to picture the faith in individualistic terms rather than corporate. In the field of homiletics, refreshing exceptions can be found: African-American preaching that speaks *for* the community to build solidarity; Andy Stanley's approach which ends the sermon with "we"—casting vision for what the big idea might look like in the community (*Communicating for a Change*); and David Buttrick's concept of "moves" that form in group consciousness (*Homiletic*). But Esposito's point stands, that homiletics should instruct how

to use preaching to bring about change not only in individual hearts but also in the culture of churches.

With its genesis as a D.Min. dissertation, *Preaching for Culture Changes* employs eclectic theories, is grounded in the "real world," and is written with verve by a working pastor who shepherds his flock. But in its eclecticism and use of sources, it also lacks critical engagement.

Esposito field-tested the claim that the preacher is a "cultural architect" (14) and that preaching has an "outsized influence on church culture" (10). To explore that thesis, the opening chapters walk through a biblical survey of the purposes of preaching and the power of language, then through leadership literature from the corporate world, and then through selected theories from linguistics to again show the power of language. Esposito eventually describes his D.Min. field-test which consisted primarily of interviews of church members from his own congregation, CrossWay Church, outside Milwaukee. The interviews were designed to gauge how preaching contributed to culture change. The author concludes that the preaching at CrossWay has indeed accomplished an outsized influence. The final chapter expounds ten preaching principles for effective culture change. Like Heath and Heath's *Made to Stick*, the principles emphasize the necessity of repetition, story, emotion, and clarity. The book's most original contribution seems to me to be the epicenter of the book: "Focus on the Corporate." I would like to see this fleshed out more, although the author does give some concrete ideas and provides two sample sermons in the book's appendices.

The Women's Lectionary: Preaching the Women of the Bible throughout the Year. By Ashley M. Wilcox. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021. 978-0-6642-6619-6, 294 pp., $40.00.

Reviewer: *Arica Heald Demme, St. Veronica Anglican Mission, Bear, DE.*

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) and its denominational derivatives have been justifiably criticized for not including enough readings featuring women, their concerns, and feminine imagery, particularly of God. Wilcox lays out a one-year lectionary that focuses solely on these things. The lectionary lists two readings per Sunday: an Old Testament passage, which might be a Psalm; and a New Testament passage, taken from either a Gospel or epistle. Passages have been assigned with liturgical themes and seasons in mind.

The passages Wilcox chose for her lectionary fall into four categories:

1. One or more women are characters in a narrative. Two such readings are the parable of the woman who finds her lost coin (Luke 15) and the narrative of the midwives in Egypt (Exod. 1).
2. Women are discussed in general. Examples include Paul's guidelines for widowed believers (1 Tim. 5) and the LORD's promises that daughters shall prophesy and that He will pour out His Spirit on female servants (Joel 2:28-29).
3. An abstract concept is personified as a woman. Wisdom is personified in this way in three lections from Proverbs.
4. Feminine imagery is present. For instance, through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD describes Himself as a consoling mother (66:13).

Unlike the RCL, Wilcox does not shy away from difficult texts, particularly ones that include sexual violence. The rape of Jacob's daughter Dinah by the son of a powerful regional leader (Gen. 34), the nonconsensual sexual assault by the daughters of Lot against their father (Gen. 19), and the incestual rape of King David's daughter, Tamar, by her brother (2 Sam. 13) are all part of the lectionary. Wilcox is right that, "Too often, the church's response to stories of sexual assault and rape in the Bible has been to avoid them" (xxi). Preachers need to acknowledge and

fill these lacunae with preaching characterized by candor and pastoral sensitivity.

Perhaps of interest to non-lectionary users, Wilcox also proposes eight sermon series. One is a book study of Esther. The rest are thematic, such as "Jesus and Women," which covers five Gospel accounts like the woman at the well of John 4 and the Syrophoenician woman of Mark 7. These series could be used for adult Bible studies as well.

The bulk of the book contains brief preaching commentaries for each passage it treats. The commentaries cite scholarly research, engage with the original languages, and reflect genuine pastoral care. Each commentary is followed by three thought-provoking questions for further reflection and application of the text.

This reviewer especially appreciated how Wilcox shares the arc of her spiritual journey, her hermeneutic, and her pastoral concerns in the frontmatter. Where her commentaries differ most noticeably from the evangelical perspective is regarding the nature and character of God—from which other differences naturally flow. For example, the homiletical idea for the LORD's annunciation to Sarah in Genesis 18 could be, "Nothing is too wondrous for Yahweh, who faithfully keeps His promises." In contrast, Wilcox speaks of "a God who can be wrathful and unpredictable" (158). She does not place texts within the overall narrative of the history of the Kingdom of the consistently good and holy Trinity.

For preachers in the liturgical traditions that include four readings (Old Testament, responsive Psalm, Gospel, and epistle) in their principal Sunday service, Wilcox's lectionary is two passages short any given Sunday. This limitation is unfortunate because the collection itself is not entirely comprehensive. Sarah, who is found in eight chapters of Genesis, is given only two readings in this lectionary. Athaliah, the only woman to rule as queen over Judah, is omitted altogether. There is thus room for further development here.

The value of this work for EHS members lies largely as a reference and springboard for its collation and liturgical

arrangement of many of the biblical texts related to women and femininity. Those who, like this reviewer, read Scripture from a traditional theological viewpoint, will likely differ from many of the interpretive decisions Wilcox presents in her commentary.

How to Preach the Prophets for All Their Worth. By Andrew G. M. Hamilton. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022. 978-1-6667-3622-9, 236 pp., $30.00.

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

Rare is the book that one can recommend without reservation. Nearly all members of this Society will find *How to Preach the Prophets for All Their Worth* to be such a book. Andrew Hamilton provides readers with precisely what his work's subtitle claims: *A Hermeneutical, Homiletical, and Theological Guide to Unleash the Power of the Prophets.*

Hamilton is professor of preaching and Old Testament at the Italian Evangelical Biblical Institute and serves on the leadership team of the Bible Teachers and Preachers Networks at the European Leadership Forum. The same dedication to sound exegesis, genre sensitivity, and practical homiletical instruction that one finds in Steve Mathewson's volume on preaching Old Testament narrative and in Ken Langley's work on preaching the Psalms, appears in Hamilton's book on the prophetic corpus.

Why preach the prophets? Hamilton tackles that question first, pointing to the examples of Jesus and the apostles, the value of the prophets' messages, and the inherent genius of their rhetoric as more than enough reason to blow the dust off their all-but-forgotten sermons. And make no mistake about it, insists Hamilton, the prophets were preachers! Because of that, he turns in the second and longer part of his book to the question of how to preach the prophets. His answer includes the common guidelines one would expect to find in any "how to read the

Bible" styled handbook but go well beyond that to include thoughtful discussions on the foretelling aspect of prophecy, the prophets in their historical contexts, how to preach the prophets' sermons like the prophets themselves did, and how to connect the prophets to Christ and the church.

The book is written in a clear and accessible style sometimes reminiscent of Haddon Robinson's works and either refers to or quotes him here and there throughout its pages. Helpful diagrams, sample sermon excerpts, and/or preaching ideas augment the ideas expounded in each chapter.

What's not to like? Well, Hamilton advocates for a Christ-centered versus theocentric hermeneutic, even though he acknowledges there are occasions for the latter. He suggests that all sermon series should be Christocentric but not every single sermon. All in all, *How to Preach the Prophets for All Their Worth* is a balanced book that will be a welcome addition to any pastor's shelf or professor's classroom, particularly if the subject is genre-sensitive preaching or preaching the Bible's literary prophets.

Pandemic Preaching: The Pulpit in a Year Like No Other. By David H. Garcia. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021. 978-1-6667-3050-0, 248 pp., $28.00.

Reviewer: *Kevin Maples, First Baptist Church, Madisonville, KY.*

Pandemic Preaching is a collection of sixty homilies composed from March 29, 2020, through March 21, 2021, by David H. Garcia, a Catholic priest serving as rector of San Fernando Cathedral. While the intended audience appears to be lay people seeking devotional material, the book is useful for preachers and teachers of preaching as it provides a snapshot of Catholic preaching. By including every homily from a given year instead of a select sampling of the very best, this collection provides students with a more realistic view of the challenge of preaching weekly to the same congregation.

A confessed news junkie, Garcia incorporates events from the week in almost every homily, often asserting his personal political views. His bridge from the ancient text to the modern audience appears brilliant at times and forced at others. While preaching Mark 1:1-8, Garcia proclaims: "If John the Baptist were alive today, and in this country, I think he would be marching in the Black Lives Matter protests, carrying a simple sign with one word on it: Repent!" (155). On Father's Day, Garcia uses the statement, "Several Black Americans killed by police were also dads," (57) to make a connection between the Black Lives Matter movement and Jesus's statement in Matthew that people are worth more than many sparrows (10:31).

Garcia identifies the talk Jesus gave on the road to Emmaus as the inspiration for his homiletical method. He summarizes: "First, understand what is happening in the lives of the people. Second, shine the light of Scripture on those experiences. Third, leave the hearers with questions" (x). To his credit, he appears to practice what he preaches in terms of homiletical method.

Evangelical readers will naturally find fault with Garcia's theology. He presents the gospel accounts as "theology, not history" (161). When preaching the account of Mary visiting Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–47), he proclaims, "This is not necessarily an accurate account of what happened. It does not all make sense" (161). Regarding salvation, he says, "Final salvation is not guaranteed. The fact we are baptized or have received sacraments, even though they help, is not enough" (138). In another homily, he teaches, "The surprise for the good and the bad is that in everyday actions they see Christ and can earn their salvation if they so choose" (146).

One aspect of Garcia's preaching that should be emulated is his attention to the words of the text. For example, he explains, "It is significant that the disciples call Jesus 'Lord' in the gospel, while Judas calls him 'Rabbi,' a term used in the gospel by unbelievers" (7). When preaching from the Gospels, he often compares parallel passages, drawing the reader's attention to details of the text.

It is difficult to see any new contribution to homiletics in *Pandemic Preaching*, except for providing material for a case study of preaching during a national or global crisis. A comparison of *Pandemic Preaching* with Chrysostom's famous *The Homilies on the Statues* could be an excellent research project on crisis preaching. Perhaps the best use of the book for members of this Society is as a tool to introduce students to a different tradition of preaching, thereby broadening their perspective of current preaching practices.

Disastrous Preaching: Preaching in the Aftermath of a Natural Environmental Disaster. By Jeff Stanfill. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022. 978-1-6667-3219-1, 146 pp., $23.00.

Reviewer: *Christian Schmitt, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (graduate).*

In this outgrowth from his 2019 Clamp Divinity School D.Min. project, Jeff Stanfill provides an excellent introduction to the challenge and opportunity of preaching in the wake of a "natural environmental disaster" (NED). Several ideas recur throughout his book. Theologically, he understands weather and NEDs as God's good creation twisted out of proportion by the Fall. Devotionally, he urges both preachers to highlight, despite a NED's temporary disruption to everyday life, that God is immutably good and faithfully attentive to His people. The local and universal church, similarly, has an unchangeable purpose of evangelism, discipleship, and service. He also encourages victims to ask questions honestly of God in good, Job-like faith; preachers, likewise, should embrace a level of epistemic humility, especially relating to NEDs' unknowable-to-humans ultimate purpose. Most listeners need compassion, not an ironclad theodicy, reminds Stanfill, were such a theodicy even possible. There is, in short, much to be preached in the wake of a

NED. Thankfully, since the recovery process is long, post-NED preachers will be greatly helped by Stanfill's many observations.

The book's first section relates the author's personal experience while pastoring in Baton Rouge during a catastrophic 2016 flood. It is no surprise that a preacher's storytelling, like Stanfill's here, is so effective; especially for those without training for or experience of NEDs, his account powerfully demonstrates the urgency of homiletic preparation for such an event. The second section gives targeted commentary on a number of biblical NEDs, essentially cataloging possible preaching ideas upon which a post-disaster preacher might draw. Stanfill then catalogues the various domains of NEDs' effects on their victims (physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and communal) and possible homiletical responses. The final section encourages faithful pastoral and preacherly presence after a NED, bringing together Stanfill's advice to pastors about their assessment of the disaster and about their own callings as Christian leaders who are Christians themselves.

Stanfill's work is short, filled with practical information, and transparent, which makes it especially valuable for pastors and preachers whose reserves of time and energy are drained in the aftermath of a NED. The book would be a wise read for any pastor seeking to prepare for potential NEDs. Similarly, it would be a sensible supplemental reading in any homiletics or pastoral ministry syllabus. It is sufficiently accessible to the most introductory of courses, yet thematizes subjects unlikely considered by even advanced students.

Although Stanfill does not use the term, it is encouraging to see another solidly evangelical foray into preaching and trauma, which has been on the cutting edge of mainline homiletical inquiry and, until recently, entirely outside of evangelical interest. Despite the fact, then, that Stanfill offers very little scholarly rigor, this reviewer hopes that his work will catalyze a more thorough outworking of an evangelical homiletic of trauma and disaster. Indeed, Stanfill's writing undoubtably already contains many of the foundations of such a homiletic; it

is relevant not only to NEDs but to many other forms of personal and congregational trauma as well.

The weaknesses of the book are minor. For instance, he repeatedly assumes that community organizers outside of any Christian framework will ask pastors to address NED-related community gatherings and encourages pastors to accept such invitations. Stanfill thus seems to assume a degree of Christian alliance with its surrounding community. While this may certainly be the case in some contexts, it will be less so in other geographical settings. Future work, then, should modify and expand Stanfill's framework to account for post-Christian settings. On the other hand, it is perhaps not inaccurate to describe the long-rising post-Christian cultural tides as disasters in their own right, which establishes a relevance for Stanfill's work to every Western preacher, regardless of their eventual experience of NEDs.

Despite the attention paid to exegetical and sermonic ideas and suggested applications, relatively little thought is given to post-NED sermonic *form* beyond the admonition to preach with greater-than-usual simplicity and brevity. Perhaps the wide variety of congregations' and preachers' customary forms makes such advice impractical, yet one cannot help but wonder how preachers might adjust the shapes of their sermons, rather than just their sizes or contents, after a NED. Finally, such a practical book as Stanfill's would benefit greatly from the inclusion of sample sermons or sample outlines for a longer timeframe of post-disaster preaching. Such a supplement, even as an online appendix, would enable the author to teach by example and to show, rather than merely tell.

From Ancient Text to Valid Application: A Practical Exploration of Pericopal Theology in Preaching. By Josiah D. Boyd. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021. 978-1-6667-2514-8, 143 pp., $24.00.

Reviewer: *Russell St. John, Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO.*

In *From Ancient Text to Valid Application*, Josiah Boyd offers a lightly modified D.Min. thesis that seeks to test the profitability of Abraham Kuruvilla's "pericopal theology and a christiconic hermeneutic" (46) for sermon application. Boyd merits commendation for his high view of Scripture and his zeal for valid, text-driven application, and he communicates the purposes, methods, and results of his project with clarity. Ultimately, however, Boyd's work suffers weaknesses that limit its value to the readers of this Journal.

Boyd's project lacked a control group, and he deserves credit for acknowledging this weakness (83). While Boyd's results indicate that his sheep emerged from a four-part expository preaching series on the book of Jonah with improved understanding of the Scripture, improved understanding of Boyd's theological convictions about the text, and improved understanding of his applications of it, Boyd employed only Kuruvilla's pericopal theology and christiconic hermeneutic in crafting each sermon. He created no similar preaching series utilizing an alternate hermeneutical method in order to enable comparison. Boyd therefore notes that his results ought, in some sense, to be "expected when sitting under Bible-based preaching, regardless of methodology" (76). The best that Boyd can say is that his sheep grew through his expository series, but not that they grew because he employed Kuruvilla's method in particular. "Ultimately, there was no control group that could increase the confidence that it was indeed the pericopal theology and christiconic hermeneutic responsible for the change observed" (83).

The structure of Boyd's project almost guaranteed that his sheep scored better on the after-test than on the pre-test. Knowing the theology and application points he intended to preach in his sermon series, Boyd crafted questions designed to reveal whether his listeners captured those very points (47-48). In other words, he created test questions based upon the sermons

he had already written, and then preached the answers to the questions the test contained. His results therefore don't so much indicate the extent to which his sheep learned *because of* Kuruvilla's hermeneutic as much as they indicate the extent to which his sheep retained the substance of their pastor's preaching, regardless of the hermeneutic he employed in constructing his sermons. There really wasn't any way to avoid this dynamic, and Boyd understands the "potential limitation" that his sheep "simply regurgitated what they had memorized from the individual messages presented rather than underst[anding] the movement from text to praxis being demonstrated" (83).

Boyd nevertheless stands convinced of the supremacy of Kuruvilla's hermeneutic, for he believes it produces objectively valid applications flowing from objectively valid interpretations (85). If the reader grants the correctness of Kuruvilla's hermeneutical method, then he or she may agree with his theological interpretations of any given pericope. And if the reader grants Kuruvilla's theological interpretations, then he or she may agree with his particular applications. But what if Kuruvilla's hermeneutic itself is flawed? Boyd assumes the supremacy of Kuruvilla's method rather than establishing it, and his conclusions about its usefulness feel more like a *fait accompli* than the result of critical investigation.

In Appendix A, Boyd lists the theological foci for each of his four Jonah pericopes (91-95), which he developed in conjunction with Kuruvilla himself (50, note 14). They offer a fascinating practical window into Kuruvilla's hermeneutical method, and they do prove one of Boyd's key points—hermeneutical methods matter. Inasmuch as this reviewer approaches Jonah from a different hermeneutical posture than Kuruvilla and Boyd, he reaches different theological conclusions about the text. In some sense, the reader must assume the accuracy of Kuruvilla's method in order to agree with his theological foci, and the accuracy of his theological foci in order to agree that his applications are objectively "valid." Although Boyd rightly fears unchecked subjectivity in application, he

seems unable or unwilling to acknowledge the subjectivity inherent to *every* interpretive method.

In seeking valid applications from pericopal theology only, Boyd unfortunately precludes applications drawn from redemptive-historical, biblical, or systematic theologies (54). Following Kuruvilla, Boyd does so in search of a replicable, mechanical method for ascertaining and proclaiming valid applications from each text—a laudable goal. But in the process, he anathematizes two thousand years of profitable applications flowing from other hermeneutical streams (45), and insists that faithful preachers must confine themselves to the use of a hermeneutical method that boasts little more than a decade of limited use.

Ultimately, Boyd's work depends so thoroughly on Kuruvilla that the readers of this Journal ought to go directly to Kuruvilla's own work in order to evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of his hermeneutical method.

Circles in the Stream: Index, Identification, and Intertext: Reading and Preaching the Story of Judah in Genesis 37-50. By Paul E. Koptak. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022. 978-1-6667-3532-1, 133 pp., $20.

Reviewer: *Stephen Stallard, Western Seminary, Portland, OR.*

When perusing *Circles in the Stream,* by Paul Koptak, one immediately notices how committed he is to a close and careful reading of the Scriptures. He asserts, "[T]his is a book about using literary-rhetorical criticism to read Scripture for preaching" (10). As a preacher (and as a professor emeritus of preaching), he understands that preachers feel the urgency of connecting the text of Scripture with the context of the lives of those who listen to their sermons. Yet, Koptak believes that preachers can re-center the Bible in such a way that it removes

this pressure. According to Koptak, the connections abound within Scripture.

The controlling metaphor of *Circles in the Stream* is that of a rock thrown into a river, producing countless ripples across the surface of the water. For Koptak, the Scriptures continue to produce ripples that touch modern hearers. In this way, Scripture is relevant to lived experiences. The slim volume is a summary and appropriation of Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theories. Central to *Circles in the Stream* is Burke's idea of consubstantiality. According to Koptak, this can refer to the way in which modern readers of the Bible are standing with the characters of the biblical drama.

At its heart, *Circles in the Stream* is about helping preachers to read the Bible better so that they can preach it in such a way that they lead their listeners into the sacred story as ongoing participants. Koptak proposes a three-step method: find connections within a text (index), find connections with a life issue (identification), and find connections within the canon (intertext). Koptak provides a chapter on each of these methodological moves.

The author is at his best when he weds literary-rhetorical analysis with preaching. He models a thick engagement with the Scriptures, with the goal of "letting the text have its say" (21). In his sample sermons (one for each chapter), Koptak uses the Judah narrative from Genesis 37-50 as a case study. Instead of focusing upon the more prominent Joseph stories, Koptak traces Judah's narrative arc in order to demonstrate his model's efficacy for preaching these challenging texts.

The most difficult feature of this unique homiletical contribution was the at-times dense discussions of the rhetorical theories of Kenneth Burke. While appropriate for homileticians, these advanced forays into rhetorical theory seemed inaccessible to the typical pastor-preacher. An appropriation of Burke's theories, without the discussion of more advanced topics, would have made this book more valuable for those who must stand behind the "sacred desk" every Sunday. All in all, *Circles in the*

Stream is a helpful reminder that reading the Bible closely is essential to preaching the Bible correctly.

Jude: An Oral and Performance Commentary. By David Seal. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021. 978-1-6667-3029-6, 116 pp., $20.00.

Reviewer: *Harry Strauss, Horizon College and Seminary, Saskatoon, SK.*

This insightful commentary addresses what might be deemed an overlooked book. Jude receives limited attention from preachers and teachers, but David Seal seeks to correct this oversight.

Jude, of course, focuses largely on the challenge of false teachers, and ultimately concludes with a call to perseverance coupled with a beautiful blessing. But Seal's commentary addresses more than the content of Jude's short letter. His primary focus is on how Jude says what he says, with particular attention to the implied or explicit oral performance features embedded or suggested by the content. As the subtitle suggests, the book is about the oral performance dynamics inherent in the book of Jude.

The author addresses topics such as rhythm, triplets, impersonation, alliteration, rhetorical style, parallelism, similes, and amplification, all of which are important to hearing and understanding Jude. He also provides helpful insight into the background and role of the reader in New Testament times, as about only 20% of people could read then. It was an oral world. Though his book focuses largely on how the epistle was meant to be read, Seal consistently comes back to the content or message of Jude, with an application emphasis for each section.

Seal has made a significant contribution to the understanding of Jude. Indeed, in praise of the book, one writer says that "David Seal has written a ground-breaking commentary." This reviewer would be inclined to agree. It is

short and concise, yet packed with helpful information and insights not only for Jude but readily transferable to other portions of the Bible. How does one best read biblical content in a public setting? Are there indicators within the text on what oral delivery might look like? Equally, are there any indicators of aural implications within the written text? Jude was written with the listening audience in mind—important then, and equally important today.

The author clearly has a depth of knowledge and understanding of the importance of oral presentation. It is reflected through the entire book. He also introduces the reader to terms such as homoeoteleuton, onomatopoeia, and epanaphora. Thankfully, definitions and examples are provided! Beyond the new terms, three take-ways (among others) for this reviewer included: (1) Jude's extensive and intentional use of triplets, which the author suggests as contributing to a collective expectancy (36); (2) the excessive rhetoric used against false teachers as comparable to a modern-day political speech; and (3) the large proportion of powerful vowels in the doxology which contributes to the grandeur of praise for God (91). Fascinating insights!

There might have been one or two places where the reviewer wondered if more was being read into the text than was originally intended, but that was perhaps more the reviewer's reaction to the newness and freshness of the material. Again, a very insightful book. This slim commentary certainly merits attention, particularly from anyone about to preach from Jude.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

The Evangelical Homiletics Society (EHS) convened its inaugural meeting in October of 1997, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, at the initiative of Drs. Scott M. Gibson of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Keith Willhite of Dallas Theological Seminary. Professors Gibson and Willhite desired an academic society for the exchange of ideas related to instruction of biblical preaching.

Specifically, the EHS was formed to advance the cause of Biblical Preaching through:

> promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching increased competence for teachers of preaching integration of the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics

The EHS membership consists primarily of homiletics professors from North American seminaries and Bible Colleges who hold to evangelical theology, and thus treat preaching as the preaching of God's inspired Word. The EHS doctrinal statement is that of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Purpose:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is designed to engage readers with articles dealing with the best research and expertise in preaching. Readers will be introduced to literature in the field of homiletics or related fields with book reviews. Since the target audience of the journal is scholars/practitioners, a sermon will appear in each edition which underscores the commitment of the journal to the practice of preaching.

Vision:

The vision of the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is to provide academics and practitioners with a journal that informs and equips readers to become competent teachers of preaching and excellent preachers.

General Editor:

The General Editor has oversight of the journal. The General Editor selects suitable articles for publication and may solicit article suggestions from the Editorial Board for consideration for publication. The General Editor works cooperatively with the Book Review Editor and the Managing Editor to ensure the timely publication of the journal.

Book Review Editor:

The Book Review Editor is responsible for the Book Review section of the journal. The Book Review Editor contacts publishers for books to review and receives the books from publishers. The Book Review Editor sends books to members of the Society who serve as book reviewers. The reviewers then forward their written reviews to the Book Review Editor in a timely manner. The Book Review Editor works in coordination with the General Editor for the prompt publication of the journal.

Managing Editor:

The Managing Editor has oversight of the business matters of the journal. The Managing Editor solicits advertising, coordinates the subscription list and mailing of the journal, and works with the General Editor and Book Review Editor to ensure a timely publication of the journal.

Editorial Board:

The Editorial Board serves in advising the General Editor in the publication of articles for the journal. The Editorial Board serves as a jury for articles considered for publication. The Editorial Board consists of no more than five members. Board members are approved at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and hold a two-year appointment.

Frequency of Publication:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is published twice a year: March and September.

Jury Policy:

Articles submitted to the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society are blind juried by members of the Editorial Board. In addition, the General Editor may ask a scholar who is a specialist to jury particular articles.

The General Editor may seek articles for publication from qualified scholars. The General Editor makes the final publication decisions. It is always the General Editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

Submission Guidelines

1. Manuscripts should be submitted in electronic form. All four margins should be at least one inch, and each should be consistent throughout. Please indicate the program in which the article is formatted, preferably, Microsoft Word (IBM or MAC).

2. Manuscripts should be double-spaced. This includes the text, indented (block) quotations, notes, and bibliography. This form makes for easier editing.

3. Neither the text, nor selected sentences, nor subheads should be typed all-caps.

4. Notes should be placed at the end of the manuscript, not at the foot of the page. Notes should be reasonably close to the style advocated in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 3rd edition (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1988) by Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert. That style is basically as follows for research papers:

   a. From a book:

   note: 23. John Dewey, *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (Ann Arbor, 1894), 104.

   b. From a periodical:

   note: 5. Frederick Barthelme, "Architecture," *Kansas Quarterly* 13:3 (September 1981): 77-78.

   c. Avoid the use of op. cit.
   Dewey 111.

5. Those who have material of whatever kind accepted for publication must recognize it is always the editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

6. Manuscripts will be between 1,500 and 3,000 words, unless otherwise determined by the editor.

Abbreviations

Please do not use abbreviations in the text. Only use them for parenthetical references. This includes the names of books of the Bible and common abbreviations such as "e.g." (the full reference, "for example" is preferred in the text). Citations of books, articles, websites are expected. Please do not use "p./pp." for "page(s)," or "f./ff." for "following." Precise page numbers or verse numbers are expected, not "f./ff."

Captalization

Capitalize personal, possessive, objective, and reflexive pronouns (but not relative pronouns) when referring to God: "My, Me, Mine, You, He, His, Him, Himself," but "who, whose, whom."

Direct Quotes

Quotations three or more lines long should be in an indented block. Shorter quotes will be part of the paragraph and placed in quotation marks.

Scripture quotations should be taken from the NIV. If the quotation is from a different version, abbreviate the name in capital letters following the reference. Place the abbreviation in parentheses: (Luke 1:1-5, NASB).

Headings

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These headings are within the First-level section and are to be flush left, in italic in upper and lower case, and also separate from the paragraph that follows.

Notes

All notes should be endnotes, the same size as the main text with a hard return between each one.

Submission and Correspondence

Manuscripts should be sent to the attention of the General Editor. Send an email with attached Word document to: scott_gibson@baylor.edu

Address correspondence to Scott M. Gibson, General Editor, Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Baylor University's Truett Seminary, One Bear Place #97126, Waco, TX 76798-7126

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