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. A copy of the article on computer disc must also accompany the submission. The disc may be IBM or MAC compatible. Please include a self-addressed and stamped envelope to: Scott M. Gibson, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 130 Essex Street, South Hamilton, MA 10982. 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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The Journal of the
Evangelical Homiletics Society

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.

Here We Stand [and Preach]…...We Cannot Do Otherwise

by Scott M. Gibson

Preacher Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms to give defense of his protestant views: "Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen!"

Some scholars have questioned whether or not the "here I stand. I cannot do otherwise," were actually Luther's. Whether the statement is a legend or reality, for preachers – and probably Martin Luther – when we are before a congregation to expound God's Word, that is what we are called to do, preach – we cannot do otherwise.

This edition of the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society explores what it means to stand before one's listeners and preach, considering the theological presuppositions of preaching and the process of sermon delivery. The first article is by Dave McClellan as he examines the nature of orality in preaching. McClellan's article was awarded the Keith Willhite Award, voted by members at the annual meeting (October 2005) as being the outstanding paper presented. The Keith Willhite Award is given in memory of the late co-founder and second president, Dr. Keith Willhite.

The second and third articles are by Bryan Chapell, the plenary speaker at the October 2005 Evangelical Homiletics Society meeting at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Chapell explored the contours of the conference theme: "Show Me the Truth: Illustration, Metaphor and Example in Preaching." Notice how in both articles Chapell carefully and thoughtfully deals with the theological strengths and weaknesses of current issues in homiletical thinking. The first article, "Preaching His Story: Narrative Paths,

Problems and Promise" and the second article, "The Story of the Gospel Applied to Exposition," will help readers to preach more thoughtfully, theologically, and biblically.

Wayne McDill contributes the fourth article in this edition, "Low-Tech Preaching in a High-Tech Age." Dr. McDill deftly challenges readers' possible presuppositions against the age-old use of oral communication compared to the current trend of using technology in preaching.

Timothy S. Warren joins the discussion with "Presence in Persuasion." Dr. Warren carefully leads the reader through an analysis of the essence of presence through images and emotions, thus aiding persuasion.

Finally, the sermon, "Bringing Tidings to Zion," is by Ken Langley, senior pastor of Christ Community Church in Zion, Illinois and an adjunct professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. The sermon was preached at the 2005 meeting.

The articles are followed by a hearty collection of book reviews. Readers will appreciate the insightful and helpful comments written by our reviewers.

As teachers of preaching we want our students – and all those who preach – to understand well the why and how of preaching. When our students – who know the why and the how of preaching – stand before their congregations they, like Luther, will be compelled to say, "Here I stand – to preach. I cannot do otherwise." And they can mean it.

Recovering a Sense of Orality in Homiletics

by Dave McClellan

Abstract

The newer trend in homiletics toward spontaneity is actually very old, going back to the days of primary orality, before literacy had established dominance in the communicative arena. Resources from the pre-modern world of orality (including metaphor, grounding in struggle, repetition, narrative structuring, classical invention, and dialogue) can serve to make the sermon a truly oral event even informing a post-modern homiletic setting.

Introduction

In 1891 Thomas Edison and his assistant William Dickson stunned the world with a demonstration of their revolutionary new machines: a Kinetograph to capture a rapid sequence of still photographs, and a Kinetoscope which enabled the viewer to see, for the first time, those still pictures dancing in what appeared to be motion. Up until that point, action had always been vaporous and fleeting. Once an event occurred, it was lost and unrepeatable. Edison made action documentable and repeatable. Suddenly, sight had an archive of motion, and Edison and his technological successors changed the way we think about experienced reality, which could now be captured and domesticated.

Thousands of years ago, a similarly revolutionary innovation changed the way humans interacted. From the dawn of civilization, speech had always been vaporous and fleeting. Once spoken, words, unless memorized, were lost forever. But it wasn't the tape recorder that produced the first change. It was something even more innovative, but strangely routine for us today: the alphabet, developed around 1500 B.C.[1]

Before the alphabet, sound could not be mapped. Though humans used language pervasively and communicated with precision and intelligence, nothing was documentable or even "parsable" by rules of grammar. It is almost impossible now, having so long breathed the air of literacy, to imagine what it was like to use language that was not broken up into discreet units of words, syllables, and letters. Imagine using the sound pattern "Get-me-that-cup" without conceiving the four separate words and their corresponding letters. It is almost impossible to think of the word "cup" without "seeing" the letters "c-u-p." But in earlier civilizations (earlier, but no less intelligent), the phoneme/word "cup" was only a noise, a patterned sound. "It" (the word, not the actual cup) did not exist anywhere else. This is what linguistic historians call a society of primary orality.

But as civilizations became more organized and centrally-governed, documentation became necessary. Starting as scratches and then pictographs, early scribes transferred concepts onto various writing surfaces to log payments, inventories, and invoices. Eventually they became more proficient at using symbols to stand for whole syllables (combining, in modern English equivalence, a symbol for a dog and an adjacent symbol for mother to forge and render the word "dogma," (which has no relation to dogs or motherhood).[2] Signs on paper were starting to lose their tight correspondence with actual physical items and adopt a looser more symbolic connotation. Symbols were starting to encompass complex and abstract ideas. But the real breakthrough was the alphabet.

Immersed as we are in literacy, we seldom think how revolutionary the alphabet was. Starting with the Semetic alphabet of consonants, and expanding with the Greek addition of vowels, the tools were in place to accurately map vocal sound (phonemes). For the first time, sounds could be mapped and transferred economically and accurately. With a wonderfully simple collection of roughly 20 alphabetic letters, almost any noise the human mouth could enunciate could be mapped and replicated. For the first time, people could mouth words they didn't personally conceive. Until that point, every speaker was an author. Now speakers, without any memorization, could ape the words of others, and audiences were confronted, for the first time, with secondhand (even borrowed or plagiarized) thoughts. Suddenly, sound—words— had an archive, and human thought and communicative interaction would never be the same.

Plato did a considerable amount of hand-wringing over this innovation. Although scholars have concluded that, ironically, Plato was responsible for a good deal of the shift toward abstract literate ways of thought, he also harbored grave misgivings about literacy.[3] In a sort of double irony, we only know of these misgivings about writing because he chose to document those misgivings in writing:

> Writing, Phaedrus, has this strange quality, and is very like painting; for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question they observe a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence. But if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing. And every word, when once it is written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak; when ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it, for it has no power to help or protect itself.[4]

Ong elaborates these dangers by pointing to literacy's tendency to separate knower from known. When this paper is finished, it can sit alone on a table, apparently alone and anonymous, ideas occupying

space. Its author can say, "Where's my paper?" and someone can reply "Right there on the table" in a way they never could in primary orality. It lives "out there" unnaturally exterior to me. In older times the question would have made no sense. "Where are my ideas?" "In your head. In your mind. In your mouth." Even, "In your memory." But not, "On the table." Ideas cannot live on a table.

Ong's point is that literacy literally remaps our thinking patterns toward abstract and extended modes of thought. It is not as if a text is merely literate until it is read aloud, at which point it becomes oral. Its very structure during composition will be radically different depending on whether it was produced out of a context of orality or literacy.

At the end of Ong's monumental and oft-quoted work, he lists areas of study that could be affected and/or informed by his understanding of this creative tension between orality and literacy. The list includes the usual suspects: Literary Theory, New Criticism, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Reader-Response Theory, and finally Social Science, Philosophy and Biblical Studies. Yet oddly enough, this Jesuit priest who preached on a regular basis for most of his life, never mentions connections between orality and homiletics. Such will be the line of inquiry for this paper. How would an understanding of the issue of orality/literacy inform the praxis of preaching (an undeniably oral event grounded in literacy)? Since Ong and other scholars of orality offer scant elaboration, the following suppositions will attempt to apply his groundwork to the tasks common to all preachers.

Expositional Literacy

Though not all preachers would describe themselves as "expositional," almost all would acknowledge that the homiletic task is in some sense grounded in the biblical text. So literacy is an unavoidable and appropriate starting point. If God is going to reveal himself through language, it would make sense that he would encode the revelation in literacy with its notable competence in accuracy, precision, transferability. That literacy has such strengths, no one

disputes. Even proponents of orality extol the superiority of literacy for many linguistic tasks. Note Ong's eloquent summary:

> Orality is not an ideal, and never was. To approach it positively is not to advocate it as a permanent state for any culture. Literacy opens possibilities to the word and to human existence unimaginable without writing. Oral cultures today value their oral traditions and agonize over the loss of these traditions, but I have never encountered or heard of an oral culture that does not want to achieve literacy as soon as possible.[5]

So much for the idea of returning to a golden age of primary orality. Ong clearly has no such agenda. Bertonneau draws out the supremacy of literacy in his analysis of Plato's dialogue with Protagoras. Protagoras has trouble matching wits with his more logical and literate counterpart. Whereas Protagoras is accustomed to getting by with story-telling and sophistic surface argument, Socrates slices and dices his opponent by detailed exposition of the poem they are mutually discussing. For Bertonneau, Socrates' arguments betray an extended form of argument made possible only with the precision of literacy.[6] Such precision comes in handy for any world view grounded in sacred text. Though the scriptures were originally delivered and recorded in a world where orality and literacy overlapped,[7] its commitment to alphabetic documentation would render literacy a necessary skill for every generation (after the original) to enjoy access to that text.

Douglas Burton-Christie examines early monastic practice to get a feel for the relationship of orality and literacy in the copying of scriptural manuscripts. According to Burton-Christie, hermetic monks privileged orality despite their long hours of dedication to the chirographic task. In their actual practice, they seemed to value learning through dialogue rather than learning through intellectual speculation. They were aware of the danger of a disembodied word. "In such a setting we find both a growing facility with literacy and a residual uneasiness toward the culture of textuality."[8]

Preaching Today

Today, however, the tables seem to have turned. Rather than monks grounded in orality forced by necessity to indulge in literacy, contemporary preachers seem quite grounded in literacy, forced every Sunday to dabble in a bit of orality called "the sermon." Like yesterday's monks both skills are required in the office of preacher. But the balance of power seems to have shifted. Preaching has become dominated by literacy in almost every tradition of preaching, regardless of the denomination of the church or the education of the pastor.

In the high church tradition, preaching is dominated by the liturgy, itself highly literate. The sermon is ensconced between pages of readings and recitations, all regulated by the omnipresent and continuously consulted liturgical notebook, in many respects functioning like a book of spells, holding the key to the authorized incantations. In lower church traditions, the sermon enjoys a more privileged status, often dominating the rest of the service. Yet it is no less literate than its high church counterpart. Surrounded by stacks of commentaries and popular books, the homiletician emerges from his private sanctuary of preparation with an extensive list of notes (or even a manuscript) on the scriptural text, which he then "delivers" to the assembled masses.

In both cases, high or low, literacy wins the day. Even the word "exposition" is interesting in its common use to describe the practice of preaching. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word as "The action of putting, or the condition of being put, out of a place; expulsion." It is also used to describe, in ancient societies, the practice of abandoning an unwanted child to death. More common usage is reflected in the third definition, "The action of putting out to public view; an instance of this; a display, show, exposure."[9] In all three cases, the expositor is in complete control over the material for exposition. There is a tone of mastery and dominance, even death. So how did such a word become used to describe the act of preaching a sermon? Just what is being exposed in a sermon? Allegedly, it is

the word of God.   But it often becomes an exposition of the preacher's intellect and, according to the dictates of literacy, a finished word, ready to "throw out" or "display."   It is disembodied and well under control.

Metaphorically, the literate preacher is the hunter, the forest is the scriptural text.   The sermon is the prey hidden in the forest.   Once captured, the sermon is field-dressed in study before the exposition of its carcass in the skeletal outline.   With electronic assistance, the outline is then projected onto the wall with PowerPoint precision so every bone of the word can be exposed to the duly impressed audience.   Much like mounting the conquered savage beast on the wall of the hunting lodge, the preacher mounts or "exposes" his skewered word on the wall, giving new meaning to the expression "six-point sermon."

Is this really what should describe preaching?   Does the literacy of the scriptural text require a literate "exposition" of that text?   Or has the preacher in such a case confused the nature of his source material with the nature of his presentation?   Does the written Word necessitate a literate sermon?

A preacher must be careful before committing too completely to the relative strengths and weaknesses of literacy.   The very strength of literacy in accurate preservation and transmission quickly becomes a weakness for the sermon, which lacks the authority and infallibility of its scriptural counterpart.[10]   Flawed sermon notes and outlines preserve inaccuracies for future sermons and future audiences, often taking on the same authoritative aura as the scripture text itself. Bauml calls this false sense of literary credibility "documentary reality"[11] and argues it endows discourse with a "factual" and "objective" sense that is absent in the unfolding of oral discourse. Literacy disguises the sense that a "fact" on paper is no more credible than the person who penned it, all appearances to the contrary. Perhaps parallel is the false sense of credibility granted by word processors and laser printers to otherwise mediocre term papers. Print claims authority - legitimate or not.

When the study and teaching of scripture becomes dominated by literacy, there may be unfortunate consequences, especially when those forces meet the less galvanized tendency of cultures still conditioned to think first in orality. Seminary students in Africa often do not know what do with the requirement to approach the text with pure literacy. "One response of the students is often to pay *lip* service [italics mine, should it perhaps be called "pen service?"] to Western biblical literacy and retreat into the safety of oral biblical literacy in their own worshiping community, safely out of sight of the professor. Three years of university training is abandoned the moment the student graduates."[12]

Although western students and audiences are more at home with a literate approach than their African counterparts, their overdependence upon literacy in preaching can be similarly counterproductive (even though sound has made a comeback in recent days with electronic voice-dominated media, creating what Ong calls "secondary orality" and the consequent widespread practice of recording sermons to tape or CD or radio broadcast).[13] It is still standard procedure to prepare a sermon, which will be, when delivered, an indisputably oral event, with almost exclusively literate resources, and then to expect that literate preparation to magically conform to the oral/aural arena where it has been sanctimoniously dropped. Ong calls this sort of orality, "chirographically organized orality,"[14] a sort of literacy posing as orality. There seems to be a striking discontinuity here.

What would it look like if orality was allowed to permeate the homiletic air? What if in preparation and delivery, sermons were to take on the not-insignificant advantages of oral construction and thought patterns? Would not this be more consonant with the communicative environment suggested by the act of public address? What would such a sermon look like?

Oral Preaching

The phrase "oral preaching" at first sounds redundant. Is not all preaching oral? All preaching is presented orally, but not all

preaching is prepared and structured in orality. Yet orality has an uncanny way of surviving even after literacy bosses it around. It survives in the margins of homiletic, outside established channels. "Indeed, the heroic view of a triumphant literacy pushing previous practices aside is being replaced by an understanding of the ways in which oral practices survive the challenge of literacy, and can indeed shape the cultural and social contexts within which literacy is adopted."[15]

One of the places orality has "held out" is in the folk preaching of the black church. "Prevented from learning how to read and write, slaves developed a highly oral tradition of folk preaching. Black folk preachers could not own their sermons because they did not write them down. Instead, they borrowed sermons from each other on the assumption that everyone creates language, and no one owns it."[16] Martin Luther King Jr. learned to preach not in his higher education at Boston University, but in the black church where he grew up. Because of his notable accomplishments, King scholars have spilt lots of ink dissecting King's preaching style and are among the few to connect homiletics with orality. John Patton's analysis is typical of these studies and will be used, in coordination with Ong himself, to flesh out a rough sense of homiletic orality.

Abandonment of Literate Reference Points

Patton is quick to note the increasing sense in which King jettisoned notes as he became more comfortable and grounded in his message. As a particular message or theme was told and retold, King gained a confidence to relinquish dependence on notes. "His young pulpit assistant, John Thomas Porter, was always impressed by how King would bring that text with him, but would leave it in his chair and ascend to the pulpit without any notes."[17] Indeed his most famous "I Have a Dream" speech gained, according to eyewitnesses, a surge in persuasive force when King set aside the notes he brought to the podium. Mrs. King recalls that the final climactic moments of that speech were marked when "King stopped reading from the text, being lifted and carried himself in the overflow of powerful feeling."[18]

This is no small endeavor for a preacher accustomed to the reassurances and prompting power of the literate sermonic "script." To operate without literate assistance requires a preacher to draw from something deeper and closer than abstract words on paper. It requires a certain "ownership" of the material at an experiential level, and demands the preacher have firsthand acquaintance with his subject matter. This daunting requirement keeps many preachers comfortably nestled into a literate preparation and delivery where the interpersonal risk is significantly lower.

Reliance upon Symbol and Metaphor

Another hallmark of oral preaching is its extensive use of visual images in metaphors, lending concreteness and familiarity to an otherwise abstract and unfamiliar idea. King would title his sermons "I Have A Dream" or "I've Been to The Mountaintop" or with reference to "Moses" and the "Promised Land."[19] Using already familiar symbols and metaphors draws the listener from the world of the known to the unknown, asking them to accept a new framing for an existing situation. Where literacy relies on the cogency of an extended argument to make a point, orality appeals to already understood relationships that metaphorically provide the missing insight.

People already understand what a dream is and how it functions. There is no need to explain that. But they may have never connected a dream with the fuel to provoke change in the here and now. The dream metaphor draws in the audience and does a good deal of the persuasive work enthymatically, automatically.

Grounding in Noble Struggle

Borrowing from Ong, Patton identifies King's speech as "agonistic in tone"; speech that "situates knowledge concretely within the human lifeworld and, most importantly, in the context of a struggle, a dynamic polarization of the world of good and evil."[20] Anchoring a sermon in agonistic struggle pulls the audience toward identification

with the speaker and the message. When a preacher accurately describes and intimates familiarity with the struggles of the parishioner, they are irresistibly drawn toward participation, sensing a stake in the yet undecided outcome.

Patton martials Walter Fisher's understanding of narrative rationality to build this agonistic identification. "The operative principle of narrative rationality is identification rather than deliberation."[21] An orally structured sermon will tend to say less of, "This is my point" and more of "This is our challenge. This is our struggle."

Episodic Narrative Structuring

Orality and narrative are often connected. But when Ong makes the connection he has a particular kind of narrative in mind. Distinguished from what he calls the narrative of a "climactic linear plot" possible only in literacy, Ong describes oral narrative as epic and episodic.[22] That is, it doesn't attempt to construct an elaborate and interconnected linear plot with precise chronological timings (as in a detective novel). Instead, the epic poet would naturally drop the listener *"in media res,"* or "in the middle of things."

A sermon structured around episodic narrative is not actually a carefully-crafted long story that is released scene by scene. It is connected more thematically than chronologically (as is a good deal of scriptural narrative) and feels free to flash both backward and forward, with timed sequence at the service of theme. Connected episodes carry the story, and each episode illustrates the central theme.

This is important for homiletic application. If a preacher understands a narrative structure to mean that her sermon begins with "Once upon a time" and stays in a singular story line until a climactic end, the discontinuity with traditional preaching will be so great, that the entire narrative project will be dismissed as "mere" storytelling, and a task unworthy of the serious exegete. Yet this same preacher might be convinced to consider stringing together

interconnected and reinforcing episodes on a common theme to form a consistent "story."

Redundancy as Reinforcement

Ong describes repetition as a necessary feature of orality. In literacy, repetition is not as important because the reader can always go back and check a text if something is unclear or forgotten. The progression of thought can unfold quickly since the reader is in control of how fast the material comes. Not so in orality. Complex ideas must be approached repeatedly and with different nuances, giving the listener's mind a chance to catch it on a second or third pass. "Since redundancy characterized oral thought and speech, it is in a profound sense more natural to thought and speech than is sparse linearity."[23]

Listen to actual conversations and hear a tremendous amount of redundancy, prompted both by a desire to clarify another's ideas, and by a need to clarify one's own. For it is in speaking that we sometimes find out what we mean. But it is an inexact process of trying out ideas live, in the moment. Unless we face a situation of extreme duress, we rarely rehearse interactions ahead of time, but allow them to spill out in a mutual series of testing and clarification. Oral preaching will have this kind of natural redundancy. But preachers attempting an oral style should be cautioned against using the actual sermon to "find out what they mean." Such testings and refinements can be done before the sermon, during preparation, to eliminate redundancy caused by tentative or conflicted ideas. Sermons that have been spoken several times before actual delivery benefit from natural fluency forged in the rehearsal of ideas. Redundancy in such cases will serve as reinforcement instead of brute repetition.

Interactive Mutuality

Ong's word for this factor is "participatory."[24] Patton talks about a sense of "mutuality." "The possibility for such mutuality is centered

on the very nature of speech as oral sound."[25] In either case the idea is that the sermon is affected by the immediate context of delivery and adapted in some way to the actual listener. The nature of sound is a factor here. It has the ability to penetrate in a way visual images, as refractions of light, do not. According to Ong, sight reveals surfaces, exteriority. Sound reveals essence, immediacy, and interiority.[26]

When the preacher is reciting a prepared text or flashing it up on a screen, although the words are delivered orally, the literate grounding is intuitively sensed by the audience with a consequential loss of mutuality. There is no give and take in the finished work; no sense of shared space. The delivery is monological and "outside" the speaker and the audience. It lives independently of them. Oral preaching, on the other hand, evaporates upon completion, and there is a sense of unrepeatability, of its essence as a product of the gathering, not of prior preparation.

Analysis of the Homiletic Task

That literacy is important is not in question. That literacy is an important factor in preaching in not in question. What is in question is whether the resources of literacy or those of orality are more proper to the preaching situation. Bertonneau quoting Thoreau's Walden lays out the difference clearly. "The orator yields to the inspiration of a transient occasion, and speaks to those who can hear him. But the writer, whose more equable life is his occasion, speaks to all who in any age can understand him."[27] Is the preacher speaking to all in every age? Then she should write and read her sermons. Is the preacher speaking to his specific congregation, from the scriptural text, to their specific situation? Then he should cultivate the resources of orality.

Common to all these hallmarks of oral preaching in a sense of spontaneity not present when literacy dominates. But is it really responsible to advocate a spontaneous homiletic? Do we really want preachers shooting from the hip each Sunday and spouting whatever

comes to mind in the passion of a gathered hearing? Are we advocating widespread rollout of a revivalist preaching technique complete with saliva spray and impassioned pacing of the platform? What about the myriads of preachers who are simply not comfortable "thinking on their feet?" Are they doomed to the predictable cadence of literate preaching? Can spontaneity be grounded, rational, and clear?

Of course it can. Otherwise every speaker before literacy would have been on the level of a raging lunatic. Primary orality had tools to regulate oratory. These tools are very old, the product of millennia of trial and error, and were recorded in the process of making rhetoric systematic (written documentation of oral techniques). They were designed to balance spontaneity with rationality. Although a thorough listing of them is beyond the scope of this paper, there is at least one ancient practice that deserves brief mention.

Invention through Stasis

Invention was first in the Roman canon of rhetoric (the others being arrangement, style, memory and delivery). It is at the stage of invention, that an orator would thoroughly dissect the issue at hand. "Its mainstays, the generative system of the topics and the analytical system of stasis, were introspective, but their application was outward toward a variety of audiences and situations."[28] Stasis consisted of "a series of questions that determine the nature of the case and thus the required strategy. The system allowed the rhetor to winnow through the material of the case and decide upon the area of clash... In essence a system of stasis served to focus the rhetor on the key strategy and was consequently right at the heart of rhetorical invention."[29]

This sort of detailed and exhaustive probing of the subject and the circumstances was a process that armed the rhetor with enough grasp of the issue to speak with a sense of spontaneity. In other words, invention was designed to produce a highly informed rhetor who, prior to any public address, had been forced to think exhaustively about an issue from a variety of angles. This is in sharp contrast

with the literate model of researching the commentaries for the authoritative word, and then transferring the correct interpretation to the sermon outline.

Extensive invention is the price a rhetor has to pay to be equipped to move in the circles of orality with confidence and fluency and without the security blanket of nearby scrawled notes.[30] This is the homework that is essential for orality to work, and should not be confused with a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants style of spontaneous blustering. At one level, it takes more preparation (but fewer toner cartridges) to work in orality than in literacy. The literate mind does not have to embrace the content with the same level of expertise required in orality. The literate orator can always, and always does, make recourse to written prompts-encouraging a surface or stilted acquaintance with the issues or the parroting of stock approaches.[31] In delivery, the orally-based orator has a significant advantage when his intimate and personal acquaintance with the content lends a sense of conviction, Aristotelian ethos, and uninterrupted eye contact with the audience.[32]

Refinement Through Dialogue

Another horizon for an oral grounding is the possibility for dialogue to play a substantial role in homiletic preparation. The world of literacy prizes the scholar's ability to work in private and deliver, at the last moment, the public word. Sensing the power of speech to refine thought, the oral preacher utilizes other significant people in the process of preparation. Once a preacher has previewed or tested ideas in a small group setting, with his or her spouse, with a worship leader or another pastor, the thoughts are not only refined in dialogue, but embedded with fluency. By the time an oral preacher takes the pulpit, the ideas of the sermon have already been pronounced numerous times in various settings. Far from removing all sense of suspense, the preacher gains the trickle-down value of multiplying the ownership of the sermon and the vested interests in getting those ideas out. It actually approaches a shared homiletic where those in dialogue sense their power to affect the sermon's

delivery.   More scholarship is needed to connect dialogue with homiletics, but the possibilities seem obvious, if not common.

Augustine's Homiletic Method

St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo was a gifted orator, and often in the course of his travels was called upon to serve as a guest preacher. His method of preparation was to read and meditate extensively on the early lectionary scripture text(s) corresponding to the then current week. This served as his stage of invention and *stasis*. If and when he was obliged to speak, he preached spontaneously, drawing upon the meditation and invention that flowed naturally out of his study, and melding it fluently with the exigencies of the actual situation. "Preparation like this still allows one to say that Augustine, as any orator in antiquity, was mainly improvising.   The only written assistance Augustine allowed sometimes to himself was the Sacred Scriptures."[33]   Indeed, Fitzgerald documents instances where the lector "read the wrong gospel lesson and substituted another reading for the responsorial psalm which he had requested and prepared, Augustine on both occasions accommodated himself to the lector's mistake."[34]   He seems to have been in essence a walking sermon waiting for the invitation to speak.

"Augustine's concept of style is focused much more toward the experiential and oral dimension of language."[35] Speaking of Augustine's most overtly rhetorical work, *On Christian Doctrine,* Purcell concludes "Thus the hallmark of the first medieval rhetorical work is its view of rhetoric as a living entity that must be adapted to its purpose and time rather than as a collection of rules that must be memorized and imposed on any rhetorical situation."[36]

How many of today's preachers have the deep grounding and intimacy with theology to be able to speak almost extemporaneously on the day's reading? In one sense it is a daunting challenge. But in another sense, perhaps easier; easier if one was able to view all of life as a sort of homiletic preparation; tying theology to everyday practice, examining the interaction of the two from various angles

and perspectives, and then working those angles through a process of invention and metaphorical expression.

One wonders if this is not the style Jesus used in preaching and teaching. It is clear from the gospel accounts that he had a unique style, drawing freely from the Law and the Prophets, but in a decidedly oral style; not bothering to document his teaching with rabbinic support. "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:28).

Conclusion

The tension between orality and literacy is not necessarily harmful and is far from novel. At least since Plato and perhaps earlier, people have not chosen between the two as if they were mutually exclusive. They have mediated between the two, using resources from both sides.[37] Burton-Christie recommends the same attitude today. "Rather than arguing for the primacy of either the unlettered or the philosophically sophisticated, it seems that we should perhaps give more thought to the kinds of relationships that existed between them."[38]

This document, literate as it is, has been pressed into service for the sake of recovering a sense of orality's potential in preaching. In typing it, we ask literacy to undermine itself; and it happily obliges, documenting its own weaknesses in the process, and yet, ironically, utilizing its strengths as well. But the favor is returned whenever a text is read out loud; in essence, asking orality to come to the rescue of an otherwise frozen and lifeless word. After comparing their divergent patterns of thought and expression, they may seem like strange bedfellows. But they don't seem to mind.

Notes

1. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York, 2002), 88.
2. The technical term for this use of pictographs is "rebus" writing. See chapter 4 in Ong's *Orality and Literacy*, or Thomas Bertonneau, "Orality, Literacy and the Tradition," *Modern Age* (Spring 2003) for a concise historical overview of the development of the alphabet.

3. Ong quotes Havelock extensively on the point of Plato's ironic undermining of orality even as he celebrated it (*Orality and Literacy*, 79). Bertonneau illustrates it thoroughly in the dialogue with the sophist Protagoras (116).

4. Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *The Rhetorical Tradition* (Boston: St. Martins/Bedford, 2001), 166.

5. Ong, 171.

6. Bertonneau, "Orality, Literacy, and the Tradition," 116. Bertonneau's argument only holds up if we assume that Plato's narration of the dialogue was massaged, revised and extended in the process of becoming literate. If it is a word-for-word transcription, the dialogue only illustrates the wonderful complexity of thought available to spontaneous interlocution, and perhaps, Socrates' more agile and facile mind. Platonic dialogues can be summoned to testify on either side of the literacy/orality debate.

7. See Susan Niditch's *Oral World and Written Word* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) for a detailed guess at both oral and written backgrounds to the composition of the The Law, The Prophets, and the Writings. Rejecting Source Criticism as grounded in literary bias, she attempts to track down and demonstrate the "interplay" of orality and literacy as a better explanation of their present condition.

8. Douglas Burton-Christie, "Listening, Reading, and Praying," *Anglican Theological Review* 83:2 (Spring 2001): 197-221.

9. Oxford English Dictionary, "Exposition."

10. William Purcell, *Ars Poetriae: Rhetorical and Grammatical Invention at the Margin of Literacy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1996), 13. This weakness of literacy goes back to Socrates original complaint of it being frozen and unable to reply to corrections and challenges.

11. Franz Bauml, "Writing the Emperor's Clothes On: Literacy and the Production of Facts," in *Written Voices, Spoken Signs* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1997), 46.

12. Jonathan Draper, "Less Literate Are Safer: The Politics of Orality and Literacy in Biblical Interpretation," *Anglican Theological Review* 84:2 (Spring 2002): 313.

13. Ong, 133. Secondary orality has many of the features of the pre-literate primary variety, but still "depends on writing for its existence".

14. Ong, 136.

15. Matthew Innes, "Memory, Orality, and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society," *Past and Present* 158 (February 1998): 4.

16. Keith Miller, "Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Folk Pulpit," *The Journal of American History* 78:1 (June 1991): 121.

17. John Patton, "I Have a Dream: The Performance of Theology Fused With the Power of Orality," in *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse*, ed., Carolun Calloway-Thomas (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama, 1993), 106.

18. Patton, 117.

19. Patton, 112.

20. Patton, 112. Patton collapses Ong's nine "psychodynamics of orality" in his homiletic analysis, sensing their overlap and the fact that some do not appear as relevant to the study of preaching. Still, Ong's influence is pervasive and should be seen as the grounding behind Patton's study.

21. Patton quoting Fisher 125.

22. Ong, 141.

23. Ong, 40.

24. Ong, 45.

25. Patton, 124.

26. Ong, 72.

27. Bertonneau quoting Thoreau 117.

28. Purcell, 15.

29. Purcell, 16.

30. It would be interesting to take the classical modes of invention and apply them to sermon preparation; or perhaps to design new questions for invention adapted to the hermeneutic challenge. This is the ground where hermeneutics and homiletics meet.

31. In the process of documenting the variety of rhetorical approaches, the art moved closer and closer to literacy, eventually listing 64 rhetorical figures. Hence the tools to background orality eventually became the tools of literacy.

32. Though Aristotle's ethos is commonly reduced to a sense of the orator's character, this is actually the adaptation of Quintillian ("a good man speaking well"). Aristotle is clear to explain that his sense of ethos is the credibility that comes from the orator in the course of the actual speech. It is the believability of the speaker as he interacts with content, not his credibility before or after the speech.

33. Allan Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia.* (Grand Rapids, 1999), 790.

34. Fitzgerald, 676.

35. Purcell, 38.

36. Purcell, 39.

37. Innes, 17.

38. Burton-Christie, 221.

Preaching His Story: Narrative Paths, Problems and Promise

by Bryan Chapell

(editor's note: this address was given at The Evangelical Homiletics Society annual meeting on 14 October 2005 at Covenant Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.)

People love to hear stories. Christ's own use of parables and the high concentration of narrative material throughout Scripture well attest the power and appropriateness of storytelling to communicate eternal truth.[1] Every pastor knows that listeners yearn for, and need, the concrete to anchor the abstract. This does not mean that metaphor, illustration and story are merely cognitive crutches that supplement sound exposition. Rather, image and narrative are essential to effective exposition not merely because they keep us from falling asleep, but also because they exegete Scripture in terms of the human condition to create a whole-person understanding of God's Word.[2] By grounding biblical truths in recognizable images and situations, preachers unite biblical truth with experience and, in so doing, make the Word more accessible, understandable and real in ways that bare propositional statements cannot.[3]

Much that has been written on preaching innovation over the last twenty-five years has borrowed from the astute observations of speech theorists about how we receive and process concepts through narrative means.[4] There is much to commend and learn from these innovations that are so attractive to our story- and image-oriented culture, but we who communicate God's Word are also obligated to understand the presuppositions and consequences of these methods.

Having spent several years seeking to persuade Evangelical preachers of the meaning and power that narrative can add to their preaching, I now feel obligated to help define when narrative is not enough.[5] I enter this discussion not intending to retract, but rather attempting

to define the borders of narrative benefit and appropriateness.[6] My aim is for antagonists to be less fearful of encroachment upon theological boundaries and for protagonists to be more wary of ignoring homiletic precedent.

The Distinctions of Narrative Preaching

One of the key observations that has driven narrative theory is that oral communication is not usually heard as "logical points" but rather as a flow of impressions that are built or turned through the various "moves" of language.[7] Word and image choices introduce a thought, lead through its consideration with introduction of some complication, and then draw some resolution that typically leads to the next thought.

Narrative Observations

A listener processes these moves not as a computer dispassionately processing a line of logic along its various branches, but rather as a series of experiences that interact with previous and present life contexts. These experiences then automatically become the new contexts that orient and explain later thought in the message. This analysis of the way most persons perceive all communication, including sermons, advises preachers not to think of their sermons as debate speeches that wrestle listeners into submission with intricate and indisputable propositions of logic, but rather as sequences of impressions that create an experience in which listeners come to understand truth on their own terms.[8]

Emphasis on the importance of personal experience in communicating meaning has naturally led speech theorists and homileticians to study how experiences can be shared in order to maximize communication. If we cannot all go out and walk in a field together to experience the flowers, then how can we know what it means to enjoy them? The answer, of course, has become narrative- we re-create the experience in a story. On the assumption that meaning is best communicated when we have shared views of an

experience,[9] stories have become for some the primary means of making sure that the truth of the preacher is shared with (i.e., experienced by) the listeners. In a story, listeners are introduced to an experience, vicariously live through the events or impressions described, and take away shared impressions of its implications so that meaning is formed in and held in community.

Narrative Methods

Wonderfully insightful and winsome methods of forming sermons on story structures have resulted, and many books and articles have come to advocate story as the preeminent and most effective way of communicating meaning. Eugene Lowry's description of the "homiletical plot" remains one of the best known and most helpful resources for pastors to discern what makes a story work and how to use its features in sermon construction.[10] A story, and a sermon that reflects its development, unfolds an identified experience with these features: upset the equilibrium (oops!), analyze the discrepancy (ugh!), disclose the clue to resolution (aha!), experience the gospel (whee!), anticipate the consequences (yeah!).[11]

Not only do such structures naturally capture listener interest, they also may naturally and powerfully reflect the development of the biblical narratives.[12] Virtually every expository preacher has felt the tension of trying to mash the features of a biblical account into the mold of three points worded in propositional language. The truth of the account may much better be communicated when aspects of the sermon are devoted to giving the listener a realistic impression of what the biblical character was experiencing or what the complications of the event required of God's people.[13] In such cases narrative forms may more accurately reflect the actual form of the biblical account in relating its truth. Informed understanding of the techniques biblical writers use to construct narratives can help pastors better understand how to construct sermons accordingly.[14]

Narrative Limits

So, if narrative preaching offers such benefits, what are its limitations? Perhaps beginning with the obvious is best. Narratives do not ordinarily serve well when what is needed is close analysis of technical issues. Whether one is making the exegetical case for justification by faith alone or describing the equations needed to figure fuel consumption for the space shuttle, the need for propositional statement and logical analysis asserts itself rather quickly. By making these statements I do not mean to demean the importance of narrative, but respectfully acknowledge that the Scriptures we proclaim contain a genre spectrum consistent with the varying purposes of prophets and apostles. Gospel narratives, prophetic visions, proverbial maxims, and didactic epistles each have a role in Scripture, yet vary in their narrative density. If preachers cannot reflect that density in homiletical method or intellectual depth, then our preaching will become progressively more shallow and our people increasingly ill-prepared.

Narratives also prove less useful when explicit statements of propositional truth need to be supplied by the speaker rather than derived by the hearer. The need for directions to an exit when a building is on fire will provide some common sense corroboration of this conclusion. In such a case, listeners do not need someone to tell a story that allows them vicariously to experience the path to safety in order to know its reality in their own consciousnesses;[15] they need someone to shout, "Go down the first stairwell on the right to get out." As straightforward a statement about escaping hell has its place in preaching also (cf. Lk. 12:5).

Of course, one could argue that space shuttle equations and fire exit instructions are comprised of language that is metaphoric in origin and, thus, narrative in nature.[16] However, such an argument used to establish the pervasive presence of narrative, simultaneously dissolves the case of the narrative theorists who claim their method brings to preaching a dynamic not present in traditional modes of propositional speech. One cannot argue that narrative preaching has

unique qualities and also contend that all that communication is essentially narrative.

The Path to Narrative Preaching

While the journeys toward narrative preaching[17] of the last two decades have received considerable discussion, we cannot evaluate the limits of narrative without exploring the path that led to the canonization of vicarious experience. Such exploration inevitably will lead to the hermeneutical origins of the contemporary homiletical discussion and, thus, will indicate why this path was followed while others were bypassed. Without an awareness of these roads not taken, preachers may unnecessarily limit their homiletical journey while vistas old and new yet beckon us to observe their beauty and power.

Enlightenment Influences

Homiletic innovations at the end of the 20th Century are the culmination of a quest for an authority for meaning with origins in the Enlightenment. That era gave twin birth to the scientism and subjectivism that have driven Western thought to its present despair of locating meaning beyond the borders of one's own personal experience. The rationalistic skepticism of Locke, Spinoza, and Voltaire placed religion at odds with the authority of reason and empirical science. Yet, once thought was freed from the supposed shackles of a religious metaphysic, science itself came under the assault of Descartes' subjectivism. For Descartes, thought established being and, thus, relegated meaning to thought structures rather than an empirical reality. Resultant Romantics and Impressionists resolved not to be limited by a science blind to its own perspectival limitations even as such philosophers and artists reveled in the freedom from religious imposition that scientific discovery promised to invalidate.

As the unruly marriage of scientism and subjectivism danced through the development of Western thought, religious philosophers

adapted by articulating a privatized faith that sought to alienate neither partner. When Kant argued that one's perceptions of the world form the world one can know, he established the framework for a non-objective faith that Kierkegaard would say could only be known through the experiencing of God. From this notion of how personal encounter articulates the faith that can be known by the individual springs the existential religion of this past century in the various manifestations of Heidegger, Bultmann, Barth, et al.

Hermeneutic Effects

A number of parallel influences track with the philosophical/religious developments that ultimately make the individual the locus of meaning for mainstream thought in this century. These influences reinforce the hermeneutical factors that drive preachers toward narrative forms that seek to provide individual experience as the basis for understanding by undermining authority for meaning in other sources.

Traditional hermeneutics recognizes that meaning is transferred through the interaction of the author of a text, the text itself, the reader, and the universe in which all three exist.[18] Various schools of thought have arisen to advocate one or more of these features of the hermenuetical process (or some ratio, tension, or gap between the features) as holding the authority for establishing the meaning of a text. Historic orthodoxy tends to center meaning in authorial intent and textual exegesis. Modern trends move the locus of meaning more toward reader and universe dynamics. Through these identifications I do not mean to stereotype movements, nor imply that any school totally ignores some axis of the hermenuetical paradigm, but rather to provide a framework for understanding how communication theorists have moved resolutely toward narrative forms through hermeneutical assumptions preachers may not have previously considered.[19]

Objective Inquiries

The grammatical/historical method of interpretation (known as Aristotelian or Classical in secular settings) asserts that the authority for meaning inheres primarily in the relationship between the author and the text which the reader is objectively to discern. This Classical approach received early challenge in this last century from what initially seemed an ally. The psychological school of interpretation arising out of the 19th Century's wrestling with scientism and subjectivism also argued that meaning resided in the relationship between author and text. However, this latter school saw the text not as a totally conscious product of the author's intent that could be known by objective exegesis, but rather as a combination of subconscious and conscious factors indiscernible by the author. The text was not merely a product of authorial intent, but a symptom of the author's psyche and situation that could only be known by scientific, objective analysis external to the author. Thus, though the locus of meaning was still author-oriented, it was not necessarily author-intended.

The built in flaw of such psychological analysis quickly surfaced. If the author could not discern subconscious factors determining meaning, how could the analyst know such subconscious factors were not also influencing his or her supposed "objective" interpretation?

Subjective Inquiries

The demise of the hope of objective inquiry forced interpreters to look beyond authors, or their analysis, for authoritative meaning. Various critical schools stepped into the breach to argue that the meanings of texts lay in the socio-political universe of the texts' origin (cf., e.g. Marxist, Capitalist, Feminist interpretations). Since modern assumptions dictated that the author could not be truly known, and the interpreter could not be truly objective, other schools of interpretation salvaged what they could from scientific method and literary analysis to focus upon the text itself.[20] The hope of these Archetypal, Formalist, and Structuralist schools is to focus

scientific analysis narrowly enough on the text itself that research biases (and even author biases) are minimized.

The hope of the Structuralists was not to determine what authors meant to say (that meaning was forever obscured by cultural sedimentation and personal prejudices), but rather what their saying (i.e., the form of their expression) meant. By identifying the presentation patterns of various texts, the Structuralists believed they could scientifically discern "conventional codes" or "rule-governed processes" that were typical of human communication.[21] Since the truth (meaning) behind the communication was subjective both for the author and the reader, the only meaning that could be excavated from a text lay in its structure. This perspective readily conceded that texts had only relative meaning for authors and readers, but it maintained that the expressions themselves fall into paradigmatic formats that are objectively analyzable.[22]

Scientific analysis of texts, presumed to have relative meaning, birthed the field of semiotics. This linguistic science studies language as a system of signs whereby personal meaning is processed by the recognition of a sign (Sn), which is itself a combination of the thing actually being signified (Sd) and a signifier (Sr) used to bring that thing into consciousness. Ferdinand de Saussure characterized this process by a mathematical formula ($Sn = Sr/Sd$).[23] He believed such a formula objectified the process of language while acknowledging that meaning remained subjective since the relationship between a signifier and a signified was relative for different individuals and situations (e.g., the signifier, "chicken," might signify a barnyard bird for some while signifying a cowardly playground chum for others). In a similar fashion, what was signified in the mind of the author by use of a specific term had no necessary relevance to what was subsequently signified in the mind of the reader. Thus, for Saussure language could be objectively analyzed even though shared meaning of a concept encapsulated in the terms being used could not be guaranteed.

Community Inquiries

Shared meaning became the passion of Phenomenologists who conceded the relativity of meaning but realized that communities and communication required some sort of mutual perspective. Like Saussure the Phenomenologists sought an objective means of studying communication, but the focus was on characterizing "interlocking conscious views of experience" that permit persons to think and act in common.[24] Writers such as Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz and Maurice Merleau-Ponty sought to define the understanding that persons share by means of a phenomenological reduction in which an experience is bracketed in perception, descriptively defined, and interpreted for shared use. For the Phenomenologists these shared experiences rescued communication from a radical existentialism in which expressions only had definite meaning for the one using them.

At precisely this point in the hermeneutic odyssey of the 20th Century, the narrative theorists enter the stage with much fanfare. What, after all, is narrative but a human experience bracketed by a beginning and an ending, and an account full of descriptive characters and events that are arranged so as to involve the thought and emotions of a hearer so that both speaker and listener share (at least vicariously) an experience? In short, a narrative is by its very nature a phenomenological reduction that provides an "interlocking conscious view of experience" for listener and speaker so that meaning can be shared. This dynamic explains the communicative power of recounted experiences and, in the light of the hermeneutical bog into which communication theory had mired itself in the 20th Century, explains narrative's allure for this generation of homileticians. Still, before we give narrative theory a messianic mantle, it is important to remember the presumptions that not only spawned the theory but now also circumscribe its potential.

The Presumptions of Narrative Preaching

The hermenuetical developments that promoted narrative to its

current ascendancy in preaching lead to, and ultimately advocate, the presumption that personal experience is the foundation of meaning. This premise posits that individuals communicate best only on the basis of shared experience. To the extent that their experiences coincide, meaning can be transferred between individuals. Thus, shared narrative becomes the "master metaphor" for modern communication.[25] In this medium individuals can connect, but their narratives are always limited by the experiences which differ for each individual. Thus, there is no meta-narrative to establish a transcendent truth, only multiple story lines.[26] Each individual's truth remains trapped within the circumference of his or her own experience and shares the meaning of others (or the biblical text) only to the extent that their experiences in some degree intersect. Preachers who ignore this hermeneutical heritage while employing the pragmatic advantages of newer narrative forms to "spark" listener interest, may have naively yielded to philosophical pressures they never intended to endorse.

The Relativity of Truth

The discovery of the subconscious, combined with the discrediting of unbiased judgment that ultimately exposes scientism to its own blindness, has not only undermined empirical thought but also closed the modern mind to consideration of objective truth. Friedrich Schleiermacher's "hermenuetical circle"[27] (which reveals that understanding is always based on prior assumptions that presuppose the truths being sought) reveals that meaning resides in the predisposition of the individual and is, thus, rigorously subjective. Not only does this circle deny the possibility of any true science of discovery, it also precludes transcendent truth.[28] Meaning that results entirely from individual assumptions cannot be absolute. Without this "True truth" (to use Francis Schaeffer's terms[29]) individuals are left without propositional anchors and are predisposed to discovering their own personal meanings in experiential narratives.

The Subjectivity of Communication

The modern assumptions that lead to the conclusion that meaning is subjective for individuals also necessitate the corollary that communication is boundaried by the personal interpretations governed by individual perceptions. At the heart of this subjectivity is not merely a bias against propositional truth, but also the presumption of the non-transferability of propositions. Several streams of modern communication theory converge to bolster this presumption: 1) identification of the "linguistic labyrinth" which demonstrates that any term or phrase has multiple meanings (governed by grammatical rules, variant definitions, syntactical structures, and personal use) that make locating definite meaning an infinitely complex task of encoding and decoding messages;[30] 2) focus upon perspectival limitations[31] that imply no two individuals can perceive propositional terms identically because persons will always contextualize those terms differently; and, 3) realization that expressions used in propositions act as "terministic screens" simultaneously hiding certain meanings even as they disclose others[32] (e.g., by describing a foreign nation's crisis as "another Vietnam" or "another Holocaust," speakers may represent identical facts to draw strikingly different conclusions about whether a military intervention is warranted – the terms chosen to represent a truth direct what the mind of both the speaker and listener can perceive rather than describing all that could be perceived).

The limitations of language that lead to an undermining of trust in propositional meaning reach their most extreme expression in the recent Deconstructionist movement. The Deconstructionists have used Saussure's attempt to provide an objective analysis of language ($Sn = Sr/Sd$) to open linguistic expressions to radically arbitrary meanings. Believing that differences between individuals deprive propositions of universal meanings, the Deconstructionists recognize that the reader (or listener) becomes the final arbiter of whatever meaning is taken from the expression of another. In addition, the signifier chosen by the listener or the speaker can never fully capture

the significance of what it signified (i.e., signifiers bring to mind only select features of the signified, never its full essence).

For the Deconstructionists the perspectival differences of the parties to any communication along with the inadequacy of signfiers to capture the full context and meaning of what is signified lead to a "rupture" between the signifier (Sr) and signified (Sd) that rules any sign (Sn) to be of "indeterminate" meaning. As a consequence, ultimate meaning is perpetually "deferred" and definitions disappear in the infinite regress of signifiers searching for linkage to a signified that must itself be identified by another signifier in consciousness. The result is not merely that meanings of terms are made relative by the differences of individuals (the existential isolation of Modernism), but rather that meanings are arbitrary and non-communicable (the radical solipsism and ultimate despair of a Post-modern world characterized by an anarchy of ideas).

The Primacy of Experience

Pessimism toward the transference of meaningful propositions led late 20th Century and early 21st Century thought to depend on experience as the highest (and perhaps only) source of personal understanding. The dominant school of narrative preaching reflects this thought by employing and elevating the dynamics of storytelling that create vicarious experiences as the primary medium for communication. Thus, in turning away from propositional preaching to catch the wave of narrative theory coursing through our churches, preachers (deliberately or naively) honor more than pragmatic concerns about attention spans.

The fields of hermeneutics and homiletics have both sought haven and continuing purpose in the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer who sought to break the strictures of the hermeneutical circle with experiential distinctives. Gadamer argued that since understanding of a text is governed by one's pre-understanding (i.e., personal background) which acts as a limiting horizon for the individual's

knowledge, then texts can only be understood to the extent that there is a "fusion" of a text's and an individual's horizons.[33] The text's horizon of meaning (i.e., definition) is established by what it is not as well as by what it is. Thus, the way an individual knows what a text means is by experiential exposure to both what a text is and is not. Such exposure is never complete since the text has its own spatial and temporal contexts of origin, transmission, and use, but there can be meaning-laden points of contact between the text and interpreter.

Since, for Gadamer and his progeny, meaning transfer requires an intersection of the horizons of the text and reader, then the text and the reader co-determine meaning. To the extent that their horizons can be made more closely to correspond by conforming the experience of the reader to the contours of the text, there remains hope for partial, but real, meaning transference even though there cannot be a single correct reading of a text due to the uniqueness of the pre-understanding of individuals. Narrative theorists seize upon this insight, admonishing preachers to pattern their sermons after the narrative structures of the text so that the horizons of text and listeners fuse as closely as possible for as much meaning transfer as is attainable. The goal is to fuse the experience of the reader with the expression of the text as a mechanism for achieving understanding that is confessedly limited by the adequacy of the narrative to generate appropriate listener responses. Thus, though narratives that supply vicarious experience as the means of communication well satisfy the Post-modern palate with its distaste for propositions, these story forms remain restricted in their ability to communicate universal, absolute or authoritative truth.

The Problems of Narrative Preaching

The limitation the presumptions of narrative preaching impose upon its communicative potential forces the question of whether the very theory that advocates preaching in accord with the contours of Scripture actually conforms to its design principles. The Bible, though it contains a great deal of narrative, remains rich in

propositional content. In fact, the genius of Scripture as it pertains to transferable meaning is that it weds narrative and propositional forms to lock down meanings across time and accross individual and cultural differences.[34] In the Bible, narratives provide experiential reference for the meaning of propositions, even as the propositions provide conceptual and linguistic backgrounds for the narratives that give their shapes meaning. The narratives would have no personally transcendent meaning without the propositions, and the propositions would have no personally transferable meaning without the experiential accounts that provide vicarious interaction with Scripture's truths. By providing narratives along with propositions the Bible asserts the value of both, and makes suspect any communication system that would deny the value of either.

The Bible's structure and content do much to confirm the value of story and to endorse the importance of experiential meaning that narrative theorists advocate. What the Bible will not endorse is the limitations upon meaning transfer presumed by modern thought that undermine the communicability of definite truth through propositions or narrative. There is no biblical reason to presume, for instance, that the differing personal contexts of individuals create such radically different pre-understandings that consistent transfer of a text's meaning is precluded, or that the meaning is so individualized as to be a unique product of each person. The presumption of the non-transferability of propositional truth defies common sense (e.g. most people run from the theater when someone shouts, "Fire") and it also runs against the basic principles of Scripture.

Minimizing the Imago Dei

While Scripture recognizes and respects the basic differences in individuals, it also asserts a continuity of personhood that rejects the solipsistic conclusions of modern thought. The fact that we are each made in the image of God (Gn 1:26-27) means that there is an overlapping of individual "horizons" that transcends personal and community differences. The logical conclusions of the

Deconstructionists that are the necessary, irrational end of these major threads of Post-modern philosophy, cannot explain why individuals continue to function within communities and with understanding, given the fact that their pre-reflective differences ought to preclude meaningful human communication. What the secularists ignore, and the faithful should take care not to obscure, is that the biblical principle that we are all created in the image of God provides the common foundation to all being and thought that allows meaningful human interaction.

Limiting the Holy Spirit

Even the religious might still argue the absurdity of transcendent meaning on the basis that our fallen condition has so marred the *Imago Dei* in us that common understanding of spiritual truth is beyond human ability. This is, of course, true. The Bible well affirms that transcendent truth is beyond mere human reach. We are told in Scripture that, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Imago Dei in us is so seriously marred by our fallen condition that our unaided understanding cannot cohere with the One who most perfectly represents the unblemished image of God. The Bible teaches, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). In this condition each person is forced to find and develop his or her own truth (Jude 19), as modern thought rightly concludes. However, the Bible does not limit human understanding to these human means.

Scripture contends that the Holy Spirit renews our minds and mends the marring of the image of God in us so that we are freed from private judgment and made privy to the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). In modern terms this means that when we perceive the signifiers in Scripture that represent the truth God wants to communicate, God's very Spirit orders our pre-reflective

and reflective understanding so that we are able to conceive his message. The fidelity of our understanding to Scripture's intent is, thus, not limited by our human capacities but rather is secured by the fact that the same Spirit who inspired the Word is the One who illumines it within our consciousness (cf. 1 Corinthians 2: 10-14; 2 Psalms 1:20-21; Romans 5:5). Without the Holy Spirit the modern philosophers rightly conclude that transcendent understanding is limited by human experience, but the presence of the Spirit frees the mind and heart from the shackles of human subjectivism.

Due to remnant influences of the old nature the regenerated mind does not perfectly, nor fully, process all that God's Word says, but this does not make Spiritually revealed truth subjective.[35] The fact that our understanding is limited does not necessitate the conclusion that our conceptions are wrong, indeterminate or individually projected. In fact, Scripture requires us to confess the limitations of human understanding while simultaneously confirming the divine authority with which God's Word can be proclaimed (cf. Romans 11:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:2 & Titus 2:15). From the perspective of Scripture the field of meaning within the horizons of Scripture and the field of understanding within the horizons of the regenerated mind not only fuse, but overlay. The field within the human horizon may contain areas of obscurity due to our fallenness but this does not mean that the entire text is opaque. Instead, Scripture urges us to see the results of the Spirit's influence as generally providing believers with extraordinary clarity and accurate insight into God's truth (Psalms 119:130).

The Promise of Narrative Preaching

Narratives communicate at a level of understanding beyond abstract reflection. This is both their power and promise.

Misdirected

When narratives become the master metaphor of expression based on the presumption that propositions cannot communicate, then

personal experience becomes the master interpreter and, ultimately, the ruler of understanding. Such use of narratives limits the meaning of Scripture to the horizons of the reader (or listener) and, thus, is not enough to communicate objective truth of a transcendent nature. Discovery of the ways in which our particular and personal experiences intersect with the doctrines of the Word of God is essential work for the preacher, but the apostles and prophets meant for their words to address the experiences of the people of God and not for the people's experiences to construct the Word of God (Dt 28:45).

When personal experience dominates interpretation, transcendent meaning disappears. A decade ago, during the ascendancy of narrative theory, a theologically reflective magazine published an uncommented story about a boy and a tree that grew up and old together. When the publisher subsequently asked readers to give the meaning of the story, interpreters variously described the characters as representing "parts of the same person," "a kid gone bad," a "beautiful view of God and His Son, Jesus Christ," a "tainted depiction of love between a parent and child," "God's grace and parental love," "an inadequate picture of the way love should be expressed between people," and "poetic statements of idealized sacrificial Christian love."[36] A narrative without a propositional interpretation produced confused and conflicting meanings in the minds of readers. This anecdotal evidence supports what is first a common sense and, then, a biblical conclusion; i.e., meaning dependent upon personal experience alone has no dependable meaning. Stories do not scan themselves.

Truth Directing

In contrast to the philosophies that make meaning subject to personal experience, the Bible contends it has freed us from personal vagaries and offers transcendent, authoritative, and communicable truth (Ps 19; Col 2:2-4). The truth in Scripture comes packaged in both propositions and narratives, suggesting that a theory that minimizes the importance of either is insufficient for communicating

the Bible's message. The theory that most closely corresponds to the Bible's contours does not require an either/or choice between narratives and propositions, but rather recognizes the value of each to serve differing purposes in the communication process.

As a departure point for future reflection, I would suggest that the master metaphor that most closely corresponds to Scripture's expression is not narrative, but the term from which the preaching discipline takes its name: *homiletikos*; i.e., conversation. In a conversation, the interplay and proportion of narratives and propositions assumes a flux status appropriate for the content of the conversation and the purposes of the speaker. Propositions articulate, organize and universalize (or particularize) principles, while narratives clarify, stimulate responses, and personalize (or universalize) meanings. Each form of expression serves the other by supplying communication dynamics the other does not equally possess. Content, personality, and situation can each be weighed in determining the appropriate proportions of narrative and proposition in a conversation without predetermining that one will not communicate. This observation indicates that narrative is not enough when it is the only communication tool preachers bring to the homiletic.

Scripture presents its truth in propositions as well as in narratives because we are made in the image of God and are indwelt by his Spirit - the same Spirit that inspired his Word.[37] These truths do not deny cultural and personal hurdles for transferring gospel meaning, but rather these are the very truths advanced by Scripture to show that such barriers can be overcome by the preaching of the Word in all its dimensions. The "genius of Scripture" is its use of narrative to give propositions culturally transcendent contexts while synergistically using propositions to give meaning to the narratives that is not merely existential but rather eternal.[38]

These biblical dynamics do not disregard the power of story, but they do challenge the presumptions that would make its use exclusive or preeminent in preaching. It is possible to mine the riches of narrative

without falling into the mineshaft of preaching without propositional truth. Much of what modern theorists have written about the techniques and effects of storytelling may be fruitfully used by expository preachers in sermons with creative "moves" designed to expose the truth of the text or in the illustrative features of traditional expositions.[39] For example, sermons that begin with a human interest account that exposes an FCF (Fallen Condition Focus) also have an implicit inductive structure in that they use an introductory experience to identify a human complication the sermon must then resolve with gospel truth. In addition, sermons that are Christ-centered inevitably contain an implicit narrative (and are consequently powerful instruments of the Gospel in this story-thirsty culture) because in them the saving God always comes to the rescue.[40]

Conclusion

What preachers must be careful to avoid is not all methods that are narrative, but rather the assumption that listeners indwelt by God's Spirit are incapable of hearing the transcendent truths of his Word. Accepting such non-biblical assumptions will cause preachers to begin to substitute simple, moral allegories for the regular and careful explanation of the biblical truths that are the bread of life for those who believe. Thankfully, awareness of this reality is swinging the homiletics pendulum back to a greater emphasis upon the exegesis and explanation of the text in this culture that is increasingly unfamiliar with the Bible.[41] The promise of the future is expository sermons that are more true to the scope of Scripture, more reflective of it's many communication dynamics, and more able to minister the truths of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit to the people of God for the glory of the Savior.

Notes

1. See the author's, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Zondervan, 1992; rev. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 40-47.
2. Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 65-81.
3. Walter R. Fisher, "Narration as Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984): 488; and the subsequent article "The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration," *Communication Monographs* 52 (1985): 347-367. Cf. Klaas Runia, "Experience in the Reformed Tradition," *Theological Forum* 15:2, 3 (April 1987): 7-13. Runia places in proper perspective much of the contemporary secular thought demonstrating how

"experience does not precede the Word but rather follows after it." Encapsulating Calvin's thought, Runia explains, "Experience, however, is not the source of knowledge, in addition to Scripture. It is not an independent road to God, next to the revelation of Scripture." Experience "functions as a hermeneutical key for the understanding of Scripture," which Runia and the Reformers make quite clear is not rooted in, or limited by, human experience. Objective truth transcends human subjectivity, but full understanding of the Word of God, when opened by the Holy Spirit, is still contextualized for reflection and obedience by the experiential. See also Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 49-63.

4. Richard L. Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 11-14 and *Narrative Imagination: Preaching the Worlds That Shape Us.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 141-174; James Earl Massey, *Designing the Sermon: Order and Movement in Preaching,* ed. William Thompson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980); Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990); Lucy Rose, "The Parameters of Narrative Preaching," *Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching*, ed. Wayne Bradley Robinson (New York: Pilgrim, 1990), 23-41.

5. See *Using Illustrations*, 22-32; and, also an earlier version of this material, 177-191.

6. I am not attempting at this point to define the various versions of narrative theory, trusting that the issue is well handled elsewhere. My presumption is that readers recognize that narrative theory, as it is applied to preaching, presumes that experience is a (or, the) primary informant of human understanding and, thus, argues that preaching should use story dynamics to correlate the being of the listeners with the meaning of the text. An introduction to the discussion of how the forms of sermons should conform to the "plot" of the text appears in such works as: Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980) and *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985); Richard Eslinger, *A New Hearing*; and Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal and Charles L. Rice, eds. *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

7. David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 23-53; see in relation to the communication thought of Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978), 5, 72-78.

8. Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority,* (3d edition Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 57-63.

9. Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, gen. ed. John Wild (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 97-138.

10. Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 25 and *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997) 56-89.

11. In his later work, *The Sermon*, Lowry reduces the stages to four: conflict, complication, sudden shift, unfolding (81-84).

12. Calvin Miller, *Spirit, Word and Story* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 139-183.

13. J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Haddon Robinson and Torrey Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

14. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990); Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,* Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, (vol. 3, senior ed. Moises Silva Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); Meir Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1885).

15. See the excellent discussion of such narrative goals by Lucy Rose in "The Parameters of Narrative Preaching," 34-35.

16. As I. A. Richards argued in this past century and as Aristotle revealed more than 20 centuries ago. See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936, 34-5; and, I. A. Richards, "Functions of and Factors in Language," in *The Rhetoric of Western Thought*, 3d ed., by James Golden et al. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1983), 193, 206; Lane Cooper, trans., *The Rhetoric of Aristotle* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1932), 209].

17. The narrative paths of the last two decades are ably described in the work edited by Wayne Bradley Robinson, *Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990). See also the very helpful synopsis by Robert Reid, David Fleer, and Jeffrey Bullock, "Preaching as the

Creation of an Experience: The Not-So-Rational Revolution of the New Homiletic," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 18:1 (1995): 1-9.

18. Longman, *Literary Approaches*, 18-45.

19. Summaries of the these hermeneutical developments are included in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Raman Selden, *A Readers Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 2d ed. (University Press of Kentucky, 1989); and Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1994).

20. Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 26-30.

21. Longman, *Literary Approaches*, 32.

22. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 127-8; Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (University of California Press, 1945; California edition, 1969), xv.

23. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* trans. W. Baskin (London: Fontana/Collins, 1974).

24. Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, (Chicago: Northwestern University, 1967) 195; Richard L. Lanigan, "The Phenomenology of Human Communication," *Philosophy Today* 23 (Spring 1979): 6.

25. Walter R. Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm" 486; Peter D. Miscall, *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative*. The Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies, ed Dan O. Via, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 9.

26. Tim Keller, "Preaching to the Secular Mind," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14 (1995): 54.

27. See discussion in Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 104-7.

28. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, trans. John O'Neill, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 148; Richard Lanigan, "Communication Science and Merleau-Ponty's Critique of the Objectivist Illusion," in *Continental Philosophy in America*, II (New York: Humanities Press, 1983), 2.

29. Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1968), 151.

30. E.g. Wendell Johnson, *People in Quandaries* (San Francisco: International Society for General Semantics, 1946), 152-5.

31. Johnson, 7 and 23-30.

32. Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action* (University of California Press, 1966), 44ff.

33. For discussion of this fusion see Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* , 16 and 307-10.

34. Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 69-84. John Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, l985), 106.

35. Moisés Silva, *God, Language, and Scripture,* vol. 4 of *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 33.

36. *First Things*, 52 (April 1995): 8-10.

37. Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 186-189.

38. Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 186-189.

39. Bruce C. Salmon, *Storytelling in Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1988), 47-51. See also the Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 28-31 and 56-62.

40. Tim Keller makes this important observation in "Post-Everythings," *By Faith*, 1:1 (June/July, 2003), 29-30. By contrast the difficulty with so much narrative preaching is that a good story is followed by a simple (human) moral that is incapable of communicating the necessary involvement of the Savior in all that would truly please and serve God.

41. Fred Craddock, "From Classroom to Pulpit," *Preaching Magazine*, 18:6 (May-June, 2003), 19-20. See also the fountain of new works aware of narrative insights but also committed to expository preaching: John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002); Al Mohler, Jr. et al, *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, John Kistler, ed. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002); Steven J. Lawson, *Famine in the Land: A Passionate Call for Expository Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2003); Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, rpt. 2001); Robinson and Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages*; Jim Shaddix, *The Passion-Driven Sermon* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003); York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Broadman and Holman, 2003).

The Story of the Gospel Applied to Exposition

by Bryan Chapell

(editor's note: this address was given at The Evangelical Homiletics Society annual meeting on 14 October 2005 at Covenant Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.)

I am grateful for the observation of New York City Pastor Tim Keller that when we preach the message of redemption from all the scriptures, we speak with particular power for a post-modern generation because of its appetite for story. As I indicated yesterday, that appetite is not always whetted by Biblical perspectives, but that does not mean that there is no proper application of story in biblical exposition. The Bible is itself three-quarters narrative. The Holy Spirit does not seem averse to using the structures of story to speak to us; and following the leading of the Spirit is never a bad idea. One of the ways that we follow that lead says Keller is by expounding the grace of God in all the Scriptures. When we do so there is always an implicit story: God always comes to the rescue. When we preach grace from all the Scriptures, our consistent story is God is the hero of the text!

My concern for consistently applying the story of the Gospel to Scriptural exposition had an intensely personal beginning. The inadequacies of my preaching were torturing me and I wondered whether I should leave the ministry. I could not discern what was wrong. Church members complimented my messages, but their own lives were consistently plagued by depression, addictions, and anger with each other. I had to question, "If I am such a good preacher, then why are the people I serve doing so badly." Ultimately I determined a central reason for their despair, their escapist compulsions, and their judgmental impatience with one another was a pattern of thought I was encouraging.

Week after week I told the imperfect people in my church to "do better." When God's people only hear the imperatives of the Word,

they are forced to conclude that their holiness is a product of their efforts. What I needed to learn was that the cure was not preaching less of Scripture, but more. In particular I needed to learn to preach each text in its redemptive context. No Scripture is so limited in purpose as only to give us moral instruction or lifestyle correction. Paul says, even the law itself functions as our "schoolmaster to lead us to Christ" (Gal. 3:24). Jesus also says that all the Scriptures the Jews searched "testify of me" (John 5:39). His story underlies and gives proper contour and context to every text. This does not mean that every text mentions him (or should be made to do so), but rather our Savior's words teach that every Scripture stands in some relation to him as part of God's revelation of his redemptive purpose. Really to expound a text, therefore, requires us to place it in its redemptive context.

I was not doing this because I had gotten the story wrong of what preaching really is. My thought was constrained by the context of my own narrative and background that indicated the Bible is mainly intended to correct human misbehavior or misunderstanding. According to this story my primary job was to tell people what they should do behaviorally or know doctrinally. In essence, I was heaping upon people ever greater obligations of doing and knowing while missing the story line that all of Scripture is about the revelation of God's redeeming work in behalf of a fallen people. I am not saying that moral performance and doctrinal correctness are unimportant, but us getting ourselves straight is not Scripture's ultimate aim. Resting upon and responding to the One who alone makes us whole is Scripture's ultimate aim.

I am grateful – eternally grateful for the early writings of Sidney Greidanus who began to help me understand this way of looking at the text; and for the providence of God that had me simultaneously in grad school at a time that narrative theory was being vigorously explored for its communication power. My goal today is to relate to you how these lines of thought may coincide to help us see how story principles apply to Gospel exposition.

One way to consider how we may preach the Bible's story line in all that it communicates is by considering the insight of Kenneth Burke, perhaps the 20th Century's greatest speech theorist. Burke helped us see that all persuasion must have certain narrative contours in order for communication to occur. To help us see the narrative dimensions of all communication Burke provided us with his pentad, a simple anatomy of story elements that he would later call his five children: act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. The play and interplay (or ratio) of these children not only reveal the nature of story in general, but also help us understand how to expound the truth of Scripture in a way that stays true to the story line the Bible wishes to tell.

Act

By revealing the holy nature of the God who provides redemption and the finite nature of humanity that requires redemption, the law and the prophets point to the necessity of a Redeemer and prepare the human heart to seek him. Because of the great disproportion between our best works and God's righteousness, we are always and forever incapable of the righteousness that would reconcile us to a holy God – our acts are insufficient. Our best works are judged but "filthy rags" in the Old Testament (Isaiah 64:6), and the Savior echoes, "When we have done all that we should do, we are still unworthy servants" (Luke 17:10). Thus, in context the text is never about moral instruction – our acts – alone, but always about our dependence on the Savior to be and do what his Word requires. Someone must act on our behalf, and all Scripture in various ways is revealing the need for God to act for us.

Scene

Christ-centered exposition of Scripture does not require us to reveal Jesus by mysterious alchemies of allegory or typology, but rather identifies how every text functions in furthering our understanding of who Christ is, what the Father sent him to do, and why. The goal is not to make Jesus magically appear from every detail of Hebrew

narrative or every metaphor of Hebrew poetry (such practices have led to allegorical errors), but rather to show where every text stands in relation to the person and/or work of Christ whose grace achieves our salvation. No text occurs in isolation from the big story. Since the proclamation and promise of Genesis 3:15, there has always been a salvation scene upon which the commands and teaching of Scripture are overlaid even as they further explicate the features of the scene.

One approach to signaling the redemptive scenery upon which biblical texts are laid is demonstrating how a passage *predicts, prepares* for, *reflects* or *results* from the person and/or work of Christ. This approach seeks to identify how the passage furthers our understanding of what Christ will do or has done in redemptive history. These four categories of redemptive/historical explanation are not, should not be, rigidly categorized. Other classifications also function well in relating the many varieties of Scripture passages to the person and work of Christ. The goal is not to determine a master metaphor or universal scene that will provide a proper niche for all passages. Such inflexible categorizing of texts typically limits the implications of the Bible's own rich variety of metaphors that are used to relate redemptive truth (e.g., kingdom, family, Sabbath, tree).

As long as we observe the text through spectacles whose lenses focus how the Holy Spirit is 1) revealing the nature of God that provides redemption and/or 2) the nature of humanity that requires redemption, we will interpret as Christ did when he showed his disciples how all Scripture spoke of him (Luke 24:27). Asking these two questions (i.e., using these two lenses) maintains faithful exposition and demonstrates that redemptive interpretation does not require the preacher to expand every text's scene from Genesis to Revelation in every sermon to show a text's redemptive context. While there is nothing wrong with such macro-interpretations, it is also possible – and often more fruitful – to expound the doctrinal statements or relational interactions in the immediate text that reveal some dimension of God's grace. The relational interactions can include how God acts toward his people (e.g., providing strength for

weakness, pardon for sin, provision in want, faithfulness in response to unfaithfulness) or how an individual representing God provides for others (e.g., David's care for Mephibosheth, Solomon's wisdom recorded for others less wise). The scene can be narrow as well as broad and still adequately reveal the contours of grace.

Agent

In essence, redemptive exposition requires that we identify an aspect of our fallen condition the Holy Spirit addresses in the passage he inspired for our edification, and then show God's way out of the human dilemma. Such a pattern not only exposes the human predicament that requires God's relief, it forces the preacher to focus on a divine solution. He alone is the agent of our deliverance. Thus, his glory is always the apex purpose of the sermon. The vaunting of any human agent and puffing of human pride vanish in such preaching not because the imperatives of the law are minimized, but because God is always the hero of the text. He enables our righteousness, pardons our unrighteousness, and provides for our weakness. Thus, he remains the central agent of our exposition even if other characters are on the scene.

Agency

This consistent preaching of the dimensions of the grace of God does not render superfluous the commands of the law, but rather gives them new power by providing both our biblical motivation and enablement to honor them. Motivation and enablement are the agency (or, means) by which we do what God requires. Redemptive preaching supplies this agency by highlighting the redemptive work of God. Such preaching refuses to define grace as the world does – a license to do as I please. Redemptive preaching defines grace as does the Bible: a mercy so overwhelming that it compels us to do what pleases God. Thus, the agency that is the motivating power for obedience is evident in Christ's words, "If you love me you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). The agency for fulfilling God's purposes in our lives is revelation and recognition of the grace of God that instills the love that compels the obedience he requires.

Purpose

Because redemptive interpretation of Scripture leads to sermons marked by consistent adulation of the mercy of God in Christ, hearts in which the Spirit dwells are continually filled with more cause to love God. This filling becomes the primary purpose for preaching when we recognize that hearts in which the Spirit dwells are most able and willing to obey God when they are captivated by love for the Savior. For the believer there is no greater spiritual motivation than grace-stimulated love – not fear, or guilt, or gain. Burning love for God fueled by consistent preaching of grace makes the Christian want to walk with God and follow the commands that please him. This is why the Apostle Paul could say the grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions (see Titus 2:12). The Bible's ultimate purpose for our lives – to be holy because God is holy – is the product of a compelling love for the Savior that flows from embracing the grace that has saved us from his just wrath for our sin.

When grace is properly perceived, the law is not trashed; it is treasured. The standards that honor God we want to honor because we love him. In grace-based preaching the rules do not change; the reasons do. We serve God because we love him, not in order to make him love us. After all, how could production of more filthy rags make God love us? He releases us from the performance treadmill that promises to provide holiness through human effort, but the affect on the heart is love that is more constrained to please him. God's overwhelming and unconditional mercy ensures that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1), but rather than promoting license, this kindness leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). We want to turn from the sin that grieves the One we love (Eph. 4:30).

To this point, I have identified how each of Kenneth Burke's children may function separately in the Gospel story, but it is important to note that they don't have to play in separate rooms. In fact, the distinguishing contours of any story are developed according to the interplay, or ratios, of the children in the pentad.

Pentad Ratios

The primary message of preaching that stimulates such loving obedience is the cross. Contemporary theologians sometimes wince at such statements because they seem to slight other acts of redemption: the Resurrection, Second Coming, and other key redemptive events. We certainly have no right to minimize or ignore these acts. Thus, we move to another concept of Kenneth Burke: stories are not simply individual components of the pentad, but rather take their particular shape from the varying ratios of the pentad in the narrative. So, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he certainly spoke of the Resurrection, Second Coming and other redemptive events, but he also said that he resolved to preach nothing among them but Christ crucified. In so saying Paul not only indicated a greater ratio being given to the work of the cross in the large story contextualizing his writings, he also reflected a profound understanding of humanity (1 Cor. 2:2). Focus on the Gospel story's primary agents reaches for the human will with profound poignancy. The Father's gift of his Son stirs the heart at its deepest level to make it tender toward God, receptive of his Word and zealous for his will. The old preaching imperative, "make much of the blood," reflects great wisdom about human motivation. The cross stimulates love for God, the Resurrection zeal for his purposes, and the Second Coming perseverance in his cause. All are necessary, but God's mercy toward the undeserving – as it unfolds through Scripture and culminates in the Cross – is still the agency that best programs the heart to receive and employ all the other truths of the Gospel.

Christ's victory on the cross acts as the redemptive agency to provide freedom from both the guilt and power of sin. The apostle Paul reminds us that because Jesus resides in us, we possess the resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19-23; Gal. 2:20). John adds, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This is more than a promise that Jesus will add to our strength or aide our resolve. Because we are in union with Christ, all of the merits of his righteousness have become ours and his Spirit now enables us to resist the sin that he reveals to us.

In the classic terms of systematic theology, once we were not able not to sin *(non posse non peccare)* but now we are able not to sin *(posse non peccare)*. Christ, the agent of our redemption, has by his actions on the cross, provided the agency of our power. Enough of our sin nature persists (because there is a proper ratio between our present power and our heavenly status) that we will not be perfect until we are with Jesus in eternal glory *(non posse peccare)*, but even now we are freed from Satan's lie that we cannot change. Sin has no more dominion over us. We can make progress against the besetting sins of our lives because we are alive in Christ.

Pentad Layers

Understanding pentad elements can be present in varying ratios enables us to understand how the Gospel message can be presented with various emphases or layers without contradiction or confusion. For example, in our present context (or scene) our union with Christ (the agent of our salvation) enables the Apostle to set another scene that itself should inform the agency and purpose that we emphasize in our preaching. Our union with Christ is so determinative of our future status that the Apostle Paul says we are already seated in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). Through the agency of our union with Christ, his scene is ours though we exist in this scene of our present existence (Gal. 2:20). Though we are acting now with the power of Christ's Spirit to overcome sin in our lives, God has already reckoned us holy by the agency of his grace embraced through our faith. This positional sanctification (provided by the scene and agency of our union with Christ) gives us the foundation for our progressive sanctification, the purpose that God intends for those who are being renewed in his image until he comes. Future grace awaits us in glory but we already possess its status through the certainty of the promises of God and the guarantee of the Spirit in us (2 Cor. 5:5). Though we are still acting out the implications of our salvation, the scene has already been set by our union with Christ so as to provide the agency for God's purpose of making us a holy people.

Pentad Priorities

Hatred of sin, freedom from past guilt, possession of Christ's righteousness and power, and assurance of future grace combine to equip the Christian for the holy race God calls us to run. However, it is important to remember that all of these truths rest on the person (Agent) and work (Act) of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). No sentence in Scripture more underscores the need for Christ-centered preaching. A message full of imperatives (e.g., Be like … a commendable Bible character, Be good … by adopting these moral behaviors, Be disciplined … by diligence in these practices) but devoid of grace is antithetical to the Gospel. These "Be messages" are not wrong in themselves, but by themselves they are spiritually deadly because they imply that our path to God is made by our works. They indicate the proper actions (obedience) and proper agents (us) but they fail to give proper ratio to the chief agent (Christ) and his agency (provision of grace to do as he requires).

We must always remember the Gospel scene: in our fallen world even our best works deserve God's reproof unless they are sanctified by Christ (Is. 64:6; Luke 17:10). God delights in our good works only when they are presented in Christ (Rom. 12:1). This means even if we do not mention Jesus by name in the explanation of a text, we must show where the text stands in relation to his grace in order to provide hope that the obligations of the text will be fulfilled. Just as the necessity of a Christ-focus in all preaching is indicated by Jesus words, "Apart from me you can to nothing," so also the power of such a focus is indicated in Paul's words, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Texts mined for imperatives outside the context of the grace principles that enable obedience deprive listeners of the means to do what they are required to do. Grace principles are on the scene (because God is always driving us to dependence on him) and to ignore the elements of this scene is to deprive God's people of the agency of their motivation and enablement.

Not Arbitrary

At this point, you are probably noting that the pentad ratios of narrative can be applied to preaching in numerous ways. I conclude not by trying to define or exhaust all the ratios, but rather to indicate the ratios are not simply arbitrary. Just because not all the elements of the ratios require equal weight or categorization does not mean that the story of Scripture is up for grabs or has no normative elements.

The Bible does not allow merely arbitrary ratios of act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. Jesus is the agent of our salvation. Our acts are not the agency of our redemption. God is never off the scene. His glory is always our highest purpose. If we do not feel the weight of these ratios, then we cannot tell the story of Gospel and cannot preach its truths even if we say many true things about isolated texts.

Not Mutually Exclusive, But Always Inclusive

This means that not only is there a Gospel ratio always operative in the pentad of a biblical message, but also the pentad is always present in all its elements. For there to be communication and persuasion, there must always be act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. But here's the freedom and beauty of our preaching: the elements only vary in ratio; they do not exclude one another. We can, for example, note that a text's main focus is on action (i.e., imperative). Our error in expounding this text is not in emphasizing the imperative action, but in removing the imperative from its scene or purpose. We would err if we failed to see the imperative in the context of the story in which the commanded action has a role. Thus, an expository sermon properly focuses on what the text focuses on. Still, the exposition fails to communicate the Bible's message if the material of the text does not find its context in the larger story. Thus, the pentad comes to our aid by enabling us to make sure that we have not neglected key story elements. Have we emphasized action – even human action? Fine and good. But the story will remain incomplete

if there is not accompanying exposition of Gospel act, scene, agent, agency and purpose.

The necessity of the Gospel pentad in all preaching that is true to the Bible's story leads to a basic question that all must answer to affirm that they are preaching the message of Scripture: "Do I preach grace – has the story of God's provision in some way or ratio made its way into my message?" Is it possible that your sermon is so devoid of the Gospel story or its critical elements, that the message would be perfectly acceptable in a synagogue or mosque? If you are only encouraging better moral behavior that any major religion would find acceptable, what distinguishes your story from theirs? The answer to these questions should remind us that the way we remain true to God's purpose of making his people more like his Son is not through preaching any less of Scripture, but rather through preaching more. Do not stop preaching until all the children of the Gospel pentad have come out to play. For, when we "suffer the children" – all the children of the Gospel story to come into our messages, then the people to whom we preach will delight in their Savior and his joy will be their strength.

Low-Tech Preaching in a High-Tech Age

by Wayne McDill

Abstract

The current trend toward the use of audio-visual aids and drama in preaching may reveal an underlying lack of confidence in preaching in its essential form. The premise of this paper is that there is no form of communication more dynamic and effective than direct oral communication by a passionate preacher.

Introduction

A seminary student was reporting to his preaching professor on a sermon he would never forget. He had attended worship at a mega-church with an auditorium seating thousands. The latest in audio-visual technology was used in the service. The preacher's face was projected on two giant screens on either side of the platform. A video clip was used as an illustration. Scripture verses and sermon points were displayed on the screens.

The most unforgettable moment of the sermon came as the pastor told the story of the rescue by American forces of an airman shot down in Kosovo. As the pastor described the climax of the rescue, the thump-thump sound of a helicopter roared across the auditorium. The student was determined to preach like that.

Homileticians and preachers alike see such multi-media presentations as the future of preaching. Some claim that the attention span of today's audience is much shorter than that of previous generations. Television has conditioned viewers to fast moving images and

continuous action. Video games, internet communication, and digital phones with continually upgraded features have made preaching seem slow and antiquated. So the call is for preaching to come of age and make use of the media available.

Preaching in its essence, however, has always been oral communication, one person declaring to others a word from God. The church will profit from the use of high-tech media for education. Some preachers will make use of audio-visual media in their sermons as well, as they have done with chalk talks and object lessons in years past. Twenty-first century preachers would do well, however, to consider the power of simple oral communication before forsaking it for audio visual aids.

Revisiting Sermon Delivery

Many contemporary preachers have the attitude James Stalker expressed about sermon delivery more than a hundred years ago:

> When I was at college, we used rather to despise delivery. We were so confident in the power of ideas that we thought nothing of the manner of setting them up. Only have good stuff, we thought, and it will preach itself . . . and many of us have since suffered for it. We know how many sermons are preached in the churches of the country every Sunday; but does anyone know how many are listened to?[1]

From the time they complete seminary preaching courses, very few preachers ever expose themselves again to a critique of their sermon delivery. They rather continue on in whatever delivery patterns they developed, for the most part assuming they are doing well. The consumers of sermons, however, are more likely to consider most preaching rather dull, and to be delighted when they hear an engaging and helpful sermon.

The effectiveness of a spoken message is largely in the manner of its presentation rather in the material presented. Allen H. Monroe

found that audience members think of effective public speaking more in terms of delivery than content.[2] In a study of student responses to speeches, he discovered that the first six characteristics they associated with an ineffective speaker were related to delivery.

The most distracting feature of delivery named by Monroe's students was a monotonous voice. Others were stiffness, lack of eye contact, fidgeting, lack of enthusiasm, and a weak voice. The student audience liked direct eye contact, alertness, enthusiasm, a pleasant voice, and physical movement. Another student study discovered that for persuasive speeches, delivery was almost three times as important for effectiveness as content.[3]

The audience is getting a number of messages from the preacher besides his words. Sixty-five percent of the message they are receiving comes by means other than the words he says. That means only 35 percent of speech communication may be verbal. These other channels for communication are tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, even the way he stands and how he is dressed.[4]

In one experiment the words of a speaker and the nonverbal signals were directly contradictory. Negative and hostile facial expressions and tone of voice were combined with pleasant and reassuring words. Then subjects in the study were asked what they thought was the real attitude of the speaker. The researchers reported that they depended only 7 percent on the actual words used. They depended about 38 percent on such features as tone of voice and rate of speech. The most credibility, 55 percent, was given to facial expression and other body language. Mark Knapp does not exaggerate when he writes, "how something is said is frequently what is said."[5]

Though some of the perceived weaknesses of preaching today may be elsewhere, serious attention should be given to the issue of sermon delivery. It is an exhilarating experience for the preacher when his audience is fully connected with him and his message. They look at him intently. They hang on his every word. They are one with him in the communication process–fully engaged, attentive, and alert.

But many preachers have a different experience every Sunday. Their audience is listless, bored, preoccupied with other matters, and distracted. Delivering the sermon takes all the energy the preacher has and he still seems to be getting nowhere. At first this inattention bothers a new preacher. After a while, however, he may come to accept it as normal. Many preachers just trudge along, chalking up the boredom to spiritual deadness in the church.

Effective delivery style for this generation can be called conversational. This does not mean chatty or of little importance. It rather has to do with the communication emphasis of conversation. Conversational style is dialogical. It is a two-way flow of communication as the preacher pays as close attention to his audience as he hopes they will to him.

Conversational style employs the melody of normal speech. Preachers often change their voices when they enter the pulpit, adopting a speech pattern that is louder, higher in pitch, tends toward a monotone, and generally sounds like a stereotypical preacher. In their classic sermon delivery textbook, Stevenson and Diehl devoted an entire chapter to this "ministerial tune."[6]

Conversational style, on the other hand, allows for variety in rate, pitch, volume, mood, and language. Just as in a stimulating conversation the preacher may whisper and shout, rush and pause, laugh and ponder, philosophize and confess, conversational preaching expresses this same variety. There is room for drama and description, pathos and persuasion, argument and anguish.

Conversational style is more personal. The preacher does not talk at the audience but with the audience. There is a level of warmth and intimacy which cannot be achieved in other styles of preaching. The sermon is designed to be hearer oriented. Conversational style is simply the preacher's natural manner. This means that the preacher uses his normal way of talking in the pulpit, enlarging his expression as necessary for the public speaking situation.

Unfortunately, much of the impact of effective delivery is lost with the use of some visual aids. Using an overhead projector or a Powerpoint presentation with the sermon draws the attention of the audience to the screen and away from the preacher. The presentation is no longer basic oral communication, with its power to engage the audience. The primary channel of communication has become the written word.

The Force of Personality

In his classic and oft quoted definition of preaching, Philips Brooks wrote that preaching is "truth through personality." He explained his meaning:

> Truth through Personality is our description of real preaching. The truth must come really through the person, not merely over his lips, not merely into his understanding and out through his pen. It must come through his character, his affections, his whole intellectual and moral being. It must come genuinely through him. I think that, granting equal intelligence and study, here is the great difference which we feel between two preachers of the Word.[7]

Matthew Simpson, a contemporary of Brooks, wrote in a similar vein, "The word of God is the constant quantity, the preacher the variable. If this be true, then that preaching is best which, on the one hand, is most full of the divine message, and which, on the other, has the greatest personality of the preacher."[8]

Aristotle named three fundamental factors in persuasive public speech: logos, ethos, and pathos. These are the logical content of the speech, the character of the speaker, and the passion associated with the subject. Concerning ethos, he said, "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible." He asserted that the speaker's character "may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses."[9]

God has chosen to use human messengers to communicate his truth, with all the risks and frailties that involves. Clyde Fant wrote, "The incarnation, therefore, is the truest theological model for preaching because it was God's ultimate act of communication. Jesus, who was the Christ, most perfectly said God to us because the eternal Word took on human flesh in a contemporary situation. Preaching cannot do otherwise."[10]

So the preacher must plan his preaching for a balance of truth and personality, the word of God in Scripture and the reality of human agency in the present moment. He must be fully in touch with that word in its own historical context, understanding its message and trusting its authority. He must also be fully in touch with his own generation, understanding his audience in their need and himself in his own unique personhood.

That personality is expressed primarily through the facial expressions, voice, and gestures of the preacher. Eye contact tells the hearer at once that he is the object of attention. Eyes indicate a person's mood more reliably than any other facial features. Eye signals are unselfconscious, genuine and hard to fake. We can tell from the eyes alone whether a person is pleased, wary, wistful or bored.[11]

The preacher's voice is one of the most important factors affecting his image in the minds of others. The way they "see" him is constructed by what they hear. As soon as he begins to speak, his spoken image becomes dominant and overrides his visual image. When he talks, he is either reinforcing or destroying the message he is sending by gestures, facial expressions, clothing, posture and other nonverbal channels.[12]

Since nonverbal elements in speech are not easily isolated, the hearer does not really analyze why he feels the way he does about the speaker. He just gets an overall impression by all the signals he is receiving. It is the harmony of many factors that makes the message clear. Pearson and Nelson cite research indicating that most

misunderstandings in oral communication can be traced to the non-verbal signals.[13]

The use of visual media in the sermon tends to minimize the personality of the preacher as a factor for persuasion in the sermon. The non-verbal signals that communicate attitudes and convictions are obscured. The incarnational element is largely lost. Instead of a life-to-life communication, the sermon tends to become a presentation of information and the preacher a servant of the media.

Audience Sensitivity

Every person comes to church with a lot on his mind. As we might expect, each one is fully preoccupied with his own personal concerns: family, work, future, health, marriage, children, bills, recreation, and so on. These are the matters he has on his mind as he faces the preacher on Sunday.

The preacher, on the other hand, has his own agenda. His role as pastor brings with it a set of responsibilities and concerns that shape that agenda. He is concerned with the success of the church. He is interested in tithing, attendance, outreach, moral integrity, faithfulness, Sunday school, the building fund, missions, and so on. No matter what text he chooses, his mind tends to gravitate back to these concerns as pastor. His agenda is to interest the people of the church in these matters so the church can prosper for the glory of God.

The conflict of interests is obvious. The man in the pew has a different set of concerns from the pastor. This puts the pastor and his preaching outside his circle of personal concerns. As he listens to the sermon he hears the same appeal for church faithfulness, witnessing, tithing, etc. It is easy to see why his mind wanders. He has enough to think about without taking on the preacher's concerns as well. Preachers have been talking about those things for generations, but his rebellious teen-aged son is a problem for right now.

Spurgeon admonished his students to sympathize with their audience: "Recollect that to some of our people it is not so easy to be attentive; many of them are not so interested in the matter . . . Many of them have through the week been borne down by the press of business cares. . . . Do you always find it easy to escape from anxieties? Are you able to forget the sick wife and the ailing children at home?"[14]

One key for engaging the audience is to present sermon material that is relevant to their own concerns. When a believer is worrying about a lab report due next Tuesday, it is difficult for him to concentrate on subscribing the church budget. When a couple knows they are drifting apart and that their marriage is threatened, they cannot generate much interest in the building program. Teenagers facing the constant pressure to forsake their convictions in an immoral world have a hard time getting serious about high attendance day.

When the preacher's sermons are largely institutional, promoting the work and programs of the church, he is missing his audience as to their personal concerns. When he preaches historical sermons about ancient religious people and how Christians should all be like them, he misses them. When he deals in exegetical trivia that is not necessary to the purpose of the sermon, he misses them.

Spurgeon said, "In order to get attention, the first golden rule is, always say something worth hearing."[15] The question must then be asked whether the "something" of the sermon is worth hearing from the preacher's viewpoint or from the viewpoint of the hearer. It is obvious that the preacher might be intensely interested in church matters, but many of his listeners are too burdened with personal problems to pay much attention.

Every preaching text has theological truths that are applicable to the life experience of the audience. Making those applications believable and faith-building is the challenge the preacher faces. The listlessness and apathy in many a congregation may well be due to the irrelevancy of the sermon material. Using audio-visual media in the sermon will

not compensate for ideas that do not connect for the hearer. Low-tech preaching can have a high impact when the message addresses the needs of the audience.

Extemporaneous Method

In his classic book, *The Art of Extempore Speaking*, M. Bautain, eloquent professor at the Sorbonne, wrote two statements about extemporaneous speech that reveals its character: "Extemporization consists of speaking on the first impulse; that is to say, without a preliminary arrangement of phrases. It is the instantaneous manifestation, the expression, of an actual thought, or the sudden explosion of a feeling or mental movement."[16] In the first place, then, extemporaneous speech is a spontaneous use of phraseology.

Bautain then wrote on the next page: "We will devote our attention only to prepared extempore speaking, that is to say, to those addresses which have to be delivered in public before a specified auditory, on a particular day, on a given subject, and with the view of achieving a certain result."[17]   The second factor defining extemporaneous speech is that it is well prepared.

In modern speech communication the term extempore does not mean "off the cuff" as the popular understanding of the word seems to suggest. An extemporaneous speech is one in which the speaker assembles his material, plans an order, and may even rehearse his delivery. But he allows the specific language of the presentation to develop as he speaks. Zimmerman is correct in his simple characterization of the extemporaneous method, "That is the key: careful preparation and practice, but spontaneous language development."[18]

The difference between extemporaneous preaching with notes and without notes is so significant that these may be said to be two different forms. Preaching with notes can be extemporaneous to a limited degree, but it also has much of the quality of manuscript preaching. The preacher is tied to his written material in either case.

His eye contact with the audience will be broken repeatedly, much more often than he thinks. He will never quite get into the mode of a fully oral presentation, with all its advantages for effective communication.

In his book, *Expository Preaching without Notes,* Charles Koller wrote that "the preacher commits to memory a progression of thought rather than words, and is never tied to a particular phraseology."[19] Preaching without notes is best not only for traditional deductive preaching, but for inductive forms as well. Ralph Lewis advocates extemporaneous delivery in his *Inductive Preaching,* especially preaching without notes, as best for connecting with the audience, a key aim of inductive sermon form.[20]

Referring to the habit of some preachers of following the words of their manuscript with the index finger while they read, Henry Ward Beecher wrote, "A man who speaks right before his audience, without notes, will speak, little by little, with the gestures of the whole body, and not with the gestures of one finger only."[21]

Preaching without notes allows the preacher to have only his Bible in hand as he faces the congregation. He does not even need a pulpit or speaker's stand. He can be much more free and spontaneous in all his movements. This will help to capture and hold the attention of the audience. It will enhance his verbal message by the full use of nonverbal channels of communication.

An aspect of preparation that preachers often neglect is oral preparation. When a preacher thinks of sermon preparation, he usually means the writing of the sermon material. A sermon is an oral presentation. If the preacher does not expect to read his sermon, shouldn't he give some preparation time to the oral delivery? After he has his content well prepared, he might take a walk and talk it out from memory. Maybe he would prefer just pacing about the study.

A preacher may think of "talking it out" as practicing his sermon. He will discover, however, that the sermon will change and grow as he speaks it. Certain terms will come to mind, certain phrases, new

illustrations, better ways of saying what he wants to say. In this sense, he is not practicing a completed sermon, he is still completing it. His written preparation should never be the only experience he has with his sermon ideas before he preaches. When he goes to the pulpit he should have already expressed his ideas orally as part of his preparation.

The use of audio-visual media in the sermon immediately changes the dynamic of extemporaneous speech. The preacher will by necessity be tied to the media presentation and be limited in the freedom he has to speak out of the moment.

Appealing to Imagination

An elderly woman was reporting enthusiastically on a sermon she had heard the previous night from John 8. "I saw that woman," she said. "I saw her hair. I saw those old men looking down their noses at her. And I saw Jesus. He was gentle and caring. He looked her in the eye and forgave her." The sermon had been so vivid to her that she recounted it in narrative terms as though she had been there when Jesus wrote in the sand. The preacher had appealed to her imagination.

Today's audience is said to be more visual in its learning style than previous generations. But there has been no generation since man was created for which imagination was not a key element in learning. Even though the prevalence of print media changed the way literate societies think, people still live their lives in the images of their particular world.

Ralph Lewis has advocated "inductive" preaching as an answer to the dull, academic, and tedious traditional sermon.[22] While making some very good points about the need for inductive elements in preaching, Lewis paints a negative caricature of traditional preaching. He criticizes sermon points as propositions not interesting to the audience. He calls for inductive material that will appeal to the imagination.

Two general characteristics distinguish between deductive and inductive elements in preaching. In the first place, this difference involves the direction of movement in the presentation of the material. Deductive thinking begins with general truths and moves to specific examples of those truths. Inductive thinking begins with specific experiences or examples and moves to general conclusions.

Beyond the direction of movement in a sermon, the kind of material employed will indicate whether it is more inductive or deductive. All sermon material could be classified as generals or particulars.[23] A general statement of truth like "Love your neighbor" is obviously different from a particular example of such a truth in action like the story of the Good Samaritan. Deductive material makes theological assertions while inductive material involves particular experiences.

As to the kind of material to use, Lewis calls for more concrete and specific development. Any sermon, whatever its direction of thought, will be dull and uninteresting if it does not use a good bit of down-to-earth life experience particulars. Lewis says inductive preaching like that of Jesus involves a lot of personal references, human need, parables, stories, narrative logic, common experiences, visual appeal, questions, dialog, and so forth.[24] There is no doubt that good preaching will utilize these "inductive" elements. But good preaching will also involve clearly stated biblical truths. The imagination, however, is only awakened by the particulars.

There is a circuit breaker in the mind of every hearer that trips when he is presented with too much abstraction. The preacher can see it in the faces of his audience when their interest flags. The eyes seem to glaze over and the face takes on a lifeless look. Sometimes they begin to fiddle with purses, look through a hymnal, or make "to do" lists on the back of offering envelopes. When the preacher notices these signals, he can immediately respond with something to regain attention, something concrete and vivid, something personal and relevant. He can appeal to imagination.

An important factor for appealing to imagination is the careful use of language. The words the preacher uses can be predictable on the

one hand or have impact on the other. Hesselgrave describes the problem of predictability in preaching: "The sermon that is simply a series of generalizations capped off with a familiar illustration will not only be soon forgotten, it will probably not be 'heard' in the first place."[25]   This is the kind of preaching in which one can almost complete every sentence for the preacher. It is the "same old same old." That kind of sermon cannot have impact on the audience. It does not appeal to imagination.

The key to imaginative impact is to frame the old story in new terms. The preacher can try to "see" and "hear" and "touch" and "smell" the biblical stories and the contemporary illustrations. He can avoid over use of generalities in favor of a good portion of particulars. He can use language that is concrete, specific, figurative, descriptive, and sensate. He can keep everything he says down to earth with examples, applications, and specific details. He can work for freshness, the kind of novelty and originality that make the sermon ideas sound new and interesting. Vividness results in high impact.

The use of visual media in sermons is often aimed at appealing to the imagination of the hearer. But a stronger appeal to imagination comes with a vividly described scene than with a photograph or painting presented in all its particulars and leaving nothing to the imagination. Oral speech has a tremendous potential for creating a motion picture in the minds of the audience. But the preacher will have to work on the use of particular language over general if he is to turn on that video and awaken the imagination of his hearers. Homiletical traditions will continue to be challenged as new media emerge and new ideas about communication are promoted. Before the preacher gives up on the sermon as simple oral communication, however, let him consider how to enhance his delivery, honor the incarnational nature of preaching, address the audience in their own experience, use an extemporaneous method of presentation, and appeal to the imagination. Whatever he decides to do, his aim should always be the most effective communication of the revelation of God to his generation.

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Presence is Persuasive

by Timothy S. Warren

(editor's note: Timothy Warren is Professor of Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas. This article was first presented as a paper at the 2005 Evangelical Homiletics Society Meeting.)

Abstract

The mind functions as a vast filing system, storing thousands of images. Some are easily brought to consciousness. Others lie hidden from awareness. An effective preacher seeks to elevate latent images and emotions into the listener's consciousness. That is the essence of presence, and presence is persuasion. This paper explores how the preacher can create presence.

> "We need words that will set an event before their eyes
> so that they see the thing occurring now."[1]

Preachers know that illustrations work. Illustrations explain, prove, and apply sermon ideas.[2] Illustrations also motivate life change at the deepest levels of their listeners' beings. Bryan Chapell affirms that, "When illustrations arouse emotions they do more than pass information on to the mind. They stimulate decision-making responses; they influence our will."[3] He adds that illustrations "exegete Scripture in the terms of human experience to create a whole-person understanding of God's Word."[4]

When the Lord's prophet, Nathan, wanted to move David to repentance, he offered up an illustration with which David would immediately identify.

> There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him

and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him (2 Samuel 12:1-4, *NASB*).

That image went straight to David's heart and turned his life back to God's way. He identified with the experience and emotions of both men in the parable, having been both a poor shepherd and a rich, powerful king. The image changed his will, leading to repentance.

The question is not whether images work, but how they work and how preachers can access their power. By asserting that, "When you link a present message to a past experience, you take a direct path to a person's emotions." Gary Smalley and John Trent reveal what the great communicators have always known and practiced: presence is persuasive.[5] If the preacher can make an idea, a biblical truth, "present" in the experience of his listeners, he can expect a dynamic response. As Haddon Robinson urges, "You don't really understand truth unless you can experience it. Therefore, while I have to think in order to understand, I also have to experience ... for truth to really make a difference."[6] How does this process work? How can we preachers practice presence to the glory of God?

The human mind serves as a vast filing system storing thousands upon thousands of images. Some images are easily brought to consciousness. Others lie, sometimes for years and sometimes for lifetimes, unexploited and hidden from awareness. One function of an effective preacher is to elevate into his hearers' immediate consciousness certain of these images for the sake of persuasion, resulting in spiritual life change. In so doing the preacher creates a "presence." The image or images made present- that is, made immediate and therefore "real"– can aid the preacher's efforts to convince his hearers. If, for example, a preacher can make present in the minds of his listeners a realistic image of sinners dangling in the

hands of an angry God over the fires of eternal damnation, then he will be more likely to persuade them of their need to respond to God's offer of salvation than if he is unable to make that image present. From a communication perspective, his ability to re-present so vivid an image may explain the response Jonathan Edwards received from his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

> You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder ... nothing to keep off the flames of wrath [while] God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire ... looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire.

> And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! ... How can you rest one moment in such a condition?[7]

The process of presence begins when images that have been stored in the speaker's and listeners' minds are once again accessed. Clevenger, while not immediately connecting these stored images with the goal of persuasion, identifies and classifies them.

> For a given individual at a particular time, some images come to mind more readily than others. For each of us there are some images that leap to mind at the slightest provocation or the remotest association, and others that are dragged into awareness only by repeated stimulation. Those images that are, so to speak, in the forefront of a person's mind are for him said to be salient, while those that are evoked with difficulty are said to be *latent*.[8] (italics mine.)

Listener's Mind   Speaker's Mind

Latent | Salient   Salient | Latent
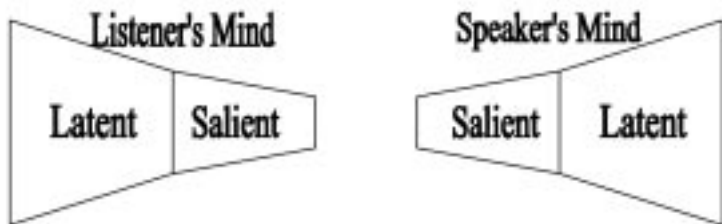
If the preacher is to enhance persuasion, he must pull both latent (dormant and undeveloped) and salient (near the surface, but not conscious) images into the present consciousness of his listeners.

Latent   Salient   Present
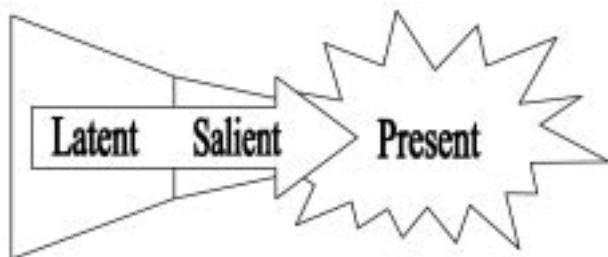
Commenting that timing, a sense of "right now," makes a difference in the salience factor of particular images, Richard Weaver emphasizes the necessity of creating an *omnipresent consciousness* in the minds of the audience. He argues that an *immediate awareness* of crisis prepares an audience to accept as rhetoric arguments that otherwise would be unacceptable. Thus, he ties an image – in his example, a *vivid sense* of crisis – to persuasion.

> Moments of great crisis do indeed encourage people to listen for awhile to a Churchill or a MacArthur, and this is proof of the indispensability of rhetoric when men feel great things are at stake. But today when the danger is past, they lapse again into their dislike of the rhetorical mode, labeling all discourse which has discernible emotional appeal "propaganda."[9]

The speaker, therefore, brings a latent image- long tucked away in the mind of the listener- and/or a salient image – just back from the surface of consciousness – into the *immediate* or *present* consciousness of the audience. A recent (June, 2005) running shoe commercial worked this "magic" on me.

The commercial, for Nike's new line of running shoe called Nike Free, begins with about twenty barefoot runners jogging in the sand along an overcast beach with the theme from *Chariots of Fire* in the background. The pack of runners makes its way down the beach while passing a man sitting on a park bench as a yellow taxi cab whizzes by. The sequence is then interrupted by a city bus chugging by and the scene cuts to a New York street with a runner wearing the new Nike shoes. The idea is that if you wear the shoes you'll feel as if you are running barefoot.[10]

The emotions evoked by recalling the latent, or salient, image(s) of the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* are transferred into the present for ESPN and MTV viewers. The latent (I haven't watched the film recently) images of struggle, courage, and joyful victory depicted in the film now sell shoes to those who feel, once again, the powerful emotions of the movie, yet apply those feelings to the present experience of running barefoot.[11]

Wayne Booth goes a step farther in developing the concept of presence by stating that an effective communicator:

> ...engages us in the process of thinking – and feeling – it through. What makes the rhetoric of Milton and Burke and Churchill great is that each *presents us with a spectacle* of man passionately involved in thinking an important question through, in the company of an audience.[12] (italics mine.)

Generating that "spectacle" is the essence of presence. It is, as Booth notes, a speaker bringing into the present various images by which he "thinks and feels through...in the company of an audience" the subject at hand. Persuasion is much more likely to occur when the listener is included in the rhetorical process, and the listener is much more likely to engage with the process, not only mentally, but also emotionally and volitionally, when he "connects" through familiar images.

Nathan made a present spectacle of David's latent (shepherd) and salient (king) roles/images, compelling the guilty sinner to "feel" and "think" his way to his own conviction: "Surely the man who has done this deserves to die."

The process, as viewed above, depicts emerging presence from the perspective of the hearer. Of course, that exemplifies the latter portion of the entire communication process. Prior to evoking the listeners' mind, heart, and will, the preacher works his way, backwards, through a similar process. Once the sermon idea is grasped through exegetical and theological study, the preacher will seek to make the truth present for the potential listeners. He will journey back into his own experience, through salient and/or back into latent images in order to recover an experience that will bring about a similar desired effect on the audience. Then he will represent those images to the audience.

More likely than not, when we preachers think of "image," we usually think of illustrations. And, although illustrations are not, as we will see, the only means of creating presence, they are probably the most common and effective means. That is because illustrations, or "emotional word pictures," possess great power to evoke latent and salient images, bringing them into the present with all their clarifying and emotive power.[13]

Others, from the ancient rhetoricians to those of the modern era, comment on the notion of creating presence.[14] Indeed, "presence" is the term that Perelman gives to this rhetorical undertaking. The Belgian philosopher maintains that the communicator must show the audience, from the images that are stored in their minds, whether latent or salient, those things that will persuade them. Perelman comments:

> What an audience accepts forms a body of opinion, convictions, and commitments that is both vast and indeterminate. From this body, the orator must select certain elements on which he will focus attention by endowing them, as it were, with "presence."[15]

In *The New Rhetoric,* Perelman defines presence as, "the displaying of certain elements [images] on which the speaker wishes to center attention in order that they may occupy the foreground of the hearer's consciousness."[16] This function of (re)focusing the images in the listener's mental and emotional world plays an essential role in persuasion:

> Effective presentation that impresses itself on the hearers' consciousness is essential not only in all argumentation aiming at immediate action, but also in that which aspires to give the mind a certain orientation, to make certain schemes of interpretation prevail, to insert the elements of agreement into a framework that will give them significance and confer upon them the rank they deserve.[17]

As the images in the mind of the speaker run through the lens of our shared experiences and associations our consciousness is focused on a new present image. Thoughts, feelings, and commitments from the past become transferred into present mental, emotional, and spiritual experience. The goal is that what is happening to the speaker will also be happening to the listener, right now, in the present. Latent images in the mind of the speaker had been made salient and, at the moment of speaking, *present* for both the preacher and the listeners.[18]

Having examined the essence of presence, I will now identify some of the means of producing it. Illustrations, though probably the most used and most effective way of evoking presence, are not the only way to stimulate the powerful experience. Each of the five canons of rhetoric will be surveyed in order to determine how each one affects or is affected by presence.

Invention

Aristotle's classic definition of rhetoric, "The faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion," identifies the speaker's role as, among others, a searcher for ideas.[19] Once the preacher has "found" his idea, he must discover arguments that take the listener to the idea or, in another way of looking at it, bring the idea to the listener. In order to determine what kinds of arguments will bring the idea to the listener the preacher seeks to answer the following questions in regard to his exegetically/theologically derived idea: "What does it mean? Is it true? What difference does it make?"[20] These three developmental questions are rooted in Quintilian's three questions regarding any subject matter: "Is it? What is it? And of what kind is it?"[21] If the speaker is able to create a "presence" for his argument in answering these questions, he will be fulfilling the role of an effective persuader. That, at least was Quintilian's position when he spoke of

> ...Images by which the representation of absent objects (or ideas) are so distinctly represented to the mind, that we seem to see them before our eyes and have them before us. Whoever shall best conceive such images, will have the greatest power in moving the feelings.[22]

This is the essence of presence in invention; making the evidence evident and making the reasoning apparent in the minds of the listeners. The logical, ethical, and emotional proofs, then, become potential carriers/creators of presence.

Logical proof

Simply mentioning an argument, whether a passage of Scripture or an illustration, creates presence. Perelman wrote that, "any argument, by its presence, draws the attention of the audience to certain facts and makes it give consideration to matters that it may not have previously thought about."[23] Speakers, he argued, too often ignore this technique:

> By the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, their importance and pertinency [sic] to the discussion are implied. Indeed, such a choice endows these elements with a presence, which is an essential factor in argumentation and one that is far too much neglected in rationalistic conceptions of reasoning.[24]

On the other hand, certain arguments may go entirely unmentioned. They are kept from the conscious awareness of the audience:

> A somewhat different technique consists in presenting a thesis as the answer to the hypothesis, all other hypotheses being tossed aside en bloc. Only the thesis which the speaker is developing is made present. Sometimes, after having set it forth, he asks his hearers if they have a better solution to offer. This appeal, known classically as the argumentum ad ignorantiam, derives its force essentially from its very urgency, for it excludes the possibility of pausing for thought.[25]

A recent example of this absence of presence may be witnessed in the November 2004, article, "Was Darwin Wrong?" in *National Geographic Magazine.*[26] The article avoided any mention of the intelligent design movement. Even a passing reference to the design movement would have given some credence to its claims and allowed it space in the ongoing dialogue/debate between Darwinists and Biblicists.[27]

Since any argument actually stated creates a degree of presence, and since unstated arguments create no presence, the persuader must choose carefully those logical proofs that will most help and least hinder his cause. He must decide, on the basis of what he determines to be shared experiences and associations, what arguments will best evoke presence.

The time factor is always a concern in this decision. Choices must be made regarding the number of arguments and supporting materials to be employed in order to fit within the time limitations. Rather than add another argument, the preacher may choose to illustrate the existing argument, investing that single argument with an even greater presence.

Illustrations are particularly helpful tools for creating presence, since: "An illustration seeks to increase presence by making an abstract rule concrete by means of a particular case."[28] Bill Hybels practices this strategy in his sermon, "Christianity's Toughest Competitor: Moralism."[29] Hybels' big idea is that comparative religion, comparing oneself to another on a scale of morality, keeps people from seeing that they are sinners totally incapable of meeting God's demand of perfect holiness. The entire message revolves around this one concept. He translates his point into an emotional word picture by telling an extended story of his experience with the sport of racket ball. In so doing, he creates a vivid presence in the listeners' minds.

The preacher will always wrestle with the tension of having to choose between good and best arguments, arguments and supporting materials, and good and best supporting materials. This discovery and selection of the best means of creating presence and causing persuasion is at the heart of rhetoric. As a result, the communicator will not be free from this tension when he seeks to elicit presence through ethical proofs. Choices must be made here as well, though the presence of the speaker in the speaking situation may be an even more effective tool than illustration. "Being there" creates presence.

Ethical Proof

Since the individual communicator is part of the overall message, the fact that the preacher is present elicits a degree of ethical appeal. An acknowledged champion of a particular message or idea increases presence for that idea. Rick Warren, for example, lends presence to living with purpose, especially as he uses his newfound popularity as a platform for making God known in a lost, sick, and starving world. John Piper lends presence to worshipping a holy God. Elisabeth Elliot lends presence to devoted obedience and perseverance over a lifetime. James Dobson lends presence to family and moral/ethical issues affecting the family. Billy Graham lends presence to the simple gospel of salvation by grace through faith. Thus, the mere physical presence of a speaker often lends presence to an idea or event. The stronger the connection, in the eyes of the audience, between a preacher and the message or issue he represents, the more presence will be lent to that cause by his being present. Just so, Perelman suggests that in many cases a particular speaker symbolizes the cause:

> Similarly, if an individual who is a member of a group has become a symbol of this group his behavior will be regarded as more important, because it is more representative, than that of other members of the same group. This symbolic person, representing the group, will sometimes be chosen to play this representative role either because he is the best in the field...or because he is an average person whom nothing, not even his name, distinguishes...[30]

Some groups would do well to listen to Perelman and seek new spokesmen for their causes. Democrats have been wondering whether Howard Dean is the best chairman and spokesman they can find to represent the Democratic Party. Indeed, groups often choose "no names"- Perelman's "average person"- to uphold a particular platform or perspective. Other speakers, however, known for their particular passion(s), aid their cause through ethical presence. For example, Houston Peterson comments on the effect of William

Wilberforce speaking against slavery before the House of Commons:

> It was not alone the heart-rending subject, nor the manner of speaking, moving though it was, that counted. It was the man himself. In his lifetime struggle against slavery, Wilberforce was to become the conscience of England. In his person, piety and eloquence combined to make every reform respectable.[31]

How much presence a preacher can and should create before the sermon, through predetermined introduction, or during the speech in reference to his character, intelligence, and good will is a question that places the preacher in tension. It is the wise speaker who will create a presence of integrity, of knowledge and wisdom sufficient to qualify him to speak on the subject at hand, of an attitude of wanting the best for his listeners. The images he evokes, however, must create the presence he desires rather than unfavorable or negative presence. If what the audience sees is a preacher trying too hard to "sell" himself, he may be hindered by the presence of pride in their minds. Essentially, just being there to represent his cause creates a presence for the speaker.

Emotional Proof

Presence greatly aids the communicator in making emotional appeals. Cicero argued:

> Men often form a judgment through the influence of hatred, love, desire, anger, grief, joy, hope, fear, mistake, or some emotion of the mind, rather than truth or precept, or any rule of law, or any form of judgment or statutes.[32]

> Compassion is moved, if the hearer can be brought to apply in his own case the afflicting circumstances that are deplored in another's; whether they are past or dreaded; or by looking upon another frequently to turn his eye into his own breast.[33]

The task of the speaker, therefore, is to make these emotions present in the minds and feelings of the listeners. Missionary professor, Del Tarr, sought to persuade his listeners to act on their belief, that as they sacrificially invested in Christ's Kingdom, they would ultimately, but only eventually, celebrate. They may well "sow in tears" before they "reap with joyful shouting." He drew images from his childhood (latent) and his recent missions context (salient) to evoke similar images and accompanying emotions from his listeners' latent and salient memories:

I grew up in a preacher's home in the little towns of Minnesota and South Dakota. I spent most of my free time with the deacons' kids on John Deere tractors, International Harvesters, Cases, Minneapolis-Molines. I learned how to drill oats, plant corn, and cultivate. And never once did I see a deacon behave like Psalm126 says. What was there to weep about at sowing time?

I was always perplexed by this Scripture . . . until I went to the Sahel, that vast stretch of savanna more than four thousand miles wide just under the Sahara Desert, with a climate much like the Bible lands. In the Sahel, all the moisture comes in a four-month period: May, June, July, and August. After that, not a drop of rain falls for eight months. The ground cracks from dryness, and so do your hands and feet. The winds off the Sahara pick up the dust and throw it thousands of feet into the air. It then comes slowly drifting across West Africa as a fine grit. It gets in your mouth. It gets inside your watch and stops it. It gets inside your refrigerator (if you have one).

The year's food, of course, must all be grown in four months. People grow sorghum or milo in fields not larger than this sanctuary. Their only tools are the strength of their backs and a short-handled hoe. No Massey-Fergusons here; the average annual income is between eighty-five and one hundred dollars per person.

October and November...these are beautiful months. The granaries are full-the harvest has come. People sing and dance. They eat two meals a day – one about ten in the morning, after they've been to the field awhile, and the other just after sundown. The sorghum is ground between two stones to make flour and then a mush with the consistency of yesterday's cream of wheat. The sticky mush is eaten hot; they roll it into little balls between their fingers, drop it into a bit of sauce, and then pop it into their mouths. The meal lies heavy on their stomachs so they can sleep.

December comes, and the granaries start to recede. Many families omit the morning meal. Certainly by January not one family in fifty is still eating two meals a day.

By February, the evening meal diminishes. People feel the clutch of hunger once again. The meal shrinks even more during March, and children succumb to sickness. You don't stay well on half a meal a day.

April is the month that haunts my memory. The African dusk is quiet, you see...no jet engines, no traffic noises to break the stillness. The dust filters down through the air, and sounds carry for long distances. April is the month you hear the babies crying in the twilight...from the village over here, from the village over there. Their mothers' milk is now stopped.

Parents go at this time of year to the bush country, where they scrape bark from certain trees. They dig up roots as well, collect leaves, and grind it all together to make a thin gruel. They may pawn a chair, a cooking pit, or bicycle tires in order to buy a little more grain from those wealthy enough to have some remaining, but most often the days are passed with only an evening cup of gruel.

Then, inevitably, it happens. A six- or seven-year-old boy comes running to his father one day with sudden excitement.

"Daddy! Daddy! We've got grain!" he shouts.

"Son, you know we haven't had grain for weeks."

"Yes, we have! The boy insists. "Out in the hut where we keep the goats – there's a leather sack hanging up on the wall-and I reached up and put my hand down in there – Daddy, there's grain in there! Give it to Mommy so she can make flour, and tonight our tummies can sleep!"

The father stands motionless. "That's next year's seed grain. It's the only thing between us and starvation. We're waiting for the rains, and then we must use it."

The rains finally arrive in May, and when they do, the young boy watches as his father takes the sack from the wall...and does the most unreasonable thing imaginable. Instead of feeding his desperately weakened family, he goes to the field and – I've seen it – with tears streaming down his face, he takes the precious seed and throws it away. He scatters it in the dirt! Why? Because he believes in the harvest.

The seed is his; he owns it. He can do anything with it he wants. The act of sowing it hurts so much that he cries. But as the African pastors say when they preach on Psalm 126, "Brothers and sisters, this is God's law of the harvest. Don't expect to rejoice later on unless you have been willing to sow in tears."

And I want to ask you: How much would it cost you to sow in tears? I don't mean just giving God something from your abundance, but finding a way to say, "I believe in the harvest, and therefore I will give what makes no sense. The world would call me unreasonable to do this-but I must sow regardless, in order that I may someday celebrate with songs of joy."[34]

Quintilian was on target when he wrote:

The chief requisite, then, for moving the feelings of others, is, as far as I can judge, that we ourselves be moved, for the

assumption of grief, and anger, and indignation, will be often ridiculous, if we adapt merely our words and looks, and not our minds, to those passions.[35]

Two elements seem to evoke an emotional presence: sincere feeling on the part of the speaker and a forceful use of style. In their classic text, *Speech Criticism*, Thonssen and Baird argued that two communications might speak of the same event:

> ...Yet one is more likely to have emotional value than the other because of the word selection and arrangement. The abundance of adjectives, the pictorial effect, and the appeal to imagery contribute in no small measure to its affective construction.[36]

We may conclude that much of a speaker's emotional appeal rests in his use of language to create persuasive images. Thus, in our survey of the five canons of rhetoric we turn to style.

Style

When the classical rhetoricians write concerning what we are calling presence, they relate it, for the most part, to style. Aristotle notes that word choice affects presence when he writes, "One word may come closer than another to the thing described, may be more like it, and being more akin to it may set it more distinctly before our eyes."[37] Quintilian agreed that the task of the orator included, "exciting the mind, giving character to things, and setting them before the eye."[38] This was to be accomplished through stylistic devices such as metaphor through which the speaker may, "set forth the objects of which we may speak in lively colors, and so that they may, as it were, be seen."[39] Aristotle argued in a similar manner for the use of metaphor, "for vividness."[40] An impressive use of this stylistic devise is seen in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, speech on America's citizens of color coming to Washington to, "cash a check," when they gathered to support the passing of civil rights legislation in the summer of 1963:

> In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.[41]

Who in King's audience could not draw from salient and latent images of being shamed by one's "betters"? What deep feelings were made present by King's metaphor of standing before a white establishment bank teller and being told that, "Your check is bogus, you fool!"?

Simile is another stylistic device that allows the preacher to set his case before the audience in clear, vivid images. Abstract concepts are made present through simile as Quintilian illustrates, using the following argument for capital punishment: "As surgeons amputate limbs rendered useless by disease, so base and mischievous persons, though intimately allied to us by blood, must be cut off from society."[42]

Adding more than mere perspicuity, "representation" is a figure that goes beyond making an idea clear; it forces an image into the consciousness.[43] Aristotle is suggesting this when he instructs, "Describe an object instead of naming it."[44] Perelman identifies this as the figure called "hypotyposis" or "demonstration,"[45] and illustrates the effectiveness of evoking details:

> Publicity agents know that, if they indicate in detail the necessary steps for placing an order, they get the idea of

ordering into the customer's consciousness and make it easier for him to decide. An impression of reality is similarly conveyed by piling up all the conditions preceding an act or by indicating all its consequences.[46]

The key element of this technique, then, is to create presence through a detailed representation or description of the issue at hand. Some words or ideas, according to Quintilian, need expansion.[47] This is a strategy akin to description. To detail the fall of a city in the time of war, for instance, creates more presence than to say simply, "The city was taken."

Quintilian argues that, "That chief power of an orator lies in extenuation."[48] Perelman calls this amplification. Amplification is a figure of thought in which the theme is fully developed. He argues that this is "far more instrumental than mere repetition of words in obtaining the feeling of presence."[49] In other words the preacher must not rush over an important point, "For the dwelling on a single circumstance has often considerable effect, and a clear illustration, and exhibition of matters to the eye of the audience, almost as if it were transacted before them."[50]

Perelman identifies a number of stylistic devices that result in the creation of presence. He writes of the use of the imperative[51] and imaginary direct address.[52] Shifting tenses, especially to the imperative[53] and present,[54] builds presence. The singular used for the plural,[55] the use of an indefinite pronoun or adjective,[56] and unusual uses of the demonstrative[57] are also effective uses of style.

Repetition, according to Perelman, is the simplest stylistic technique a speaker can use to evoke presence:

The simplest way is by repetition, accentuation of certain passages, either by tone of voice or by pausing before them, has the same purpose. Accumulating stories, even contradictory ones, on a given subject may create the impression that it is an important one.[58]

When, for instance, a minister speaks every week on the necessity of prayer, he creates a certain presence for prayer. Tony Campolo's message, "It's Friday, Sunday's Comin'"[59] repeats the theme, "It's Friday," over and over, creating a sense of doom and defeat at the death of Jesus and the apparent victory of Satan, until the turning point comes and the theme is developed with, "Sunday's comin'." The effect is powerful.

There are many more specific stylistic techniques at the preacher's disposal that will increase his effectiveness in evoking presence, but the above seem to be among the more important ones. That style is perhaps the greatest aid to this process of stimulating vivid images in the mind may be argued by the following statement by Perelman: "What is required in argumentation is not so much the exactness of specific logical modalities attributed to what is asserted as the means of obtaining the adherence of the audience through variations in the way of expressing thought."[60]

Just as style is closely related to emotional appeal in that emotion is stimulated through vivid language, so are style and arrangement related closely. The figures of extenuation and repetition, as discussed above, could be included in a discussion of how to create presence through the orderly arrangement of materials. We turn our survey to that discussion.

Arrangement

In most cases, the preacher will realize effective persuasion only if the audience is able to leave the rhetorical situation (sermon) with the major theme or idea in its "present" mental and emotional states. This may be accomplished if vivid arguments are carefully placed, building toward a climax. It is essential to evoke presence in the introduction to gain a clear image of the felt need and subject of the sermon as well as in the conclusion to represent the idea in the consciousness of the audience and seal it there. The introduction and conclusion lend themselves to the use of pathos that makes ideas present with force.[61] Perelman notes that arrangement affects presence:

The effort to make something present to the consciousness can relate not only to real objects, but also to a judgment or an entire argumentative development. As far as possible, such an effort is directed to filling the whole field of consciousness with this presence so as to isolate it, as it were, from the hearer's overall mentality.[62]

Joseph Fort Newton's sermon "The Presence" illustrates Perelman's principle.[63]   The theme is so interwoven throughout the entire sermon that the listener or reader is constantly aware of that theme. One reviewer wrote that while most sermons employ a wide range of rhetorical technique, Newton's sermon:

While it does all of these, does not seem to do them, for it distributes its benefits over the whole area of my heart, bringing truth and strength and comfort and vision and trust and courage. But if you ask me what he said that brought these boons, I cannot answer by chapter and verse from the sermon, for it has not been his argument or his outline or his epigram that has quickened me. It is the sermon itself in the total appeal it has made to those innumerable springs of living water which lie below the surface of our hearts and which his words gently startle into action.[64]

By a constant dwelling on the subject a speaker increases presence in the minds of the audience. Quintilian confesses to following this tactic. "I made it a practice of extracting the points on which my opponent and I were in agreement... and of not only drawing out all the possible consequences of his admissions, but of multiplying them by a process of division."[65]   Perelman supports this policy of repeating the same arguments over again throughout the structure of the speech/sermon:

Amplitude in argument may be due, not to the use of different arguments which support and complete each other and are addressed to different audiences, but simply to the

more or less exact reproduction of the same arguments. The purpose of this insistence is to make the arguments more present.[66]

Martin Luther King, Jr. employs this technique in his "I Have a Dream" speech delivered August 28, 1963.[67] King's hopeful thesis is, "I have a dream." That idea is repeated nine times in succession. The concept is developed in different images ("I have a dream that…"), but the main point of the argument is made present in those same words throughout the second half of the speech. Then King moves to the climax of his message in the "application," "Let freedom ring." That point is repeated twelve times in the last two paragraphs of his speech:

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, **let freedom ring.**" And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So **let freedom ring** from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. **Let freedom ring** from the mighty mountains of New York. **Let freedom ring** from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! **Let freedom ring** from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! **Let freedom ring** from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that; **let freedom ring** from Stone Mountain of Georgia! **Let freedom ring** from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! **Let freedom ring** from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, **let freedom ring.**

When we **let freedom ring,** when we **let it ring** from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"[68]

The preacher enjoys the opportunity of arranging his materials in the fashion that he believes best benefits his cause. On some occasions that will mean that certain arguments are held off until the end. This would be true especially with a hostile or non-believing audience. Points of agreement or partial agreement are identified and secured before the point of disagreement is made present.[69]

Step by step the line of argument emerges into the listener's present awareness as the speaker selects an order to bring forward new premises, to confer presence on certain elements, and to "extract certain agreements."[70] To make present the most effective arguments at the most effective juncture is the goal of the speaker, therefore, in arranging his material. Again, Campolo's sermon holds off on the major and climatic point, "Sunday's comin.'" Only at the end of the message do the listeners hear the final, the "present," resolution.

Some would say that a proper arrangement aids memory. An even better aid to memory is vivid imagery. We turn now to that "forgotten canon."

Memory

Presence helps the preacher remember his sermon and enables the listener to recapture forgotten memories and retain fresh perceptions. Quintilian argues that the first step toward an ornamented style-not gaudy, but graceful-consists in a vivid conception, a presence, of what we wish to say.[71] Not only is it true that vibrant, active images add to an ornamented style; they also, by heightening one's attention, aid the memory. Those lively, energy-packed images characteristic of an ornamented style are more effective both in evoking past memories and preserving new concepts than absent, obscure, and lifeless images. The phenomenon is true for both the speaker and the listener.

Simonides was able, by the aid of a vivid image in his mind, to recall the order in which guests had sat at a banquet.[72] When it became necessary to recall the exact seating arrangement, Simonides simply made present that image in his mind.

Memory is the ability to make present ideas or events that have been

learned or experienced in the past. The mind constantly draws from its vast source of filed images. Memory occurs when, by some means of association, a particular image flashes onto the screen of our presence. Quintilian calls this association a symbol.[73] "These symbols are marks by which we distinguish particulars which we have to get by heart, so that, as Cicero says, 'we use places as waxen tablets, and symbols as letters.'"[74] The preacher's vivid, premeditated images keep the structure and concepts of the sermon present in his mind as he progresses through his message.

Other techniques that aid the preacher's memory include writing out or drawing an idea so as to create an image that can be remembered by the eye and/or saying aloud an idea so as to create an audio "image" that can be remembered to the ear. It does not matter greatly how the mind is stimulated as long as the cue evokes the desired presence in the mind of speaker.

The listener will be more likely to remember the images and, hopefully, the concepts of the sermon when presence works its influence. If the preacher stimulates latent and/or salient memories, those "old" recollections are made fresh again and more easily recalled in the future. In addition through the use of a vivid presence new ideas become grounded in present images. These fresh images serve to evoke ongoing and memorable understandings, emotions, and experiences.

One does not use techniques of memory to evoke presence so much as use presence to stimulate memory. Since in the case of this particular canon presence is the cause rather than the effect, our survey has been brief. We examine next, the final canon, delivery.

Delivery

Every vocal and physical cue a communicator employs should assist him in stirring up those images, and only those images that will help him accomplish his purpose.[75] As Perelman states, "Effective presentation that impresses itself on the hearers' consciousness is essential."[76]

Persuasion will be more easily accomplished when the use of the voice and body makes the idea and/or image concrete. Again, Perelman comments:

> Certain masters of rhetoric, with a liking for quick results, advocate the use of concrete objects in order to move an audience.... The real thing is expected to induce an adherence that its mere description would be unable to secure; it is a precious aid, provided argumentation utilizes it to advantage.[77]

Visual aids, therefore, are one means of creating presence through delivery. A graph or chart may portray the message more forcefully than the words alone, for if it is clear and attractive, it may more effectively bring to consciousness the images that will aid persuasion in that particular case. A picture, or better yet, a video clip, creates an especially clear image. Yet, the speaker must use such aids with care. If I were to depict children starving in Africa in order to persuade listeners to provide aid, I might find some unable to cope with such vivid imagery. Rather than give, they may shut out of their minds the entire image and appeal or, worse yet, though understandable, walk out of my presentation.

Closely related to the use of visual aids, indeed another kind of visual aid, are symbols. Perelman explains:

> Not only is the symbol easier to handle; it can impose itself with a presence that the thing symbolized cannot have: the flag which is seen or described can wave, flag in the wind, and unfurl. In spite of its bonds of participation, the symbol maintains a kind of individuality which makes possible a great variety of manipulations.[78]

The celebration of the Lord's Supper was given to the Church as a means of evoking images of the crucified and coming Savior. Some theologians would argue that there is an actual mystical "presence" in the bread and wine while others speak of a "presence" in their minds. A swastika or a burning cross are symbols that evoke a strong

presence for many Americans, and thus, could be effective tools for persuasion in particular situations.

Another technique of delivery that lends itself to evoking presence is role-playing. During role-playing the speaker plays the part of someone else to help the audience visualize a particular image. This writer heard of an evangelist who, as the climax of a series of meetings, would dress in an asbestos suit and light himself afire. He assumed, for a few vivid moments, the role of a sinner in hell. This fiery preacher had a concept of creating presence in the minds of his listeners, though he would do well to take the advice of Quintilian on artificiality:

> We must look to nature, and follow her. All eloquence relates to the transactions of human life; every man refers what he hears to himself; and the mind easily admits what it recognizes as true to nature.[79]

Still another method of creating presence through delivery, which if done convincingly will also contribute ethos, is to take on the character of another individual and "become" that other speaker through dramatic monologue or dialogue. Many preachers and teachers find this an effective and exciting way to present material. Obviously, much work is involved in this technique, but the dividends paid in presence can make the effort well worthwhile. Of course, the dramatic portrayal need not dominate the entire "sermon" for then it would not be a sermon, but a drama. A five-minute drama within the sermon may accomplish all that is necessary to evoke presence in the heads and hearts of the congregation.

Having surveyed the five canons of rhetoric, this study comes to its conclusion. It has been argued that presence is the process of making present in the minds of audience members certain vivid images which, in turn, aid persuasion. A survey of the classical canons of rhetoric identified techniques that consistently aid speakers in creating presence. Those who wish to be more effective preachers will do well to understand the process of and techniques for creating presence, for presence is persuasive.

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by Ken Langley

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Introduction

I've chosen as a text for consideration this morning the ninth verse of Isaiah Chapter 40 which reads in the *New International Version*, "You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout. Lift it up. Do not be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, here is your God."

My theme sentence or proposition or big idea is, "You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout. Lift it up. Do not be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, here is your God." I propose to speak to the who, the what, and the how of this sentence which I think is as fine a sentence of anywhere in the Bible summarizing our task as preachers. You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good things to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout. Do not be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, here is your God.

This may be the only opportunity I ever have to preach for the Evangelical Homiletics Society, a bunch of guys who criticize sermons for a living and I've already blown it. In the first sixty seconds I have broken several rules of the contemporary homiletical code. I began, not with the listeners' concerns, but with my agenda. In fact, I started the sermon with the word I. This is not scratching where people itch.

I stated my main idea as an imperative. When I read the books, I read that I should do it in the indicative mode. I gave you a three point outline which sounds like the punch line of a joke that you might hear at the annual Evangelical Homiletics Society, and worst of all, I told you what I'm going to tell you. Forfeiting all the benefits of indirection and induction, for all practical purposes the sermon is over. But I take a little bit of comfort from a line in the movie, *Pirates of the Caribbean*. I have, as Greg Scharf said, seven children so I see all those kind of movies. You might not. But there is a line spoken by the pirate Captain Barbosa which is repeated later in a strategic point in the film. Captain Barbosa says, "Well, the pirate's code is what you might call guidelines rather than actual rules." And we know, don't we, that the homiletical code, whether you're talking about Augustine's or the code of the 1950's or the more rhetorically savvy listener-oriented homiletic of today is more what you might call guidelines than actual rules? So with your indulgence and with a word of thanks to Captain Barbosa, let's think about the who of this text.

The Who

"You who bring good tidings to Zion." That's me. I live in Zion, Illinois 60099, an hour north of Chicago, right on Lake Michigan at the Wisconsin border. A city of about 20,000 people with biblical street names and a colorful history, founded in 1900 by John Alexander Dalley, a man with a healing gift, a quirky theology and a vision to build a city for God. Time doesn't permit me to tell even a little bit of the story of our town. I tell people that there's some good and some bad but none of it's boring. I wonder how I got through Bible College and seminary without ever hearing the story of this unique experiment in American utopianism, Zion, Illinois. When I moved there several years ago from suburban Denver, I asked my friends in Colorado to pray for me every time they read the word Zion in the Bible. I think some of them agreed a little too readily, because if they read the Scriptures annually, they will pray for me 165 times a year.

I live in Zion but so do you. Already in Isaiah's day the name had begun to expand its semantic range from the hill in Jerusalem to the whole city of Jerusalem to all the towns of Judah which stand in parallel with Zion in this poetic line and eventually to all the people of God wherever they were – even in exile. And then, as we know, by the time we come to the New Testament, we read in the book of Hebrews, "that you, Gentiles, though you are, have come to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem." You live in Zion. You preach in Zion. You preach the Gospel in Zion. You who bring good tidings did you know, I just learned this from the lengthy article in "Kittle," that we may have the verse, Isaiah 49, to thank for our New Testament vocabulary for preaching the gospel? Here in Isaiah 49 and at three or four other places in Isaiah, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew as the participle for "gospeling." We're the ones who bring good tidings. We're the ones who preach the Gospel in Zion. You preach the Gospel in Zion. You preach the Gospel in Zion.

C. H. Dodd's distinction between preaching to the unconverted and teaching the convinced, has rightly been seen as a bit too simplistic because *kerigma* and *didake* and *euangellion* all overlap and intertwine in the New Testament, don't they? Our local radio station has recently changed the way it blocks commercial advertisements. They were afraid that if they put three minutes worth of commercials back to back, people might tune out to listen to another station. So now, their motto is "you're never more than a minute away from the music."

The motto of the New Testament writers might have been "you're never more than a minute away from the Gospel." There's theological reflection there, yes. There's plenty of ethical exhortation to be sure, but you're never more than a paragraph, a page or a minute away from the Gospel. And that's a good thing because Zion needs the Gospel. I cannot assume, nor can you, that the people of Zion to whom we preach Sunday after Sunday heard, understood and embraced the Gospel long ago and so don't need to hear it anymore. "We can move on to bigger and better things."

A couple of weeks ago I had just finished the second of two funerals that I had had that week, when a woman in our church came up to

me afterwards and said, "Boy, Pastor, a week like this really makes you think you've got to be ready to die at anytime." One of the funerals had been the very unexpected death of a younger man. This lady is in her late seventies, has lived in Zion all her life, a life long member of our congregation, a delightful woman, a faithful churchwoman. She is probably there fifty Sundays out of the year. She said, "A week like this makes you think you have to be ready to die at any moment, doesn't it?" And I said, "Yes, it does. Are you ready?" She said, "I'm trying." I'm trying. "Dear God," I thought, "how could you listen to, it must be four thousand sermons from this pulpit and think that you have to try to get right with God?" Zion needs the Gospel, the good news.

A few years ago Tom Long spoke to the Festival of Homiletics in a lecture called "What's the News?" He reminded us preachers that though we have thought long and much about the goodness of the good news, maybe we haven't thought enough about the newsiness of the good news, the character of Christian proclamation as tidings. He talked a little bit about all the changes in the homiletical code. Changes to which he has contributed beautifully himself, the preference for induction and indirection and narrative and genre sensitivity but wondered out loud whether in all of this preaching tinkering with sermonic form we have forgotten that the sermon is already a form designed to herald news. And, so I wonder if I shouldn't be asking, "What's wrong with that woman in my church that she could listen to so many sermons and not get it?" Maybe I should be asking myself, "Do my people hear news? Do they come Sunday after Sunday expecting to hear tidings, a word from outside, telling us of what God in Christ has done for us so that we don't have to do anything to try to be right with God? Do they, before I even open my mouth, ask themselves, 'I wonder what the news is today?'"

Well, that's the who of our text. You who bring good tidings to Zion. That's you and me. Anonymous as are the other speakers earlier in Isaiah 40 but we can now put names to them, Ken and Greg and Larry and Kent. You and I who bring good tidings to Zion.

The What

Now for the what. What's the content of the good tidings? What is the gospel? Well, in the words of John Piper's latest book, *God is the Gospel*. God is the Gospel. Or in Isaiah's words, "You who bring good tidings to Zion, say to the towns of Judah, here is your God." Here's a place where I could wish that the NIV was just a little bit more functionally equivalent in its translation philosophy. There's nothing wrong with "here is your God" but neither does there seem to be any good reason not to translate this the same as the word found twice in verse 10: "See the sovereign Lord comes with power. See his reward is with him." Verse 9 is "See your God. Look at God. Behold your God." That is the burden of our pulpit ministry, to render God. This is bigger, this is more fundamental even than justification by faith or the substitutionary atonement. What makes those precious Gospel truths good news is that they bring us to God. That's what we're privileged to do week after week – to turn our people's attention off of the idols that have dazzled them the whole week and on to God. Get them to gaze on God. Say to them, "Behold your God. Look at God." That's what we get to do.

Now the prophets did other things. Sometimes they predicted, not, however, to satisfy the curiosity of the endtimes hobbyist, but to portray the future of God. Sometimes they promised but not to get Zion to idealize or idolize the things promised but to get Zion to look beyond the promised blessings to the God who promised. Sometimes they prosecuted and this is what we probably usually think of when we hear the term prophetic preaching. We picture somebody that looks like those paintings of John Brown with wild eyes and untamed hair and steam coming out of the collar as the prophet lets Zion know in no uncertain terms what the Almighty thinks of them. The prophets didn't prosecute just to vent. They did so to press the claims of God.

So they predicted, they promised, they prosecuted, they persuaded, they pastored but primarily the prophets portrayed God. And so do we who follow in their footsteps or so should we. Will we preach on

how we have a balanced family budget? Of course we will but we will preach so people know they are stewards of what God has entrusted to them. Will we preach on how to raise teenagers? Yes, of course, we will but we won't be just doing a kind of spiritual pep talk on how kids can adjust and fit in or for that matter be counted. For its own sake we will talk about how to raise teenagers who love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. Will we preach about pornography? Of course we will but we'll go beyond accountability groups and internet filters and let them gaze on God so that He will blind them to other things. Behold your God!

I was talking about this in class a couple of weeks ago and I must have said something that made a student ask, "Are you saying that we shouldn't preach practical 'how to' sermons? Are you saying that we shouldn't give sermons catchy titles or advertise series in the paper that might make people want to come for something that scratches where they itch?" But, of course, by all means, preach practical how-to sermons. And, of course, by all means, as time permits, we will come up with clever sermon titles. And, if we are going to advertise in the local paper, we will want to have some kind of a hook, just so that when you get them there, you give them God. Will some people feel like you've pulled a bait and switch? Maybe, but not the people whose hearts God has graciously opened to recognize that their deepest need is not better sexual intimacy or better communication skills, or how to represent Christ at work. Their deepest need is God. And, a lot of the other stuff they can get from Dr. Phil or the *Reader's Digest* but, if you don't give them God, who on earth will? This is the what. You who bring good tidings to Zion, say to the towns of Judah, look at God.

The How

Now for the how. How are we going to do this? And once again, I have three points. Three answers to the how question. One of them is so embarrassingly simple that I hesitate to mention it to this group. One of them comes from the context of Isaiah 40 and one of the answers to the how question comes right out of verse nine itself.

How are we going to say, behold your God. The first answer is the one that I think is so simple is that we will make God the subject of many of the sermon's sentences. I owe Paul Scott Wilson a word of thanks for this one. I was reading his book, *God Sense*, a few years ago and he was talking about how do we communicate to the congregation that God is speaking in the sermon. And one of his simple suggestions is just put the words of the sermon on God's lips. So that instead of saying racism is bad and it's a scandal that you can still find it in our churches, the preacher says, "God says, enough is enough." Simple suggestion. I'm just expanding on it a little bit. If we want to render God, if we want to be radically God-centered in our preaching, if we want to say to our people, "Behold your God," let's say, God says, God commands, God invites, God exhorts, God blesses, God promises, God, God, God. So that by the time we're done, they know that it hasn't been a religious pep talk but that they have had to do with God.

Well, I needed that suggestion anyway. If you don't, then you won't have to bother remembering it. But there is another answer to the how question. And this one touches on our theme for this year's conference and is demonstrated in the context of Isaiah 40. How do we say, "Behold your God?" Well, with illustrations, metaphor, example, can I sneak imagery in there? God is not beheld, Isaiah knew, in the abstract. So He shows us God weighing the mountains on His scales. He shows us God racing across the desert to the rescue of His people. He shows us God measuring the oceans in the hollows of his hand. He shows us God carrying Judah close to His breast like a shepherd cradling little lambs. He shows us God calling on the stars by name to do their thing again tonight and the stars in their courses obediently shine. We biblical preachers, conservative evangelicals, don't have to be afraid of illustration, metaphor, imagery, example. You don't have to be afraid that our people's imaginations are too vivid. It may be that they're too weak.

Oswald Chambers was commenting on Isaiah 40 when he said that the people in Isaiah's day had starved their imaginations by looking too long on idols so that Isaiah bid them look at the stars. That is,

he bid them to use their imaginations right. "Behold your God" – imagery, metaphor and all the rest.

Now, we who preach know that this kind of poetry, this kind of rhetoric just doesn't come off the cuff. You have to work hard at it. You have to work hard to find the right image, to find the right words, but it is worth the effort if we are going to get people to behold their God.

The third answer to the "how" question comes from verse nine itself: "You who bring good tidings to Zion," that's who, say to the towns of Judah, "Behold your God!" That's what? How? Well, make God the subject of your sermon sentences. How? Find the right words, metaphors, illustrations, images, examples to render God and this third one from the text itself is really, really counter to the contemporary homiletical code. "You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout." Lift it up. Do not be afraid. How often, except in African-American churches, do you hear contemporary preachers lifting up their voice with a shout? That is so passé. It is so old fashioned. It is so counter to what we read in the books that we will buy this weekend, even though we don't need any more books on preaching. This is counter to the contemporary code: "Lift up your voice with a shout."

We take our cues not from texts like this when it comes to preaching style. Now we take our cues from polls that show us what boomers or busters or post-moderns find authentic or interesting or acceptable. We don't take our cues as preachers so much from our identity as heralds of good tidings as from Tom Brokaw or talk show hosts, talk radio or kind of a cool conversational style. This change in the code has been in the works for a couple of decades at least. Because more than twenty years ago, J.I. Packer could write about his concern that preaching was becoming chipper and chatty. A more positive spin would be the word conversational – conversational preaching style. I might be wrong, as a matter of fact I would be happy to know that you who know the history of preaching better, correct me but I think that Harry Emerson Fosdick, who was the first

to talk about preaching as conversation, maybe not the most encouraging pedigree for evangelicals advocating conversational preaching style.

Martin Luther King, Jr., of all people, was attempting a conversational preaching style back in 1963. He was addressing many thousands of people on the mall in Washington by the Lincoln Memorial. People had been listening to speeches all afternoon from congressmen to Harry Belafonte and Joan Baez. But the honor of preaching or speaking last was reserved for this young charismatic leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. King began his talk in a conversational style, a low key, matter of fact, recitation of the issues of the day, and what ought to be done about them. Behind him on the platform, Mahalia Jackson could sense that King was not connecting, that he was not accomplishing what he had been called upon to do that day. So even as he was preparing to wind up his message, she said in a stage whisper, "Martin, tell them about the dream." And so he launched into what we remember as his speech for that day. It was just the tail end with its soaring cadences and its marvelous rhetorical refrain and all the rest that gripped the crowd and sealed King's place as leader of the Civil Rights Movement. It was probably instrumental in his winning the Nobel Prize the next year and I want to suggest that that speech's success owed as much to its delivery as to its content.

"Lift up your voice with a shout!" Do not be afraid. What do we have to be afraid of? In Isaiah's day, gospelers were probably afraid of King Manasseh. And down through the centuries, certainly heralds of the good tidings have had plenty to be afraid of. What do we have to be afraid of? Being thought old-fashioned or irrelevant? Will Willimon addresses this fear. You may have heard the story. He finished speaking once and someone came up to him and said, "You know, the trouble with you preachers, is that you don't speak my language. You don't say anything that relates to my world." He said, "What in God's name gave you the idea that I or any of my fellow pastors would want to speak your language or relate to your world? I don't want to speak your language. I want to give you another

language that you wouldn't know unless I had preached. I don't want to relate to your world. I want to break your world and offer you a new better one. I'm a prophet for God's sake."

Alright he wasn't talking about volume, and you can't measure this in decibels anyway, can you? You know that it doesn't necessarily mean to speak with the same kind of passion or fervor or volume that some other preacher uses. You may have in your classes, as I have in mine, some Korean students who are very proper and poised. They stand behind the pulpit. They never move – dark suit, crisply ironed white shirt, tie perfectly knotted, not a hair out of place, not much gesture, not much volume. But there is sometimes, isn't there, an intensity, a gravity, a seriousness, that comes through so that you know that they are heralds of incredible news. So it's not just a matter of cranking up the volume. Do not be afraid of being thought inauthentic. What's inauthentic about getting passionate about this gospel we have to herald? Authenticity comes, brothers and sisters, from believing what we preach and living it. And if you don't believe it and live it, no amount of cool communication will save you.

Conclusion

This summer, my family and I visited a church while on vacation at the New Jersey shore. This was a cool church, very contemporary. No rows of pews or even theater seating. We sat around café style tables and people sipped their Starbucks and ate their Danish. Even during the worship time, the praise band was on the platform and the words were on the screen, and I glanced around, and fewer than half the people were singing, and this is "do your own thing time," I guess. Then the preacher, speaker, got up and, of course, there was no pulpit. There was a table in the center of the room where he laid his Bible and occasionally moved back to the table and glanced at it but mostly he wandered around the room squeezing shoulders and connecting with people and there was banter back and forth and it was very conversational.

When we left I asked my kids, what did you think of it? Well, the first comment was, "Well, we've been to brunch, when are we going to go to church?" My kids are pretty critical. I guess this just comes with being a pastor's kid. But we didn't talk too much about the music. I really didn't know what they thought of the sermon. So without prejudicing their answers in anyway, I said, "What did you think of the sermon, particularly the minister's low key conversational style?" This time the answer wasn't so quick but then, Jeff, my sixteen year old answered. Now I have to tell you about Jeff. Jeff is not a button-down fuddy-duddy like his father. Jeff is a drummer and some of you don't need me to say anything else. Jeff's a drummer. He wears his long blonde hair in a ponytail. He goes barefoot everywhere he can. We have drawn the line at church. We say, "you will wear shoes, you don't have to wear socks. But you have to wear shoes to church." But if we didn't draw the line, he would go barefoot everywhere. He likes to listen to all kinds of music. In other words, he's a sixteen year old. Not like his dad. I should add that Jeff loves God and the Bible. This kid has memorized huge chunks of Scripture – James, 1 John, the whole speech that God gives to Job at the end of Job, many Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount. Now he's working on memorizing Ecclesiastes. So, hair and drumming and barefeet and all that notwithstanding, here's a kid who loves the Word of God.

"What did you think of the sermon?" I said. And Jeff said, not in a critical spirit, but just matter-of-factly, "It seems to me that a sermon ought to be big because God is big."

Just yesterday as I was rehearsing this sermon, I decided when I got to that line, that I'm going to make me a poster for my office. It seems to me that a sermon ought to be big because God is big.

"You who bring good tidings to Zion, lift up your voice with a shout. Lift it up. Do not be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, behold your God!"

~•~•~•~ *Book Reviews* ~•~•~•~

The Web of Preaching. By Richard L. Eslinger. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 0-687-01297-X, 310 pp.

Reading Richard Eslinger's book, *The Web of Preaching* is a lot like eating fruitcake: heavy and filling. As Eslinger reviews what he considers to be the most significant homiletical options available to contemporary preachers, there is no doubt that Elsinger knows his field. He writes with an attention to detail and appreciation for subtlety. Like fruitcake, the density of this writing will not appeal to the tastes of all EHS readers. It would be a mistake, however, for members to allow this book to pass by. It is a helpful classroom resource.

Eslinger argues convincingly that the new options in homiletical method branch out from a narrative center. This homiletical shift has occurred as a result of epistemological changes in the world at large as well as an increased appreciation of the narrative superstructure of the Scriptures as a whole. Although a significant portion of the book is devoted to the narrative homiletical contributions of Eugene Lowry, David Buttrick and Paul Scott Wilson, the most significant chapter is the final one – the homiletics of imagery.

The final chapter outlines the rise of imagination in contemporary thinking and preaching. He points out that the "core function" of our imagination deals with "the ways in which human beings perceive their world" (251). Of particular importance to the cognitive process is imagery. We always and only perceive reality through images. Images "shape our sense of world and . . dominate . . . social discourse" (280).

Eslinger concludes this very helpful analysis of imagery in thinking and communication by observing that "if the perennial challenge of preaching is to employ the vernacular . . . then we will learn how to image ourselves, the world, and our God" (280). This chapter will give you a greater appreciation of imagery and understanding of how to create more effective imagery in your preaching.

An obvious drawback for EHS members is the fact that the author, a faculty member at United Theological Seminary, makes no references to conservative evangelical homileticians. In his survey of "new options in homiletical methods" Eslinger seems to be more comfortable and familiar with those who may be closer to his own theological position.

Like fruitcake, this book won't suit everyone's palette. But for those members who would like to increase their understanding of some of today's most influential homileticians, *The Web of Preaching* is a good choice. It is packed with good content.

J. Kent Edwards   Talbot School of Theology
                                                                            La Mirada, CA

Playing with Fire: Preaching Work as Kindling Art. David J. Schlafer. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2004. 1-56101-269-6, 177 pp., $16.95, paperback.

I once asked a friend if he planned to attend a particular meeting of homileticians. "Naw," he told me, "I don't have any interest in listening to those guys push the fog around." Their aesthetic, metaphorical approach to sermon creation left him cold. "How could you ever teach anybody to prepare sermons that way?" he wondered. Later one of the "fog-pushers" sneered at homileticians who taught people how to build "sermonic doghouses," whose sermon preparation processes were too prosaic and methodical to suit him.

Somewhere between pushing around the fog and nailing up doghouses there should be a homiletical middle ground. To paraphrase Thoreau, it would be a homiletic that both builds castles in the sky and puts foundations under them. The task, of course, is to keep both the majesty and mystery of preaching on the one hand and the practical demands of sermon preparation on the other.

David J. Schlafer is well aware of different approaches to teaching preaching. In fact, he points out that people approach homiletics through four avenues: lists of rules and steps for sermon preparation, catalogs of homiletical virtues to cultivate, anthologies of outstanding sermons to imitate, or theological principles that should influence how one goes about sermon preparation. He draws on all four traditions at various points in the book, though his overarching approach is deliberately metaphorical.

My friend probably would count Schlafer among the "fog-pushers," given Schlafer's admission that "to depict the vocation of preaching as playing with fire is to employ ambivalent metaphors" (118). Schlafer is right and admits that the ambivalence is partly owing to the nature of the metaphors chosen. It seems that the ambivalence is also partly owing to the fact that the biblical basis for connecting preaching with fire seems considerably stronger than the biblical basis for viewing sermon preparation as play.

Schlafer's purpose is to explore preaching via the multi-faceted, ever-shifting metaphors of fire and play. *Playing with Fire* is more evocative than explicative and more likely to probe than to pronounce, though the author leaves little doubt about his views on a number of subjects. The book also contains provocative analysis and fresh approaches to familiar material. For instance, he offers suggestions about identifying one's "preaching parents" and their influence in the development of one's preaching style.

As one might expect, Schlafer's preference for metaphor and ambiguity reflects his theological convictions. He says, for instance, that "the Gospel proclaimed in preaching is an unfolding mystery, not a fixed intelligibility" (71). "As preachers, we are not in the business of reporting truths; we are in the business of attempting,

in the power of the Spirit, to regenerate and extend the impact of God's mighty acts" (106). Hence he has misgivings about sermons that are objective or propositional. He thinks sermons should refer to the Scripture text as a text only when there is a compelling reason to do so. He recommends that sermons should be descriptive and only minimally prescriptive, should use evocative rather than hortatory language, should steer clear of emotionally charged either/or and good/evil distinctions, and generally resist the temptation to tell people what to do or think. Instead, he says, preachers should offer metaphors that invite the hearers to enter into a new kind of living. In these suggestions he clearly positions himself within the tradition of Craddock, Lowry, and Buttrick.

Playing with Fire invites preachers into striking metaphors that are less than familiar. Readers can decide for themselves whether the metaphors open the path into fresh understandings of preaching, or leave readers pushing their way through a fog.

Grant Lovejoy   International Mission Board, SBC

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The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching. Haddon Robinson & Craig Brian Larson (eds.) Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2005 0-310-25248-2 732 pp. $39.99, hardback.

The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching resembles an enormous serving table at the potluck dinner of a California mega church. No single chef could prepare that much food. Such feasts are only possible when a large number of competent cooks bring their different specialties to this single table. Like such a feast, this book was only possible because of the contributions of a large number of evangelical homileticians. Readers who belly up to this book will enjoy the experience.

The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching allows preachers to sample a variety of new authors and articles. Readers can broaden their homiletical horizons by dipping into the wide variety of articles written by professors and pastors from all across the evangelical spectrum. This book can help you discover new homiletical resources.

With the careful editing work of Haddon Robinson & Craig Brian Larson, this volume embraces all of the major elements of the preaching task. As a result, readers will be encouraged to consider important but sometimes overlooked elements of the preaching task. Sections dealing with the spiritual life of the preacher, understanding audience, how to best use your limited preparation time and obtaining constructive sermon feedback may help broaden your understanding of the preaching task. The thoughtful organization of this book can help readers develop a more holistic approach to your teaching and preaching.

The audio CD is a very nice addition to the book. Oral communication cannot be learned by reading alone. Aspiring preachers need to listen to good preaching like aspiring singers need to listen to good singing. This CD provides some good examples of a wide variety of preaching. Students and professors alike will benefit by popping this CD into their car stereo.

Like any potluck dinner, participants are not expected, and not able to eat everything at one sitting. There is just too much good stuff to take in at one sitting. The same is true with this book. This is not a book to be read at one sitting. I have found the book to be a helpful teaching aid by assigning selected lectures to be read and discussed with parallel lectures.

As good as this volume is, however, it does have some drawbacks. Many of the articles are reprints from *Leadership* and preachingtoday.com, so if you read those resources you will have read much of this book. Of course it is helpful to have all of those articles compiled in a single volume, but as I read *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching* I was reminded of a comment a friend made to me when he showed me a new Beatles CD he had just purchased. "I bought this when it first came out on vinyl, then on eight-track and again on cassette. How many times do I need to buy the White Album?" Much of this material has been available for years and may already be on your shelves. But now you get to buy it again in a new format.

Not surprisingly given its sources, the book manifests an inconsistent style. Since the minority of the articles were written for this book (and because this project changed focus during development) there is broad diversity in writing styles among the chapters. Some articles read as encyclopedia articles, others like academic lectures, and still others like two friends chatting over coffee. It is hard to compare the quality of the chapters because they were not created under uniform guidelines.

Another consequence of compiling a book from the archives is that writers frequently take differing approaches and positions on similar subjects. The editors do not resolve, discuss, or acknowledge the differences that become obvious when bound next to each other. I personally enjoy the diversity they contain and love to use the varied perspectives and emphases as discussion starters in my classes. Beginning preachers and students may find the differences bewildering.

While not perfect, *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching* is an indispensable resource for the contemporary homiletician. It presents an 'editors choice' of some of the best articles written and sermons preached in recent years. Robinson & Larsen have done an admirable job of stitching them together and commissioning writers to fill in the gaps that remained. This is the best one-volume preaching resource available today. Enjoy the feast!

J. Kent Edwards   Talbot School of Theology
                                                            La Mirada, CA

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Proclaim the Wonder: Engaging Science on Sunday. By Scott E. Hoezee. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003, 0-8010-9164-0, 238pp., soft cover, $16.99.

Scott Hoezee, minister of preaching and administration at Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI, tackles a needed but challenging task for

preachers today: integrating Christian faith and insights from modern science in our weekly preaching. The task is important, given the dominant position of science and technology in our culture, but difficult, given the complexity and rapid pace of change and discovery in the scientific enterprise. The author states that the overall purpose of the book is to "encourage a positive use of science in the pulpit" (114), and I would judge that Hoezee succeeds, for the most part, in achieving this goal.

Parts 1 and 2 of the book are devoted to developing a general theological framework for understanding the relationships between modern science and the Christian faith. Hoezee's general approach to such matters appears to be a version of the "complementarity" model, which sees science and faith as complementary – not contradictory – ways of viewing reality, with different purposes, perspectives, and languages. This is a venerable perspective in church history, with antecedents in Augustine and other church fathers, and with biblical roots in Psalm 19 ("the heavens are telling the glory of God ... the law of the Lord is perfect"), suggesting the analogy of God's revelation in the "two books" of nature and Scripture.

Readers who do not have a high degree of interest in exploring the theological and philosophical dimensions of the science-religion dialogue might do well to read the introductory chapter (11-33), and then proceed directly to the sample sermons at the end of the book, where the author gives some very helpful models of good uses of science in Sunday sermons. The theological and philosophical discussion in Parts 1 and 2 are generally helpful, though at times the author makes some questionable or confusing scientific inferences, e.g., connecting "quantum entanglement" and "chaos theory" (133), which are quite different matters in physics, or moving too quickly from quantum physics to the possibility of miracles on p.116. Readers who wish to explore these philosophical and theological issues in greater depth might do well to read books such as John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, or Keith Ward, *God, Faith, and the New Millennium*, or this reviewer's book, *Frontiers of Science and Faith: From the Big Bang to the End of the Universe.*

The sample sermons would themselves justify the purchase of the book. The sermon on Psalm 8 is a fine illustration of the use of discoveries in astronomy and cosmology to illustrate the grandeur and majesty of God's creation. The message on Colossians 1:15-23, preached as a communion meditation, skillfully integrates Christology, sacraments, scientific insights, and care for creation. A sermon on Matthew 24:1-35, preached on the first Sunday of Advent, brings together biblical eschatology and the modern scientific sensibility. The message on Psalm 29, "The Storm's Glory," is a fine example of how scientific information about thunderstorms can enhance and illustrate a biblical text about God's power and glory revealed in nature.

Hoezee's sample sermons demonstrate a high degree of homiletical skill, ably bringing together sound biblical theology, excellence of expression and verbal

artistry, and skillful illustrative use of discoveries from modern science. Whatever your own level of scientific knowledge or personal homiletical style might be, I recommend *Proclaim the Wonder* as a helpful resource in firing the preacher's imagination in matters of faith and science.

John Jefferson Davis   Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
                                                            South Hamilton, MA

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Purposes of Preaching. Jana Childers, Ed. St. Louis: Chalice, 2004, 0-8272-2997-6, 165 pp., $21.99, paperback.

The strength of this edited volume with multiple contributors lies in its diversity and breadth. Ten leading homileticians from a variety of theological traditions attempt to address the question: "What is the purpose of preaching?" As might be expected, the reader encounters ten different answers to that question.

As important as technique is for excellent preaching, preachers wrapped up in the busyness of ministry and weekly sermon preparation may overlook the larger matter of the purpose of preaching. What are preachers trying to accomplish when stepping into the pulpit, addressing a community from a biblical text? This book helps those who seek to improve their preaching and ministry skills to examine preaching from within that context.

As stated, the contributors of this volume give a variety of answers to the question of purpose, ranging from preaching that helps listeners move toward a Christian worldview (Ron Allen, 1), to preaching that disrupts life to create a space for the Holy Spirit to do his work, in order that communities will rethink and revisit their priorities (Mary Donovan Turner,135).

While wrestling with the issue of the purpose of preaching, some contributors discuss current issues that impact preaching. In light of the influence of postmodernism on language, John S. McClure declares preaching to be the "redemption of language" (84-85) that deconstructs dangerous metaphors and helps listeners adopt a new narrative for their lives.

In light of the impact of the New Homiletic, Christine Smith's contribution discusses the move away from linear, propositional preaching, and looks forward to preaching that is inductive, experiential, and transformative. In light of her own transformational experiences, she hopes that preachers will embrace preaching that on the one hand deconstructs clerical authority, but on the other hand is characterized by humility and hospitality.

An exercise in one of Mary Donovan Turner's homiletics classes sheds light on the book's title. Thirty-eight students answered the question: "What is the purpose of preaching?" (139-40). The response: thirty-eight differing answers to the question, thereby illustrating that perhaps one should not think of preaching as having a single purpose. As the exercise demonstrates, preaching has multiple purposes

that, for example, grow out of a variety of life experiences, biblical texts, and theological traditions, to name but a few.

In light of the diversity of homiletical perspectives, the contributors to this book reveal that there may not be a "right," "wrong," or single answer to the question, "What is the purpose of preaching?" By its very nature, the book graphically illustrates the reality that preaching should be viewed as having multiple purposes. Oftentimes the context determines the purpose. For example, at times every preacher is called upon to act in the role of a prophet—issuing words of warning to the community—while at other times bringing gentle pastoral words of comfort and encouragement.

As with most books with numerous contributors, some essays are stronger than others. Readers will no doubt engage more with certain authors' thoughts or concepts than they will with those of others. However, the issue of the purposes of preaching calls for reflection and dialogue, and precisely because of its broad scope, this book provides the reader a good place from which to start that journey.

Clint Heacock, Ph.D. candidate   University of Chester
                                                   United Kingdom

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Preaching with Spiritual Passion: How to Stay Fresh in Your Calling. By Edward K. Rowell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. ISBN 0-8010-9177-2, 175 pp, $13.99.

Ed Rowell is a pastor in Monument, Colorado and former editor at *Leadership Journal* and *Preaching Today.* He is also the author of a half dozen other volumes over the last ten years, mostly collections of quotes, illustrations, and humorous stories offered to help preachers add sparkle to their sermons. What's more, he is a genuine cowboy, a rodeo-bull rider and roper, and a guide for elk hunters. He weaves stories from these other lives into this volume to encourage readers to "preach like you mean it."

Preaching with Spiritual Passion is another of the growing genre that seeks to use narrative as the truck to haul instruction to the reader. Rowell is a good storyteller, skillful in his use of metaphor and simile. There are many chuckles in these autobiographical pages along with the wisdom of experience and the insight of academic background. His pen may dips often into the inkwell of modesty as part of his sense of humor. For example, when he preached his first sermon in a mission church, he went home feeling his sermon "wowed them." At staff meeting in the sponsoring church, however, his pastor-supervisor told him of a number of complaining telephone calls. They didn't want him to come back. What was the complaint? His preaching! They couldn't hear him, and what they did hear was dry and boring! This book will not bore you.

The ten chapters in this easy read mix poetic and serious titles. Chapter 1 is "The Brutal Bull named *Sermon.*" It starts with the narrative of a fearful rodeo

experience and moves on to talk about a preacher's constant struggle with "I can't do this," and "Woe is me if I preach not." Chapter 2 asks "Does Preaching Really Matter?" The author gives a convincing testimony of how he came to affirm that it matters much. Chapter 3, "Patience with Soreheads," will likely resonate with every pastor. "Overcoming the Weekly Weariness" (Chapter 4), offers some advise from personal experience on the causes and cure of a pastor's spiritual fatigue. Chapter 5, "Questions to Change a Life," presents the author's homiletical method. It is based on answering many questions for interpreting the text, structuring the message, and analyzing its usefulness.

Chapter 6 offers guidance on spiritual disciplines such as praying, journaling, and memorizing Scripture. It is a confessional chapter called " Preaching Through Spiritual Drought." In Chapter 7, "Prayers for Intervention," Rowell tells how he learned from an elderly mentor about spiritual warfare. "Predestined Compulsion" (Chapter 8) is a meditation on a pastor's sense of vocation. The ninth chapter is based on the Lord's post-resurrection interview with Simon Peter, "But Do You Love Me?" Rowell's emphasis turns to a pastor's need to learn to love the members of the congregation – jerks and all. The final chapter "Freed From Control" is about the temptation of a preacher to be a control freak.

In spite of the title, this work is about pastoring and not just preaching. It is a book well worth a one-time reading by beginning pastors and those who train them.

Austin B. Tucker   Shreveport, LA

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Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon. By J. Kent Edwards. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. 0-310-26309-3. 144 pp., CD. $24.99, hardcover.

Once upon a time a professor of preaching was asked to teach a class on narrative preaching. As any self-respecting professor would do, he began to search for literature to help him prepare, and he looked for books that might serve as textbooks to help his students.

Finding a paucity of resources available he approached his friendly publishing company representatives. "Any books out there on preaching narratives?" he asked. "There's one coming soon" he was told. "It's rather narrow in its focus; concentrates only on 'first-person' sermons." The professor ordered it, in hope...

The book came; he read it. He recommended it to other professors and preachers. He required it as a textbook in his class. Then, he was asked to write a review of the book. This is that review.

Dr. Edwards' book deals with the single-focus of the first-person narrative. As the subtitle suggests, the author covers "the steps from text to narrative sermon." After a brief explanation/apology for first-person sermons, the book is simply divided into "Steps in the Exegetical Task," and "Steps in the Homiletical Task." Following

a brief section of Q and A there are two helpful appendices (sample sermons and worksheets).

The section on exegesis is helpful, if familiar. While upholding a strong view of the authority and reliability of Scripture, there are helpful and needed guidelines on how to read narrative literature as literature. These are useful reminders to most and necessary instructions to some.

The use of the Frye's "Mono-Mythic Cycle" is unique in the field of homiletics. It helps in understanding the movement of a story and proves valuable in interpreting as well as communicating narrative literature. The emphasis upon depth of research is appreciated.

The most helpful section of the book (especially for those unfamiliar or inexperienced with narrative preaching) is the section on the homiletical task. In the context of reminding the preacher to stay close to the text there are imperative instructions on how to create a story that will "re-tell" the story found in the text. Anyone who follows these steps can feel confident of two things: he/she will produce a sermon true to the text, and prepare a well developed story.

My only criticism of these two sections comes early in the book (p. 23) when the preacher is admonished to keep the two steps distinct. While I understand the rationale, "sermonizing" is what I do. I can't help myself. So, instead of keeping those stages distinct, I suggest a separate sheet of paper for sermonic seeds that remain totally disposable until the exegesis is complete. After the exegesis the preacher can determine if any of the ideas should actually appear in the sermon.

The two appendices are exceptionally beneficial. Edwards has insightfully anticipated the key questions and given helpful answers in the first appendix. In the second, he has created a series of worksheets to help the preacher in the development of the sermon. These are invaluable. I would have liked these worksheets to be included on the accompanying CD.

The CD that accompanies the book is a favorite feature of my students. It allowed them to actually experience a first person narrative Biblical sermon. It provides a good example of what the textbook is trying to explain.

I highly recommend J. Kent Edward's book. It deserves a place in any preacher's library who wants to be creative, accurate, and consistent with the story of Scripture. It serves as a useful textbook in any class dealing with narrative literature and preaching.

Chuck Sackett   Lincoln Christian Seminary
                                                            Lincoln, Illinois

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Preaching God's Word. By Terry G. Carter, Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, 10:0-310-24887-6, 299 pp., $29.99, hardback.

Following the publication of their hermeneutics book, *Grasping God's Word*, Duvall and Hays, joined by Carter, perceived a weakness among the canon of homiletics textbooks. They felt that we need a homiletics text "that was practical and contemporary, yet still focused on *biblical* preaching" (11). They address that need in this book, intended as a companion volume to *Grasping God's Word*, although they recognize that not all readers will be familiar with the earlier book. This book "is targeted primarily for beginning students," and "assumes that the reader knows little about preaching and has little experience" (14). It is so well organized, and so readable, that it immediately becomes likable.

Preaching God's Word is divided into three major sections. Part 1, "Developing and Preaching a Biblical Sermon," contains ten chapters dealing with issues of sermon preparation and construction. These chapters summarize basic procedures found in primary homiletics books, presenting a ten step process of developing a sermon. While providing a good review for sermon development, however, the chapters are not as detailed or cogent as volumes by Bryan Chapell or Haddon Robinson.

Part 2 deals with preaching the various genres of the New Testament (Letters, Gospels and Acts, and Revelation), and Part 3 does likewise with the Old Testament (Narrative, Law, Prophets, Psalms and Wisdom Literature). These two Parts are the most valuable contribution of the volume. Each chapter presents interpretive keys, sermon keys, things to avoid, and examples of how each genre looks in sermon outlines. To understand the interpretive keys most fully, a knowledge of *Grasping God's Word* is helpful (and, in some cases, essential) since the present volume often simply summarizes. Separating the Gospels and Acts into two chapters would aid clarity (as would separating Psalms from Wisdom Literature), and identifying some well-known dispensational commentaries on Revelation would add balance (e.g. John F. Walvoord and J. B. Smith).

Part 3 attempts an almost impossible task, to show in 65 pages how to preach the basic genres of the Old Testament. The authors are commended for their efforts, and valuable insights are contained in this section. A few caveats, however, are in order. While they correctly observe that interpreting narrative literature requires "detailed observations about time, place, plot, irony, characters, point of view, and so on" (227), the reader must look elsewhere (e.g. *Grasping God's Word*) to comprehend what this means. Concerning "Sermon Keys" for OT narrative, a discussion of redemptive history, and even Jewish history, would add value to the volume.

Chapter 14, Preaching the Prophets, is the weakest of the book. It suggests that all the messages of all the OT prophets are summarized in three basic points (repentance, judgment, hope) and that all the indictments of all the prophets can be summarized in three elements (idolatry, social injustice, and religious formalism). Since the prophets have different times, subjects, audiences, and even genres, this oversimplified and artificial framework bypasses much of their beauty, power, and complexity.

The book could be strengthened in particular areas. When providing recommendations for "help with translation and parsing" (55), such volumes as Barbara and Timothy Friberg's *Analytical Greek New Testament*, and John Joseph Owen's four volume *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, should also be included. While they correctly advise not using people in sermon illustrations, "unless you have permission to do so" (140), I wonder if they followed their own advice when using other preachers as negative examples (e.g. 152, 231).

Page 160 refers to Albert Mehrabian's Nonverbal Communication (Chicago: Aldine, 1972, pp. 181-82). The authors base their understanding of Mehrabian on Haddon Robinson's, Biblical Preaching, rather than using the primary source. They write, "Albert Mehravian [sic] has provided a formula for the effective nature of various components of speaking and communication. Seven percent of the message comes through the words, thirty-eight percent from the voice, and fifty-five percent from facial expressions" (160). However, when Mehrabian wrote those percentages, he was considering whether or not a listener "likes" or "dislikes" a speaker, not if the listener is able to understand the verbal content of the message. When a speaker's voice or face clearly contradicts the verbal message, a listener is inclined not to believe the words spoken, but can still clearly understand their content.

Preaching God's Word book is an effective tool for a college homiletics/hermeneutics class, especially if used as a companion to *Grasping God's Word*. It can also be used with value as a supplemental text in seminary classes.

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Proclamation and Theology. By William H. Willimon. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, 0-687-49343-9, 106pp., $9.00, paperback.

William H. Willimon's most recent book, *Proclamation and Theology,* is the first volume in the Abingdon Press series Horizons in Theology. This slim paperback adopts the statement of the Second Helvetic Confession, "The preaching of the word of God is the Word of God" as its escort for this theological and homiletical conversation.

In the introductory pages, Willimon insists that at the heart of preaching is a God who speaks in the sermon and enables us to hear His voice. Therefore, preaching is "a theological activity. It is based upon the conviction that preaching is not about us – not about you the listener or about me the preacher. Preaching is about God and by God, or it is silly" (2). The sermon's effectiveness lies neither in the rhetorical skill of the preacher nor in the attentiveness of the listener, but in the divine-human dialogue that is initiated and sustained by a living God. Furthermore, it is through this divine-human dialogue that God continues to create, sustain, and redeem.

Willimon explores the divine-human dialogue from several perspectives. In Chapter Two, he argues that preaching is a prophetic speech-act that is dependent upon God as the Original Proclaimer. The preacher, upon being apprehended by God's Word, serves as a witness of what one has seen and heard. Willimon reminds us, "Before preaching can be communication, exhortation, admonition, comfort, or motivation, it must be prayerful listening for the Word of God . . . . Without hearing that Word, preaching has nothing to say" (21).

Chapter Three focuses on the nature of the biblical Word and how, as preachers, we are to approach and handle the Word of God. Willimon advises preachers to be cognizant of the Scripture's homiletical intent. He suggests, "Every preacher, in turning toward Scripture as a source for a sermon, is turning toward a living, speaking personality in documentary form that opens its arms toward us and rushes out to meet us in order to speak to us, through us, so that the church might be lifted up and transported to where God is" (35). Furthermore, the preacher is reminded that the chief concern of the Scripture is God, not ourselves.

The Fourth and Fifth Chapters continue to flesh out the nature of the biblical Word by focusing on God's supreme example of divine-human dialogue in the incarnation and the resurrected Christ. Once again, the statement of the Second Helvetic Confession is applied to incarnational preaching. Willimon suggests, "When Jesus walks through his congregation in the words of the sermon as the Word, the congregation experiences Jesus as God in the Flesh" (54). Consequently, we do not preach abstract ideas or about the subject of the risen Christ. We preach Christ. Again, this theological perspective has homiletical implications for Willimon. He asserts, "Our claims for preaching have little to do with a savvy utilization of various contemporary rhetorical insights; rather our claims arise from our very peculiar theological convictions about a very particular God who, in the cross and resurrection, is vastly different from any god we know" (82).

Proclamation and Theology is refreshing and inspiring in light of the plethora of anthropocentric homiletics books published in recent years. Willimon retains the necessary relationship between homiletics and theology in his discussion of the divine-human dialogue. In addition, his writing style is infused with passion and is better read aloud than in silence (as one might expect from a good homiletics book).

Nevertheless, you may find yourself wincing on occasion if you do not share Willimon's conviction that "The preaching of the word of God is the Word of God" (notice the capitalization). For example, Willimon asserts, "Scripture is a primary mode of Christian revelation, but even Scripture is secondary to preaching, which is more immediate, lively, and interactive than Scripture and more akin to Christ as the living, speaking subject rather than the dead, static object" (63). He also claims, "The practice of providing Bibles in the pews of churches or asking individual Christians to bring their Bibles with them to church can be a limitation of Scripture" (64). The implication of Willimon's

presupposition is that the Word of God, if printed on a page, is somehow dead and dependent upon the preacher to infuse life into the Word through its proclamation in the form of a sermon. Only then, through the life and voice of the preacher, does the biblical text become the Word of God. Ironically, this seems to lead one back to anthropocentric preaching.

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                                                                    Edmonton, Alberta

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Preaching and Homiletical Theory. By Paul Scott Wilson. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004, 0-8272-2981-X, 184 pp., $15.99 paperback.

Paul Scott Wilson, professor of homiletics at Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto, serves as the editor for *Preaching and Its Partners*, a series of four volumes to date, that promotes scholarly dialogue between preaching and the theological disciplines. This latest volume is a must read for any serious homiletician in that it surveys the more influential North American authors and ideas in the field of homiletics over the last fifty years.

Wilson deserves high praise not only for his selection of material, but also for his insightful summary and critique of homiletical offerings that often prove difficult to understand, classify, and evaluate. While any review of the literature carries risks – overlooking some important authors and characterizing complex theories – Wilson's work, the only one of its kind, provides a fair assessment. Anyone desiring to speak the language of contemporary homiletical theory will find in these pages a jumping off place into the three broad subjects addressed in the three main sections of the book: Preaching and the Bible; Preaching and Theology; and Preaching and Practical Theology.

Wilson argues that literary ways of reading the Bible, which result in stories more often than sermons, have not replaced the classical notion of a thesis, proposition, or big idea statement. Brief reference is made to H. Grady Davis, Haddon Robinson ("representing the modernist notion of a universal claim to a theme," p. 15), Fred Craddock, Thomas Long, Henry Mitchell, Paul Scott Wilson, Bryan Chapell, and Sidney Greidanus, all of whom propose a thesis statement in one form or another. What is new about this old notion is the growing consensus that a thesis statement must be "double-barreled," expressed from two perspectives; that of the text and that of the audience. The table on page 15 provides a means of comparing the different language used to express this two-worlds approach. Those who would argue against a propositional statement, David Buttrick, Richard Eslinger, Eugene Lowry, Lucy Rose, and John McClure, while rightly questioning authoritarian approaches to preaching, must remember that, "rational thought has structure that listeners seek even when it is absent" (21). Wilson also reminds us that preaching the Bible gives the preacher a claim to authority.

In the chapter "Exegesis for Preaching," Wilson expresses concern that homileticians devote too many pages to hermeneutical issues, an area where they might better rely on the biblical scholars, and too few pages developing homiletical theory. Noting that exegetical studies have become literary and theological as well as historical, Wilson concedes that the meaning of the text is rich and admits to a fluid text with many meanings. Here he dips more deeply into the pools of relativism, subjectivism, community, and pluralism than conservative interpreters of the Scripture who will hold to more objective (authorially intended) meanings.

"Homileticians and the Bible" overviews the influence of genre studies in biblical interpretation. Here Wilson discusses the reader response approach that has become a favorite among those who reject a more objective approach. He discusses various models of text-to-sermon and addresses issues of textual authority. In the end, however, the goal should be "placing God firmly in the center of scripture and in our preaching" (55).

The second section of *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* begins with a consideration of "four vital and related emphases of contemporary theologies of preaching: 1. Preaching as Event; 2. the Performative Word; 3. Preaching as Transformation; and 4. Preaching as Poetic Language and Structure" (59). Although Wilson's overview of these four theological perspectives identifies many of the major contributors and articulates major theological themes, this chapter seems too brief. Still, it serves the purpose of reviewing the more important literature on the topic of a theology of preaching.

The next two chapters trace historical and then contemporary expressions of law and gospel in the event of preaching. Wilson argues that law and gospel are not merely theological themes at the heart of Christian theology, but also concepts that have come to shape the structure of the sermon. Structure is no longer isolated from theology; both influence each other. The insights of H. Grady Davis weigh heavily throughout these chapters, while the writings of Luther, Perkins, Wesley, Walthers [sic], Reu, Barth, Farmer, Caemmerer, Stuempfle, and Crum all contribute to the law/gospel tradition. Though expressed in different language (i.e., Caemmerer's "goal, malady, and means" p. 81), the law/gospel relationship not only reflects Christian theology and influences the sermon's movement, but also "provides hermeneutical lenses with which to view biblical texts" (86).

Alternatives to the law/gospel theology of preaching serve as the subject of Wilson's overview and critique in the fourth chapter of section two. While Bryan Chapell, Mary Catherine Hilkert, and several African American homileticians provide "variations on trouble/grace," and Charles Bartow and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki "represent distinct alternatives," Charles Campbell's postliberal stance "tends to mute God's voice in the preaching event" (114). Such classifications and brief explanations contribute to the value of this volume.

In the third major section Wilson addresses "Practical Theology." Overviewing

"Pastoral and Prophetic Homiletics," the author touches on seven topics including rhetoric, social justice, ethics, an ethic of preaching, the character of the preacher, pastoral care, and multiculturalism. An interesting and accurate critique of the "Principle Preaching" method appears on pages 126-7. EHS readers may find themselves in these pages. While the brief references to many authors and texts prove frustrating, Wilson stays true to his purpose in providing a reference point for further study.

The final chapter, "Postmodern or Radical Postmodern?" critiques several contemporary expressions of the relationship between preaching and theology. Wilson's assessments of John McClure, Joseph Webb, Christine Smith, Susan Bond, and Lucy Rose warn against the more radical claims of these New Homiletic, postmodern homileticians. This chapter contains must read material. The critique of Rose's four tables outlining four homiletical camps makes a wonderful quick reference tool. While the radical school "diminishes God" (141), "much preaching on individual and corporate behavior in the present day is moralistic: The gospel message turns into do's and don'ts that have an anthropocentric flavor and little mention of whether God cares about the ethical issues" (153). Statements like these demonstrate the author's desire to remain fair as he evaluates the ideas that have surfaced in the homiletical arena.

Even though the reader may suffer from an information overload and a skimming-the-surface frustration, a careful study of this book will be well worth the investment. This is not a text for the average preacher, but for the scholar-pastor, the homiletics professor, and the serious student of preaching. Members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society should be familiar with Preaching and Homiletical Theory and the majority of authors and writings it references.

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Preaching Paul. By Brad R. Braxton. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004, 0687-02144-8, 192 pp., $18.00, paperback.

Brad Braxton is Associate Professor of Homiletics and New Testament at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. He also has pastoral experience at Douglas Memorial Community Church as the senior shepherd. He understands preaching as both a theorist and a practitioner. His love of preaching and Pauline theology have triggered this pragmatic strategy for preaching Paul.

Braxton is convinced that preaching Paul is predicated upon understanding who Paul was and what he thought about Jesus Christ. According to Braxton, Paul's good news is that the cross makes a difference, for it contains "life-altering revelations" (29) through which God models divine strength. By his own admission, Braxton does not accept a traditional evangelical view of Christ's atonement. The reasoning here falters: since some Christians failed to consider

Jesus' suffering as once for all redemptive, and instead tried to replicate this suffering in their own lives via violence, we should forfeit all belief in the orthodox view of the atonement (28). The wrong response to the suffering of the cross on the part of some, however, does not negate doctrine.

Such reasoning, perhaps, manifests Braxton's view of biblical authority: if I'm subject to the Bible, then the Bible must also be subject to me (23). Braxton argues that his view of reciprocal authority is similar to Paul's in that Paul was an ancient reader-response critic (100-101). In light of the historic rabbinic tradition in which Paul was trained, and what he and other apostles specifically claim regarding biblical authority, Braxton's conclusion seems hard to accept. But Braxton does not accept six of the thirteen letters as authored by Paul (19), so the claims traditionally associated with Paul change dramatically. Critical of Paul as too patriarchal (65), Braxton seems to portray himself as tolerant of both feminism and homosexuality.

Despite my misgivings which loom large, Braxton challenges those of us who would preach Paul to manifest Paul's emotional involvement in his writings via their emotional involvement in their sermons (34). Non-emotion as well as anti-emotion cannot be grounded in Pauline writings. Paul wrote and preached with pathos. Search the Pauline corpus and you'll find joyous praise, biting condemnation, and startling sarcasm.

Braxton also favors theology and exegesis over "quick-fix" preaching. The sham of the fix-it sermon, grounded in humanism, is foreign to Paul. No doubt preaching should address problems, but Braxton's portrayal of the central convictions of Pauline doctrine (50-58) underscores the depth of Paul's theological understanding of the preaching moment.

As a practitioner, Braxton lays out an interpretive approach (104-120) that is systematic, sensitive to text and context, and overtly theological. He illustrates this approach with examples along the way, and he displays a finished product in a sermon on Romans 8—a delightful read. His post-sermon analysis (132-139) also helps to envision his process and theory. Braxton takes a step further, for after submitting two more sermons, he likewise allows two colleagues the opportunity to critique them (140-155).

Encouraging is his "anointed preparation" segment (88-93) which bathes preparation in Spirit-guided prayer, wisdom, and meditation.

Preaching Paul is certainly imaginative enough, though it might be most useful in Braxton's theological domain. He may sadly disappoint conservatives, but his demonstration is engaging.

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Preachers Who Made a Difference. By Peter Jeffery. Webster: Evangelical, 2004, 0-85234-575-5, 112 pp., $18.99, paperback.

Having preached for many years in Wales and England, Peter Jeffery is convinced that preaching is a serious responsibility which requires divine unction. He highlights nine Spirit-empowered "Bible-men" (9) who preached for and saw radical change in the lives of their hearers. Each herald's conflicts, character strengths, foibles, and pulpit ministry are considered.

English martyr Hugh Latimer (1485-1555) was not afraid to challenge the leaders of his day including the volatile and violent King Henry VIII. Latimer's passionate and courageous preaching should embolden us. "Preachers are not to be concerned if their sermons upset the leaders of the church. . . . It is God we are to please not men" (23).

The life of sixteenth century Reformer John Knox reminds us of the power of preaching to change lives and even history. Indeed, "no one could question the enormous difference Knox made to the religious life of his nation. It was a difference that changed the history of Scotland for centuries" (29).

Though lesser known, Samuel Davies (1723-1759) was considered by Martyn Lloyd-Jones to be the "'greatest preacher'" (37) America ever produced. Davies' preaching still serves as a corrective for preachers whose sermons lack depth. "There was nothing superficial about his preaching nor about his converts. Grace bit deep into the hearts of his listeners and enriched their lives as nothing else can" (40).

John Elias (1774-1841) was used of God to lead many to Christ in Wales. Through prolonged seasons of prayer and Bible study, Elias sought and enjoyed the Lord's empowerment. "John Elias felt desperately the need of the Holy Spirit on his preaching" (47).

J. C. Ryle, the first Bishop of Liverpool, exercised a considerable amount of influence in England during the nineteenth century. Factors that contributed to his influence were his constant striving for clarity, simplicity, and directness in preaching and his conviction that "preaching meant exalting Christ" (59).

Born in Scotland in 1813, Robert Murray M'Cheyne died in 1843 when only twenty-nine years old. His short life was fully dedicated to the pursuit of personal holiness. "For any preacher M'Cheyne is a challenge and a reminder that 'a holy minister is an awesome weapon in the hand of God'" (71).

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) led thousands to Christ in his native England. He preached the Gospel with passion and urgency because he was convinced that "soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian minister" (84). Diligent students of Spurgeon's sermons just may acquire a renewed sense of energy and evangelistic urgency in their preaching.

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963) was seen by some as a contemporary American prophet. He was a straight-talking preacher who took a stand against an increasingly worldly church. His preaching confronted shallow Christians with the sobering reality of a holy God. Addressing preachers, Tozer insisted, "'We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum'" (94).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) enjoyed a highly successful pulpit ministry in Wales and England but his influence extended around the globe. His thorough Bible exposition and "'merciless logic'" (106) not only moved the heart but also challenged the intellect. One of Lloyd-Jones' hearers reported, "The argument was biblical, the reasoning sound, and the delivery moving" (108).

To his credit, Jeffery portrays these nine men with realism and balance. He does not skirt over Latimer's moment of weakness when he submitted to his theological enemies (24). We learn that the great John Knox could be "arrogant, proud, stubborn, and cantankerous" (28). Of Ryle's participation in ecumenical congresses, Spurgeon wrote, "Come out from among them, and no more touch the unclean thing" (61). When dealing with people, even Lloyd-Jones could become "impatient at times" (108).

The book is accompanied by an audio CD which contains sermon excerpts from all of the preachers except Tozer and Lloyd-Jones whose recorded sermons are plentiful. The sermons sound like they have been recorded in a large but empty hall. Most American listeners will need time to get used to Jeffery's accent. Although edifying, each excerpt is frustratingly brief. Preachers will not find practical "how to" principles here, but this book will stoke their passion for and bolster their confidence in Spirit-anointed preaching.

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Preaching for Adult Conversion and Commitment: Invitation to a Life Transformed. By Frank G. Honeycutt, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003, 0-687-02314-9, 180pp, $15.00 paperback.

Few people want to hear of their need of Christian conversion. What group likes being told that changing the direction of their lives is not just a good idea but essential? How many parishioners appreciate hearing that their commitments need to be taken to new levels? Challenging a congregation's level of commitment is usually not well received. For these reasons, preachers feel pressure to water down the gospel and tinker with the faith to make it more palatable. But in so doing, Honeycutt says the faith being proclaimed "becomes something other than Christianity – just an idea among ideas" (28).

Honeycutt argues that the pressure to make the gospel palatable comes both from outside and within the church. Pluralism with its emphasis on openness and tolerance cautions preachers to avoid radical statements. Congregations who want

to be assured that everything is "okay and can remain much the same" do not necessarily want to be told that conversion is a lifelong process or that new commitments must continue to be made. But can preachers dare to cower to these pressures? Honeycutt says absolutely not. If we are faithful to the Scriptures, our sermons will not always be well received. As Honeycutt contends, "the gospel is inherently offensive at times because Jesus invites his followers to radical transformation and change" (61).

But how should men and women preach in this context? Honeycutt offers several suggestions because he believes newcomers "are thirsty for clear exposition of the Christian gospel" (70). The one idea which I most appreciated (and surprised me) was his encouragement to preach apologetically and not be fearful of offering biblically-grounded propositions. Though preaching dare not be fixated on rational discourse, propositions should not be avoided. When linked with stories, relevant materials, and personal applications, propositions are welcomed even by resistant listeners.

Though the book was not filled with new material, Honeycutt offers numerous helpful insights. And the book was encouraging in its reminders that conversion and commitment are continually needed in the church, and that preachers should not be ashamed or hesitant even if their message will be unpopular or rejected. For this reason, I suggest a quick read of the text. This volume may not significantly alter your approach to preaching but it will prompt you to be unashamed in your proclamation.

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What's The Matter With Preaching Today? Mike Graves, ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005, 0-664-22632-9, 182pp., $19.95, paperback.

Taking a cue from Harry Emerson Fosdick's landmark article "What's The Matter With Preaching" originally published in 1928, Mike Graves seeks the advice of 11 contemporary homileticians in addressing that same question. It might be more accurately entitled What's The Matter With Mainline Protestant Preaching Today? since Roman Catholics, Anabaptists, mainstream Evangelicals, the Seeker and Emerging church movements are not consulted. Nevertheless, the compilation still offers a fairly diverse set of opinions on what the reader could reasonably expect to be a controversial question.

To start, we must grant two assumptions that are implicit in the approach. First, that there is indeed a problem with preaching today. Second, that digging up the problem can lead to some sort of solution. Otherwise, why not let sleeping dogs lie? Many of the authors squirm a bit under the weight of one or both of those assumptions, but still manage to deliver at least tentative answers.

Fosdick's original article, presented first, holds up well after 77 years. In a nutshell Fosdick mocks his fellow preachers for presuming that people are still interested in content for content's sake. "Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebsusites." The new game, according to Fosdick, is relevance to felt needs. Recent history would suggest that homiletics, as a whole, heard that message since relevance has risen to nearly god-like status in ecclesiology.

Of course, Fosdick has a point. The sermon, from any era, that exhibits total disregard for the listener and the listener's situation, is bound to fail from lack of a hearing, however brilliant its content might be. On this point many of the contributors agree and expand. David Bartlett is explicit about the power of "showing" over mere lifeless "telling." Buttrick argues that relevance is reclaimed today in preaching about public issues of justice in the present tense, not in past-tense descriptions of what God used to do. Buttrick and Campbell share a concern that fear of offending wealthy people keeps pastors from mounting the pulpit with true prophetic clarity and boldness. Craddock fears the preacher doesn't know herself or her congregation well enough to address theology with experiential grounding in everyday life. Consequently, the sermon has no ring of truth, no connection with what people already know to be true. Lowry echoes those concerns while complaining about a loss of mystery and suspense in the pulpit.

Anna Florence faults the temptation of inexperienced preachers to use the Bible as a sword to hack people with simplistic answers. Cleophus LaRue longs for more serious consultation of the black preaching heritage to breathe a sense of passion and grounding into white homiletics.

Many of the authors decry the dangers of lectionary preaching with its close association with formulaic and generic approaches that end up substituting downloadable resources for the blood and sweat of original prayer, meditation, and customized sermon-crafting.

Not all the contributors are enamored with Fosdick. Many caution against swallowing him hook, line and sinker. Mike Graves faults the loss of God as subject to explain shallow, anthropocentric preaching. In perhaps the most serious and eloquent analysis of Fosdick's actual work, Thomas Long gets to the heart of the matter in both his acknowledgement of Fosdick's valid points, and his prophetic caution about the dangers of an audience-driven homiletic. People want more than an exposition of themselves, he warns. People need an "outside" voice older and wiser than themselves. Long calls this "Good News."

Marva Dawn's refreshingly humble and vulnerable confession is entitled "Not What, But Who Is The Matter With Preaching." She eschews both "we" and "you," choosing "I" to describe homiletic faults. It is a beautiful and endearing piece, alone worth the price of the book.

Overall the reader gets a cafeteria-style sampling of current homiletic pondering by

some of the field's most noteworthy thinkers seeking a grounded sense of relevance in preaching.

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Preacher, Can You Hear Us Listening? By Roger E. Van Harn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 0-8028-2865-5, 159 pp., $15.00, paperback.

In Preacher, Can You Hear Us Listening? Roger E. Van Harn, retired pastor of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, serves preachers well by addressing the crucial issue of audience analysis. He insists that preachers begin hearing their listeners so that effective messages from the Scriptures might be proclaimed. The author explores where preaching fits into the mission of the church, and he effectively aids preachers so that they might preach to, *for*, and *with* the people.

The book consists of a foreword by Eugene Peterson and a preface followed by twelve chapters and a bibliography. Each chapter title is in the form of a question with such designations as "Why Should We Listen to Sermons?" (Ch. 1), "How Can We Hear with All That Noise?" (Ch. 3), and "Can a Sermon Be the Word of God?" (Ch. 10). At the end of each chapter Van Harn includes a set of questions which may benefit preaching students, preacher study groups, and individual preachers as they reflect upon their own ministries.

Van Harn states that since "faith comes by hearing, [the apostle Paul] gives a mission order for the church in which *hearing* has the central place" (2). The order of the church's mission, according to the author, is (1) sending, (2) preaching, (3) hearing, (4) believing, and (5) calling. Hearing falls precisely in the middle. Van Harn, thus, proposes that "when we listen to a sermon, we are living at the center of the church's mission" and that "hearing stands between God's speaking and his people's trusting" (3). This shows that hearing both the message of Scripture and the needs of the audience is pivotal in preaching.

Although Van Harn emphasizes the importance of preachers listening to their audiences, he does not neglect the essential role of Scriptural exegesis. He states, "Preparation for each sermon requires a careful listening to the Bible text" (18). Not only do preachers need to listen to the texts and their audiences, but the preachers, in conjunction with their audiences, need to listen to the stories *behind* and *around* the texts.

A particularly strong point of the book is found in Chapter Three where Van Harn points out that all human beings have needs which need to be satisfied. Some people spend their entire lives searching for the gratification of those needs in a variety of ways, yet they still come up empty. Van Harn emphasizes that it is in the Word of God made flesh in Jesus that the human needs of *dignity*, *meaning* and

hope are truly fulfilled. The birth of Jesus allows us to have dignity. The crucifixion and death of Jesus allows us to have meaning. And the resurrection of Jesus allows us to have hope (31-38).

One aspect of the book which may cause a problem for some readers is found in Chapter Six where Van Harn writes, "Does every sermon need a Bible text? No, but ordinarily they do" (61). The answer "no" may raise concerns among more conservative preachers. Yet, one should take special notice that Van Harn emphasizes the importance of using Bible texts. He explains that identifying and reading the Bible text to the audience has five basic functions: (1) it "*interprets* what is about to happen"; (2) it "*gives direction* to the sermon"; (3) it serves to *anchor* the sermon"; (4) it "*authorizes* what will be said in the sermon"; and (5) it allows the audience to "expect to hear the message of a Bible text *exposited*" (62-63). Overall one can see that the authority of preaching comes from *Scripture*. Van Harn is merely stating that on *rare* occasions when preachers do not specifically announce and read passages to their audiences it does not necessarily mean they are not preaching Biblical messages.

In Chapter Twelve Van Harn offers a helpful suggestion: Preachers can give daily diaries to small groups of sermon listeners. The diaries are divided into two parts: (1) concerns that are specific to Sunday and (2) concerns for the rest of the week. The author sets forth a couple of ways these diaries can be utilized. One such way is that the participants record their thoughts and concerns throughout the week and then share them with their preachers. This gives preachers "real world" experiences to reflect upon which should then enable them to listen to Bible texts on behalf of their listeners.

Overall the book is well conceived and worth reading. Van Harn raises important questions, provides helpful insights, and provokes some serious considerations for preaching. He achieves his goal of conveying the importance of balancing Scripture and life in sermons, as well as offering some practical ways to achieve this important task.

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Wired for Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church. By John P. Jewell. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004, 1587430754, 194 pp., $14.99, paperback.

In Wired for Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church John P. Jewell creates an accessible guide to the question of technology and worship. The strength to Jewell's exposition is his balanced approach. He does not reject the potential use of technology in the worship of the church. Instead he suggests a number of important potential dangers and pitfalls and offers guidelines in order to avoid them. Jewell rightly recognizes the

inevitability of the integration of technology and worship in the contemporary church and seeks to create a guide for that journey.

Much of Jewell's argument can be understood within the context of his assertion that, "The Reformation was a message in search of a tool. Technology is often a tool in search of a message." Jewell is accurately portraying a significant element of technology. Technology will be used if no other reason than its availability. Technology as an end, as opposed to a channel, is a foundational position that Jewell is battling. The most dangerous element of this position is the reality that most proponents do not recognize their support.

Jewell begins his work by critiquing those who look at contemporary technology as a revolutionary contribution to church life. One of his main targets is the Internet. Jewell counters the position that sees the Internet as an unparalleled source and power for evangelism. Although the Internet clearly has the potential to reach an historic number of people for the gospel, it does not have the necessary attributes to draw them into Christian community. In fact, Jewell suggests that the employment of technology within the life of the church may have a regressive impact. Any potential and apparent gain of technology must be weighed against the potential and hidden detriment. The user can never truly control the effects of the technology employed.

One fundamental warning that Jewell rightly levels against technology in the life of the church is the issue of community. Technology can certainly give the appearance of community while actually eroding the church's understanding of how community is constituted. Technology transforms the church understands of community and as such offers the church the dangerous position of being satisfied with something that is less than true community.

Jewell examines this dynamic through the paradigm of connection and connectivity. According to Jewell connection is something that only Christ, through his incarnation, can offer. Connectivity, on the other hand, is something that contemporary technology can offer. The church must recognize that community is not built through connectivity. However, the great danger of technology rests in its potential to offer the appearance of community through connectivity. Within this state the church no longer seeks to build an effective and cohesive community.

In Jewell's guide to the use of technology in worship he warns of two danger points. First technology is intrusive. There is an inherent characteristic of technology to take center stage. Users of technology often operate under the illusion that technology can be "kept in its place." However, Jewell points out that invariably technology affects the audience in unforeseeable ways. This impact will often distract the congregation from the intended worship. The use of technology as a sermon guide may easily backfire. Often times the technology becomes the "message." Secondly, Jewell asserts that technology is messianic. Jewell rightly suggests that technology will be used simply because it exists and it is something

new. Western culture has an equated good with new to its detriment. Nothing should enter into the church's worship without intentional and committed reflection in relation to the potential impact. John P. Jewell offers a quality introduction to the challenging relationship of technology and worship.

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Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Preaching Salvation. By Ramesh Richard. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005, 0-8010-6574-7. 243 pp., $16.99, paperback.

Perhaps you love to tell the old story of Jesus and his redeeming love. Preachers experience one of their greatest joys as women and men, young and old, come to follow Christ in response to hearing the message proclaimed. There are so many today who have never heard a clear message of salvation but who may respond in faith if they had a preacher declare the gospel. Toward this end, Ramesh Richard has written a second book based upon his *Scripture Sculpture* (Baker, 1995) seven-step process of expository preaching.

Preparing Evangelistic Sermons provides a compelling biblical and theological basis and method of preparation for evangelistic preaching. In part one, the first two chapters, the author sets the biblical foundtion for the calling of evangelistic preaching. First Richard shows that the inner call which is placed by God upon the preacher's life must be embraced by the herald then the outer call placed upon the preacher's life by the need of those who are without Christ must be engaged. Part two establishes a theological framework that emphasizes the content, quality and a strategy for preaching centered on the gospel. With so many uncertian trumpet sounds, a chapter in this section defining evangelistic preaching provides a clarion call. The biblical foundation and theological framework of the first four chapters may be rather refreshing and satisfying to the practitioner navigating ministry in a sea filled with vessels propagating merely pragmatic techniques.

The author lays out his methodology in the four chapters of part three of the book. Chapter five integrates the *Scripture Sculpture* seven-step process with evangelistic preaching. Chapter six explains three sources for a textual evangelistic sermon: a salvation-concentrated text, a salvation-connected text, or in descending order of strength, a salvation-compliant text. Chapter seven considers a textual-driven topical evangelistic message while chapter eight looks at an audience-driven topical evangelistic message. These catagories found in part three of the book may not be news, but they will prove to be insightful and helpful in the development of expository messages to novice and seasoned preacher alike. A reader will find many examples throughout this section provided by this professor of homiletics.

In part four of the book there are two chapters, one on illustrations and the other on invitations. If you skip these you will miss out on part of the treasure of the book. Early in the book we find theological soundness championed, now we are

shown how to have the audience see the truth in their own lives and so respond. Biblically sound, audience relevant, preaching needs key illustrations and a clear, non-coersive invitation. This skillful evangelist offers sage.

Then, like a baker who throws in one extra to make it a baker's dozen, yet better than that, this master teacher of homiletics provides the reader with six appendicies which include examples, illustrations, check-lists and an audit. Even the veteran may find help in these.

We love our Savior. We love people. We do not want to bait and switch an unbeliever in the audience or beat them down. Richard shows us why and how we can lift Jesus up and call all men and women unto him.

Jay Held   Multnomah Bible College
                                                                                                                Portland, OR

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Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in the Communities of Faith. By Doug Pagitt. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, 0-310-26363-8, 248 pp., hardcover.

There are three questions that a book review is meant to answer: What is the author trying to do? Does he/she do it well? Was it worth doing?

What is the author trying to do?

Doug Pagitt, the Pastor at Salomon's Porch, invites us to re-imagine preaching. The need for remaking preaching stems from its apparent failure. Conventional preaching, or as Pagitt calls it, "speaching," does not work. The act of speaching where the pastor or a lecturer stands before a seated audience delivering a speech, whose content has been decided ahead of time, usually in a removed setting, where the speacher is in control of the content, speed and conclusion, damages the people listening. It creates a sense of powerlessness. Repeated speaching, according to Pagitt, may well be an act of relational violence proving detrimental to the communities of faith we try to nurture. It is a poison that can only be consumed in small amounts.

The remedy to speaching comes in an invitation for pastors and teachers to engage in "progressional dialogue." The fundamental difference between *speaching* and *progressional dialogue* comes in the relationship of the presenter to both the listeners and the content. *Progressional dialogue,* in contrast to speaching, is established in the context of healthy relationships between the presenter and the listener, and substantive changes in content are then created as a result of that relationship. In this new paradigm of preaching the way in which the audience interacts with the sermon is as important as the content itself. The Bible becomes a companion in a conversation among friends. Pagitt invites us to participate in implicatory preaching "birthed in the dance between the story and the lives of the participants in that story." (p. 38) In short, re-imagined preaching involves the intentional interplay of multiple viewpoints

leading to unexpected and unforeseen ideas.

Does he do it well?

The process of re-imagining demands two-way traffic. In order to re-imagine something we first must be in possession of a clear and distinct image of it. It is at this juncture that Pagitt's program begins to implode. The description of speaching in the author's depiction is a confused caricature of the practice of preaching. Hardly anyone would deny that what happens in preaching any given Sunday is often a far cry from the ideal. However, the reason we can all agree about the deficiencies of the praxis of preaching is precisely because we have some sense of the biblical ideal. A practice can only be condemned by reference to a standard. If Pagitt wants his scathing analysis of the practice of preaching to stick he has to examine it in light of the biblical ideal. However, a demand for a biblical definition of preaching would force the author to revisit the goal of his project from a call to re-imaging to an invitation to re-turning to the biblical model. This would demand from the author to listen to the voice of the One who called us to preach instead of listening to the opinions of the ones who are called to have ears to hear.

A lack of a clear ideal of preaching renders the task of re-imaging an impossibility. We cannot rework in our minds something we cannot envisage. Consequently, the project of re-imagining stalls in the face of the question, "In whose image?" The urging of the author to adopt progressional dialogue as the ideal of biblical communication in our churches seems nothing more than an echo of the postmodern chorus demanding a hearing. But preaching is supposed to be about listening to God. In the absence of a thorough biblical foundation for the practice of progressional dialogue Pagitt assumes what he needs to prove, namely, that for preaching to count as biblical it ought to be an amalgam of God's voice intermingled with the voices of the Sunday morning crowd. This stands us before the fundamental question, why should we bother at all?

If the preacher cannot be trusted for rightly handling the Word of Truth, why should we have any delusions that a hundred voices will serve as a corrective to the prejudice of an individual instead of producing a cocophony of error and confusion. If a single individual committed to the study and exposition of Biblical truth is doomed to failure, why not a crowd of equally fallible humans?

Fundamentally, what stands at the heart of Pagitt's contention is the very validity of preaching of God's Word as demanded from us by the Scriptures. If we cannot determine God's message for our lives through the study of God's word, is there any hope for our conversations to be anything more than an exchange of our collective ignorance? However, if this is our plight then no amount of re-imagining can save us. We are sentenced to talking ourselves to death.

Was it worth doing?

No. Ironically, Pagitt's book is its own worst enemy. It proves that joining in a

conversation just to say something is not a sufficient reason for it to count as worth saying. We would be better served to heed Wittgenstein's caveat that whereof one cannot speak one must remain silent.

Lech Bekesza   Cobble Hill Baptist Church
                                                        Cobble Hill, BC, Canada

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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 both electronic and hard copy form, printed on a laser or ink jet printer. 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).

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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 as an email attachment to the General Editor and a hard copy through the post. Send to: sgibson@gcts.edu

Address correspondence to Scott M. Gibson, General Editor, Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, 130 Essex Street, South Hamilton, MA 01982.

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