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The Journal of the
**Evangelical
Homiletics
Society**

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Publishers should send catalogs and review copies of their books to Jeffrey D. Arthurs to the address located above.

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“In my *Doctor of Ministry* program, I get more than a professor for two weeks. I get a **mentor all year.”**



Zeke Pipher, Dr. Jeff Arthurs

D. MIN. STUDENT AND PROFESSOR

**DOCTOR OF
MINISTRY
TRACKS
IN 2007**

**PREACHING:
FROM THE
STUDY TO
THE PULPIT**
(MAY 7-18, 2007)

**PASTORAL
SKILLS FOR
THE 21ST
CENTURY**
(MAY 7-18, 2007)

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

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

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A Time for Thoughtful Reflection

by Scott M. Gibson

This is the tenth anniversary year of the founding of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. When Keith Willhite and I first met we agreed that there was a need for an evangelical professors homiletics group. We quickly put together an organizational plan and a set of theological commitments that would under-gird the new organization. Keith Willhite (1958-2003) was co-founder and second president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. He was director of the doctor of ministry program and taught preaching at Dallas Theological Seminary. His warm spirit and commitment to preaching is part of the very fabric of the society.

During the ten intervening years since the conception of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, a lot has changed in preaching – and a lot has remained the same. Since, in some ways, ten years is a good time to take a look back, to understand where preaching is, and where it might go, this issue is dedicated to explore some of the contours of the past, present and future of preaching.

The issue begins with a forum on preaching with several reflections on the state of preaching today, with forays into the past and the future. Readers will note homileticians from North America, Britain, and Africa. The contributors include: Michael Dudit, David Larsen, Rantoa Letsosa, Albert Mohler, Haddon Robinson, and Derek Tidball. Readers will note similar themes and points of concern reflected across the essays. Readers will also appreciate the various nuances raised by the authors and will be stimulated in their thinking about the past, present and future of preaching.

As for the multi-cultural nature of preaching, Matthew D. Kim provides a more in-depth article from an Asian perspective. His stimulating study explores the notion of the layers of preaching and its cultural perspective among second-generation Korean Americans.

In the second major article, the changing nature of preaching is reflected in the preaching in the emergent church, a broad, yet important category. Nicholas Gatzke takes a careful look at preaching in the emergent church context. His article will provide readers with a helpful perspective in understanding and evaluating this segment of the church and of its preaching.

A focus of preaching in recent years is orality. The final article is by Australian member of the society, Adrian Lane. Lane gives attention to the “sound” of the sermon, that is, the use of the voice. His insights will stimulate teachers of preaching to reconsider the aspect of sound as important to sermon preparation.

The sermon for this edition is by nineteenth-century British preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. His text is Luke 2:14. The sermon is followed by a healthy book review section. These reviews will allow readers to explore books that may serve as helpful resources to supplement ones teaching – and preaching.

A lot has changed in preaching, yet some things never change – the Bible and the preacher. We stand between two worlds, as John Stott poignantly put it, the ancient world and the modern world. We have the privilege to allow the past to teach us how we are to proclaim God’s Word in the present and in the future.

On this tenth anniversary year of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, please allow me to express my thanks to all those who are or have been involved in the work of the Society – to the past officers, to members, to the seminaries which have hosted our annual meetings, to all the subscribers of the *Journal* and most of all, to the Lord for His faithfulness in allowing us to encourage each other to preach the Word and teach others to do it.

The Problem with Preaching

by Michael Dudiut

(editor's note: Dr. Michael Dudiut is editor of Preaching magazine and President of American Ministry Resources.)

Allow me to begin with a confession: I am a Star Trek fan. OK, I'm not one of those wacky types who wears a Federation shirt or Vulcan ears or learns to read the New Testament in Klingon. Frankly, I don't have the time even if I had the inclination. But I do enjoy watching the various Star Trek incarnations that have come along.

As further evidence that my level of fandom does not reach the truly hard-core, my favorite episode of Star Trek is *The Trouble with Tribbles*. In this amusing episode, the Enterprise heads to Deep Space Station K-7 on a humanitarian mission to protect some special wheat destined for a famine-struck planet. On the station they encounter some furry little creatures called Tribbles, whose soft fur and soothing warble make them quite popular as they start to reproduce aboard the Enterprise.

In fact, that's the problem – the Tribbles reproduce at an alarming rate, and soon the ship is overrun with the creatures, which are beginning to jam equipment, clog up work areas, and generally make an enormous nuisance of themselves. But before the story is over, they serve an important function: because they emit a panicked squeal when in the presence of a Klingon, they help to unmask a Klingon spy who had poisoned the wheat supply.

As with any Star Trek episode, there is always a moral lesson to be drawn. In *The Trouble with Tribbles*, we are reminded that something which at first seems harmless can sometimes prove to be quite a challenge – even a danger. Likewise, what may seem like a

nuisance may, in fact, be the source of ultimate victory. Sort of like preaching.

Let me stress that I am not one of those who laments the death of preaching. To the contrary, I think there may be more great preaching taking place in our own day than at any other moment in Christian history. On any given Sunday in the United States alone, there are thousands of excellent sermons being preached by well-trained, well-prepared, gifted communicators. As someone who has spent more than two decades hearing and reading plenty of sermons from churches across America (and sometimes beyond), I'm convinced we've never had more effective preaching than we do today.

And yet, in the face of some remarkable cultural shifts that have secularized American culture to an unprecedented extent, all those gifted communicators are being tempted to change the nature of the preaching task. In an effort to engage a consumer-driven culture, contemporary preaching is in danger of shifting its focus from the biblical to the therapeutic. It's not that we have abandoned scripture; it's that our preaching has increasingly moved from the vertical to the horizontal.

Most contemporary preaching still draws on scripture, but more and more it is not rooted in scripture. Too many gifted preachers are using God's Word as a launching pad from which to deal with worthy and valid human needs, instead of using human need as an illustrative base from which to jump into the truths of God's Word. Ask these talented young communicators why they preach as they do and they have good reasons. They will tell you that by building messages around the issues that drive the people in their communities – family, money, anxiety, and so on – they are helping people recognize the relevance of scripture and the church for their daily lives. In a consumer-driven culture, they insist, we can't reach the masses without strategically-shaped market positioning and issue-driven sermons that engage the interest of unchurched people.

I've heard the sermons and they are usually well done. Such sermons are often compelling, usually helpful, and typically enjoyable. But are they the words of life, without which a man or woman may enter eternity without hope and without Christ? In the process of appealing to the whims of a pampered and purchasing culture, we are too often allowing people to come and go from our congregations without hearing the truths that only the church can tell: that we are sinners, destined for destruction apart from Christ; that we must repent and allow God to transform us into the image of His Son; that there is a day coming when God will pass judgment, and the only thing that will matter on that day is what we have done about Christ. Who will tell people these truths if the church fails to do so?

It's not that we don't need to deal with real-life issues that engage the attention of our people. It's that the best counsel we can offer is not an adequate substitute for the deeper realities of God's Word.

Yet even as preaching stands at the edge of a dangerous precipice, there is good news. Many of those gifted, God-called communicators get it. Some of them recognize that the most compelling and appealing sermon is inadequate if it stays at a horizontal level, and they are preaching messages that dig deep into God's Word and present divine truth in an engaging manner. They are preaching messages that are vertically-focused but which also connect at a horizontal level. They don't preach messages that sound like those of previous generations; like great preachers of any age, they are adapting their communicative techniques to their own age and context - even when it means they are moving beyond the homiletical training they received in college and seminary.

And we need to help them. As the ones who teach and influence those who preach, we need to encourage and equip those who are modeling effective biblical preaching in the 21st century. And we must do the hard work of studying and understanding the new communications environment in which we now exist, in order to prepare a new generation of preachers who learn to communicate

God's Word faithfully and persuasively. Let's equip them to boldly go where all great preaching has gone before – deep into God's Word and directly into the hearts of humanity.

**Evangelical Preaching: Coming of Age or Going to Seed?
A Kaleidoscopic Review**

by David L. Larsen

(editor's note: David L. Larsen is Professor Emeritus of Preaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. After pastoring for 32 years including historic First Covenant Church in downtown Minneapolis, Dr. Larsen came to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1981 and served as Chairman of the Department of Practical Theology until his retirement in 1996. He continues to teach at the master and doctoral levels, mentors doctoral students, does intentional interim pastorates, engages in conference ministry and writes. He has just finished a novel of suspense entitled St. Augustine and the Abduction and is working on a book investigating images of the ministry in western literature.)

Evangelicalism's strong commitment to the indefectible authority and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture has well sustained her high view of preaching the Word. While liberalism and to a large degree mainline Protestantism lost Biblical proclamation in their vain effort to accommodate Enlightenment rationalism and its concomitant, destructive higher criticism, evangelicalism was well-advised to draw the line against the minions of Darwin, Freud, Kant and Marx. Fidelity to the founding documents remains the ground which we must hold and defend.

Consonant with the venerable living stream in the history of preaching which has resisted subordination of the text of Scripture to anything else, American evangelicalism built its homiletic on John Broadus from the south and Anson Phelps, his northern counterpart, champions of preaching what the text says. Haddon Robinson's 1980 *Biblical Preaching* has been defining, with its insistence on dealing with the natural thought unit in its context.

The difference between preaching out of a text and preaching the text is decisive and efforts to define exposition as preaching the main thought of a passage untrammelled by how that thought is developed in the text should fall by the wayside. Preaching the “big idea” of the text as it is developed in the passage and beginning application in the introduction have happily been dominant for the most part in evangelical circles.

Doubts about following the natural order of the passage need to be rebuffed and Timothy Warren’s unremitting persistence on the need for sensitivity to the theology of the passage in its larger context has proven most prudent. Progress among us in better awareness in preaching the literary genre has been generated by Walter Kaiser and Sidney Greidanus and others.

Enlarged hermeneutical awareness has also been fostered among us by Thiselton, Silva, Osborne and Elliot Johnson to mention but a few who have goaded us on to a stronger commitment to authorial intention, single meaning of the text (which does not rule out studied cases of double meaning in John’s Gospel) and the grave perils of allegorization and hyper-spiritualization. Which is not to say that the 400,000 sermons preached weekly in America have obviated the deep spiritual hunger of the flocks addressed. There is yet much chaff in all of our camps and carving of cherry pits among us. To preach “He went a little farther” from the Gethsemane pericope as we need to go farther in prayer, etc. etc. is an outrage.

The vestigial remains of Puritan preaching with its inverted pyramid of intense doctrinal examination of a micro-text survive among us and stirred us mightily in Martin Lloyd-Jones but hardly model how laity should use Scripture. While in the nineteenth century Spurgeon, Parker and Maclaren held preaching high in Britain, America’s chief pulpiteers Bushnell, Beecher and Brookes all succumbed to the American religion (Emersonian gnosticism, Harvard pragmatism and American Manifest Destiny). None of the latter held to a substitutionary atonement but they all presage the

survival of a heresy which thrives in our time in the prosperity gospel and a very narcissistic cultural accommodation. It is an unvarnished Pelagianism.

The exciting rebirth of interest in Biblical narrative developed by left-wing scholars and homileticians was an effort to salvage something Biblical for preaching and we evangelicals who were pretty predictable in imposing our rational grid on the narrative passage and losing the power of the story-line have happily moved with new enthusiasm into the area. But we must avoid the narrative canon limitation of the left and remember that there is something very anti-cognitive in their enthusiasm. We don't build doctrine from a story nor ethical norms from facts. We need the didactic sections of Scripture. Some have prematurely denigrated linear thinking and deduction (a divinely revealed major premise is a certainty). Preaching must clearly be a blend of deductive and inductive elements.

We have benefited greatly from the great Canadian communication's theorist Marshall McLuhan in his thinking about the medium in relation to the message and his student Neil Postman (*Amusing Ourselves to Death*) along with a whole raft of data which assist us in understanding and exegeting the culture we seek to reach.

Explosive developments in technology have shaken our discipline - visuals, flim-clips, power-point et al. We lagged behind business, education and the military in the latter and now unhappily have missed their pullback and caution - turn off the projector during the last one third of discourse. Triangulation (speaker-audience-screen) poses its complex problems for us and needs to be weighed. Clearly we evangelicals have veered ironically to left-brain rationalistic preaching and do need the balance of right-brain feeling-tone and passion. But the packaging must never be allowed to supplant the content. There is no substitute for Spirit-empowered direct discourse. Three volumes on preaching and the Holy Spirit have been salutary and a renewal of interest in the spiritual disciplines and the inner life

of the preacher have been a God-send. Recrudescence of interest in the history of preaching after a long hiatus has been most heartening and truly helpful. A sense of roots stabilizes.

Yet with all of these encouraging developments, why then does not Evangelical preaching soar more conspicuously? Ours does not seem to be a day of great preaching. The gains of recent decades, it seems to me, are in jeopardy. Some foresaw awhile back the paradigm shift in which we are now embroiled and which to many of us is a grave endangerment in this hour. We are seeing a widespread paradigm shift, from text-derived, text-driven preaching to need-driven, audience-centered, problem-solving preaching in the name of relevance and helpfulness. This kind of impatience with the Biblical text and urgent move to stories and application can be lethal. What we have to offer is the Word of God. What we can learn about post-modernism, boomers, new age, generation “X” is enhancing but we must not over-estimate the dominance of this cultural current or another. The tendency of “the emergent church” is to denigrate preaching and twist itself into a pretzel and the danger on every hand is an Evangelical “cultural captivity” every bit as fatal as the liberal establishment’s craven capitulation to the Enlightenment.

The Old Testament prophets and our Lord and his apostles were “signs of contradiction” to a culture askew. This is Niebuhr’s category “against culture in the interest of speaking to culture.” Today’s preachers are cross-cultural as much as any missionary in days gone by. This contextualization of the Everlasting Gospel is the enormous opportunity every Bible preacher faces weekly, but we must not give away the store. We must “keep the faith” and wisely “contend for it.” AMEN.

Forum on Preaching

Preaching in the African Context

by Rantoa Letsosa

(editor's note: Dr. Rantoa Letsosa is Professor of Practical Theology at the School of Ecclesiastical Studies of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), South Africa.)

Introduction

Someone once said “Preach as if it is your very first sermon, preach as if it is your only sermon and only opportunity of preaching, preach as if it is your best sermon ever and preach as if it is your very last sermon – your farewell sermon.” Preaching is not an unknown phenomenon in Africa, much lesser in South Africa. Most people, even nominal Christians, believe to be very good preachers. The sad side is that to a certain extend preaching loses its value unless the church takes back the pulpit and redefine preaching.

My intention with this commentary is simply to focus on the common understanding of preaching in a South African context. In this comment I shall analyse who the preachers are, look at some tendencies in their preaching and how preaching should be understood from a Biblical perspective. My aim is not at such to give a final answer on the matter, but it would rather be a reflection on how the situation looks like in order to provoke thought and to look for answers together with you.

Listening to sermons is one thing, but analysing and describing sermons heard, is another thing. Africa is a continent with very many inhabitants, people of different races, cultures and tradition. For this reason even their approach in doing certain things differs extensively. Hence my focus will be on preaching in the South African context. To be more specific, I am specifically referring to

the Black African people in South Africa. There are eleven official languages in South Africa; I will focus on the Nguni and the Sotho speaking groups which share a common pattern of preaching, and which accommodates most of the languages among the eleven. Among both groups the majority of the preachers have either little training or no training at all. Nevertheless, there are among these preachers, ministers who are well educated with regard to sermon making and preaching. However, I shall not focus on them as such for they are but a few in comparison with the majority with little or no training.

Who Are the Preachers?

Preaching among most African people is not regarded as a calling. It is more of a talent or as something that one learns while growing. Anyone can therefore be a preacher. The function of a trained minister is therefore specifically to baptise and administer the Holy Communion. The minister becomes described as the one who does the “high duties” not meant for the laity.

Where do they preach?

Among Africans preaching is found where Christians come together for whatever function related to the church. You find preaching where:

1. Church youth gather together for fellowship.
2. Women’s league gathers together for their union
3. Christians come together to comfort each other (it being at a funeral service, or at a house where someone has died)
4. Christians come together for worship
5. A couple is joined together in holy matrimony.

In all these instances except for where a couple is married, a qualified called minister is not essential. Anyone from a youth, a woman to an elder can do the preaching or conduct the service. This is the case and the situation in most of the congregations in South Africa.

The positive factor about this is that Christianity is growing at a large rate in Africa. Hence there is a great need for *called* preachers of the Word. Romans 10:15 explicitly testifies that messengers have to be *sent out* to proclaim the word. Jesus says in Matthew 9:38 “Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will *send out* workers to gather in the harvest (see Luke 10:2).

Messengers sent out from above do not embark on their duty through their own power. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be able to execute their task of preaching the Word. We read in Acts 1 that the disciple had to *wait* in Jerusalem. Their experience, wisdom and strength would be insufficient to successfully accomplish their mission unless they are empowered by God himself through the Holy Spirit.

Once preachers are filled with the Holy Spirit they cannot otherwise but to preach the Word with boldness. We see an example of this in Acts 4:19 where Peter and John had to defend their belief; “You yourselves judge which is right in God’s sight – to obey you or to obey God. For we cannot stop speaking of what we ourselves have seen and heard” (TEV). There is thus no question that preaching is a calling from God. The power of the preacher is the power of the word and not of the voice. The preacher himself has no authority except for the authority of the Word.

How do they preach?

Due to the fact that there is little or no training at all, it does not appear whether some would like to learn, because there is also a belief that the goodness of your sermon is determined by the power of the sermon, whether there is a point or not. In the African context a good preacher should have a good voice and should in some sense scare people with the great voice. Everyone will then be forced to listen to you because of the authority with which you proclaim the word. Manner becomes more important than content. In fact the two should balance.

The following may be said about these sermons: (I'll here use the language of Eslinger 1996 to describe them).

Slow-Cooked Sermons

In these sermons all the forms and movement of the text have been boiled away. Only the conceptual themes are left at the bottom of the text. The preacher goes to a text and notices certain thoughts or themes and makes a sermon out of them. The theme of the text is extracted from the context and there is no interaction.

Water-Skimming Birds Sermon

Here the preacher comes with a specific text on the pulpit. One verse or a few verses from a pericope are read without concentrating on the full pericope. All the preacher has is an idea he got from general knowledge. This is like a bird hovering over the surface of a sea swooping down to pluck something from it without even getting wet. The literary and linguistic details are totally ignored. This is very close to the slowly cooked sermons.

Isolated Beauties

This approach to preaching has to do with pure *eisegesis*, i.e. reading into the text. The preacher here takes a certain portion from Scripture, which is very pleasing to him. S/he will “break open” the text to give it meaning. However, the problem is that the meaning is not from the context but from what s/he intends the portion to mean.

How are these Sermons Welcomed in General?

As previously mentioned, such sermon receives a warm welcoming by the majority of people. The unfortunate side of the story is that these people who evaluate such unstructured and not well formulated sermons are usually people who equally have little

knowledge about the word of God. Experience has proven that in instances where Bible study that focuses on sermon making is done, people develop critical thinking. It becomes easy for them to be able to evaluate sermons in a positive manner.

People exposed to regular Bible reading at home, in spite of the fact that they might not be very theological in analysis, they nevertheless are able to critically listen to a sermon. It thus also becomes evident that due to the fact that some people regularly read the Bible, they might in some way even better “preachers” of the word than most who preach without regular Bible reading.

Conclusion

Much training is needed for good sermons in South Africa and Africa as a continent. More attention has to be paid on sermon making. Trained ministers have to prepare well and make a difference in preaching and in this manner people will be able to discern between a well formulated and weak sermon. Members should be made aware that preaching is a calling, not anyone can simply stand on the pulpit and say so says the Lord unless s/he has entered into the inner chamber with the Lord and hears from him. Good preaching relies on regular contact with the owner of the Word Jesus Christ. This means that the preacher has to keep on praying, reading the Bible and listen to the voice of the Lord when He speaks for only a good listener is a good speaker.

The State of Preaching Today

by R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

(editor's note: Dr. R. Albert Mohler is President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.)

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity. . ." With those famous words, Charles Dickens introduced his great novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Of course, Dickens had the two cities of London and Paris in mind, and much of his story revealed that the tenor of the times depended upon where one lived.

In some sense, that remains true as we consider the state of preaching today. To a large degree, this depends upon where one chooses to look.

On the one hand, there are signs of great promise and encouragement. On the other hand, several ominous trends point toward dangerous directions for preaching in the future.

In surveying the current state of preaching, my primary concern is for preaching in the evangelical churches of North America. In these circles, preaching is generally considered to be an important part of worship and church life. Furthermore, it is generally understood to be the chief means of instructing the congregation in the Word of God and in presenting the claims of Christ. Even so, there appears to be little consensus about what preaching is to be in terms of shape, structure, substance, and subject matter. This confusion is readily seen when attending conferences on preaching or in listening to preachers talk about their own understanding of the task.

Signs of encouragement include a large number of younger

evangelical pastors who are unabashedly committed to biblical exposition and represent a resurgence of genuine biblical exposition from the pulpits of churches situated in every part of the country, from the inner city to the suburbs and beyond. This new generation is proving once again that the effective and faithful exposition of the Word of God draws persons to Christ and leads to spiritual growth and to the health of the church. A generation of young ministers, along with others making their way through college and seminary education, may point toward a renaissance of biblical preaching in coming years.

On the other hand, several trends represent issues of genuine concern. In the main, the last few decades have been a period of wanton experimentation in many pulpits and preaching has often been redefined and reconceived as something other than the exposition and application of the biblical text.

1. A Loss of Confidence in the Power of the Word

Contemporary Americans are surrounded by more words than any previous generation in human history. We are bombarded with words delivered to us in every conceivable form—sung, broadcast, electrified, printed, and spoken. Words have been digitalized, commercialized, and subjected to postmodern linguistic theories. Taken together, all this amounts to a significant loss of confidence in the word as written and spoken. Several years ago, the photographer Richard Avedon declared that "images are fast replacing words as our primary language."

This certainly appears to be the case. In *The Rise of the Image, the Fall of the Word*, author Mitchell Stephens of New York University argues that "the image is replacing the word as the predominant means of mental transport."

Since preaching is itself a form of "mental transport," any loss of confidence in the word leads to a loss of confidence in preaching. Ultimately, preaching will cease to be Christian preaching if the

preacher loses confidence in the authority of the Bible as the Word of God and in the power of the spoken word to communicate the saving and transforming message of the Bible. The preacher must stand up and speak with confidence, declaring the Word of God to a congregation that is bombarded with hundreds of thousands of words each week, many of them delivered with a soundtrack or moving images. The audacious claim of Christian preaching is that the faithful declaration of the Word of God, spoken through the preacher's voice, is even more powerful than anything music or image can deliver.

2. An Infatuation With Technology

Jacques Ellul was truly prophetic when he pointed to the rise of technology and technique as one of the greatest challenges to Christian faithfulness in our times. We live in a day of technological hubris and the ubiquity of technological assistance. We are engaged in few tasks, physical or mental, which are now unassisted by some form of technology.

For most of us, the use of these technologies comes with little attentiveness to how the technology reshapes the task and the experience. The same is true for preachers who have rushed to incorporate visual technology and media in the preaching event. The effort is no doubt well intended, driven by a missiological concern to reach persons whose primary form of "mental transport" has become visual. Thus, preachers use clips from films, dynamic graphics, and other eye-catching technologies to gain and hold the congregation's attention.

The danger of this approach is seen in the fact that the visual very quickly overcomes the verbal. Beyond this, the visual is often directed towards a very narrow slice of human experience, particularly focused on the affective and emotional aspects of our perception. Movies *move* us by the skillful manipulation of emotion, driven by soundtrack and manipulated by skillful directing techniques.

This is exactly where the preacher must not go. The power of the Word of God, spoken through the human voice, is seen in the Bible's unique power to penetrate all dimensions of the human personality. As God made clear, even in the Ten Commandments, He has chosen to be *heard* and not *seen*. The use of visual technologies threatens to confuse this basic fact of biblical faith.

3. An Embarrassment Before the Biblical Text

Through the experience of hearing innumerable sermons from evangelical preachers, I note the tendency of some to appear rather embarrassed before the biblical text. The persistent attacks upon biblical authority and the sensitivities of our times have taken a toll on the preacher's confidence in the actual text of the Bible.

On the theological left, the answer is quite simple—just discard the text and write it off as patriarchal, oppressive, and completely unacceptable in light of an updated concept of God.

Among evangelicals, we can be thankful that fewer preachers are willing to dismiss or discard the text as sub-biblical or warped by ancient prejudices. Instead, many of these preachers simply disregard and ignore vast sections of Scripture, focusing instead on texts that are more comfortable, palatable, and nonconfrontational to the modern mind. This is a form of pastoral neglect and malpractice, corrected only by a comprehensive embrace of the Bible—all of it—as the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God. *All* of it is for our good.

4. An Evacuation of Biblical Content

The last point was concerned with passages of Scripture that are never preached—but what about the texts that are preached? Are today's preachers actually studying for the content of the passage? In far too many cases, it seems that the text becomes a point of departure for some message—no doubt well intended—which the pastor wishes to share with the congregation. Beyond this, the text

of Scripture is often evacuated of biblical content when, regardless of a passage's textual form or context, the content is uniformly presented as a set of pithy "points" that come together in a staple outline form.

Every text does have a point, of course. The preacher's main concern should be to communicate that central truth, and design the sermon to serve that overarching purpose. Furthermore, the content of the passage is to be applied to life—but application must be determined by exposition, not vice versa.

Another problem that leads to an evacuation of biblical content is a loss of the "big picture" of Scripture. Far too many preachers give inadequate attention to the canonical context of the passage to be preached and of its place in the overarching story of God's purpose to glorify Himself through the redemption of sinners. Taken out of context, and without clear attention to biblical theology, preaching becomes a series of disconnected talks on disconnected texts. This falls far short of the glory of true biblical preaching.

5. An Absence of Gospel

The preaching of the apostles *always* presented the kerygma—the heart of the gospel. The clear presentation of the Gospel must be a part of the sermon, no matter the text. As Charles Spurgeon expressed this so eloquently, preach the Word, place it in its canonical context, and "make a bee-line to the cross."

The approach of many churches—and preachers—has been to present helpful and practical messages, often with generalized Christian content, but without any clear presentation of the Gospel or call to decision and accountability to the text or to the claims of Christ. The apostles should be our model here, consistently preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course, in order for the Gospel to make sense, authentic preaching must also deal honestly with the reality of human sin and must do so with a candor equal to that of the biblical text. All this presents the preacher with some

significant challenges in our age of "sensitivities." But in the end, preaching devoid of this content—preaching that evades the biblical text and biblical truth—falls short of anything we can rightly call *Christian* preaching.

These are indeed the best of times and the worst of times. I am thankful for a renaissance of expository preaching, especially among many young preachers. I am thankful for stalwart pulpit examples who now serve as mentors to a generation hungry to see how biblical exposition constitutes the very center of effective and powerful ministry. I am thankful for a number of outstanding programs in seminaries directed towards encouraging and equipping this generation for that task.

At the same time, I am also concerned that dangerous trends and many popular examples threaten to undermine the centrality of biblical exposition in evangelical pulpits. In the end, the Christian preacher simply must confront the congregation with the Word of God. That confrontation will be at times awkward, challenging, and difficult. After all, this is the Word that pierces us like a sword. The evangelical preacher must set his aim at letting the sword loose, neither hiding it nor dulling its edge.

Preaching Trends: A Review

by Haddon W. Robinson

(editor's note: Dr. Haddon W. Robinson is the Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts.)

I have been teaching students to preach for almost fifty years. I have been asked to reflect on trends, fads and realities in preaching during my five decades of teaching. To do so I need to file two disclaimers.

Disclaimer One: I am an evangelical who has ministered, for the most part, outside of the mainline churches. I have spent most of my life as a professor at independent or Baptist schools. While I believe my observations apply more widely than my corner of the vineyard I can't be completely sure.

Disclaimer Two: one person's trends may be another person's fads. Neither may be reality. Not all fads or trends are good, but not all are bad. Many of the trends that started in the past remain in some congregations today. None of them are completely pure. There are emerging trends that remain to be evaluated at a later time.

One trend seems obvious to me. The model of the preacher has shifted during the last half century. When I began as a professor of homiletics a widely accepted model was the preacher as Evangelist. During the 1940's and Fifties, many conservative churches had what was billed as "an evangelistic service" every Sunday evening. (Sunday evening services and Wednesday night prayer meetings were the norm in evangelical congregations.) Many parishioners labeled a church "orthodox" if all its services, even the prayer meeting, ended with an invitation to come forward to accept Jesus or to join the

church. Throughout the South and Midwest, many Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations sponsored week-long “revivals” at least once a year. Members of the church attended and brought their friends. Although a traveling evangelist or a pastor from another community was usually acquired to lead those special efforts, local pastors were expected to evangelize weekly from the pulpit. Titles of sermons would be straightforward such as “What Must I Do to Be Saved?” During the revival services the titles might be more clever and sensational such as “Seven Ducks in a Muddy River” to advertise a sermon on Naaman the Leper. All of this was an effort to attract the unsaved. The assumptions behind “the pastor as Evangelist” were that the culture was essentially protestant and most people held the same religious values. The task of the evangelist or the pastor, therefore, was to get the reluctant who knew the message to buy into it.

In the 1950’s in many congregations the model morphed into the preacher as Teacher. “Bible Churches” sprouted up in many sections of the country. They were started not only to teach the Scriptures but also as a reaction to the supposed threat of Communism in the United States. Senator Joseph McCarthy campaigned to rid the nation of suspected communists or communist sympathizers embedded in the government, the entertainment industry and in education. The John Birch Society, an influential right-wing group started in 1958, also raised additional questions about the loyalty of clergy in mainline churches who supported the ecumenical movement. Those pastors were suspected of wanting to build a “one-world” government. As a result, members of these churches who held conservative political views began to question the liberal theology of their ministers.

Churches that majored on teaching the Bible attracted many of these disaffected church members. The Sunday services in those congregations resembled classes in a Bible school. After two or three hymns and the offering (which were referred to as “the preliminaries”), the pastor would teach though a passage in detail “verse-by-verse.” Some of these Bible churches offered classes in

Greek during the week. In cities in the southwest, the Midwest, and California, those congregations grew. Titles of sermons reflected the emphasis on teaching: “Abraham in Egypt” or “The Dangers of Legalism” or simply “Colossians 2.”

A motto of many of these churches was “The Bible as It Is for People as They Are.” More emphasis was placed on the Bible side of the slogan, however, than the people side. Application was seldom an important part of the sermon. The boast that “we simply preach the Bible” sometimes resulted in blinding irrelevance. The civil rights movement was taking place in the streets of the cities but these Bible-teaching congregations not only missed it, they opposed it. In many churches deacons stood at the door of the sanctuary to block entrance to African-Americans who attempted to enter. They explained their blockade as opposition to “the social gospel.” Many of these churches knew the will of God for the length of a man’s hair or a woman’s skirt, but did not believe that God had anything to say about breaking down the wall between the races.

Something else happened during the sixties. Authority—all authority—became suspect. Members of congress felt it, educators experienced it, and preachers, too, were affected by it. Pastors were no longer trusted as the authorities they had been. This anti-authority mood created suspicion of churches and their values including authority of Scripture. I remember after speaking to a student group on a college campus, a student speaking for his friends challenged me, “Look just because some old man spent a night on a mountain and said, “Don’t fornicate or commit adultery, what has that got to do with me?” That mood though more subdued has continued. Preachers can no longer assume that their hearers will accept a statement as true merely because it’s in the Bible; they are challenged to show that it is in the Bible because it is true. Something else has happened. In the past the pastor and the church were granted the high road. The culture generally accepted the values and even the theology of Protestants and Catholics. That is no longer true. The high road has become the low road. For a preacher to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ and to say that Jesus

alone is the way to God is dismissed as bigotry. The values that the culture once assumed as true are now openly rejected. Acceptance of all religions has become the highest value of all.

In the 1980's and 1990's the model shifted again to the pastor as Therapist. That reflected the wider trend in society that demanded "action not talk." The emphasis on action affected churches and seminaries. In the Fifties congregations had staffs consisting of a pastor, a secretary and in larger congregations a church visitor. Theological seminaries that prepared pastors, whether liberal or conservative, were content centered. Although they might have a class on how to baptize or marry or bury, seminaries did not have departments devoted to counseling, Christian education or even homiletics. "Practical subjects" were regarded as intruders in the curriculum. In the sixties, however, that changed. Churches felt responsible for all aspects of their member's lives. Church staffs expanded to include youth ministers, music ministers, pastors of evangelism and discipleship, and counselors. Many seminaries responded by downplaying subjects such as the original languages to make a place for more "practical" studies. Sermons began to address people's felt needs. They became topical. Topical preaching itself wasn't new. It had a long history in the pulpit. The topics in the past, however, were primarily theological. Now preachers addressed topics related to life and personal problems.

Sermons on marriage, handling youth conflicts or improving interpersonal relations became common. While the major points of the sermons may have reflected a biblical passage, the supporting content usually came from the behavioral sciences. Titles of sermons became "How to Deal with Procrastination." or "How to Develop a Positive Attitude" or "A Christian View of Sex." That emphasis on the practical has continued and increased. Pastors now strive to put into their sermons "take away" applications. They respond to listeners looking for something usable and specific that will "get them through the week" The person in the pew may not care where the preacher in the pulpit found his message as long as it meets needs. Application has replaced exegesis as the primary factor in the sermon.

More recently the model of minister has become pastor as Leader. Pastors are regarded as the CEO of their congregations. In many churches the pastor's "study" has become his "office." Books and seminars for pastors focus on the basics of leadership. Much of the material comes from business models. The trend is so strong that many evangelical seminaries now offer courses and even majors on leadership. Mega-churches sponsor conferences on the subject with experts recruited from the secular arena presenting the "How To" steps for leaders to take. Preachers now lead their churches in crafting vision statements and mission statements. Effective preaching consists of sermons that further the vision. Sermon titles sometimes reflect this: "Seven Characteristics of a Highly Effective Christian," or "Leadership Principles from the Life of Moses."

These shifting of models of the pastor also reflect a shift in the authority behind the sermon. Until the early 20th century, authority rested in the preacher and his theology. Congregations relied on their pastor to tell them what the Scriptures taught and what their denomination's theology meant. Sermons were seldom expository. Ministers did not work their way through passages of Scripture to expose their content. Instead sermons would be based on a single verse or even a phrase from a text. Charles Spurgeon, the noted Nineteenth Century pastor, as a case in point, preached some great sermons from the wrong texts. The support for his sermons was his Reformed theology. He reasoned from assertions that he was sure reflected the Scriptures. When I started teaching homiletics in the 1950's textual and topical sermons were the norm. In most churches listeners accepted what the pastor said as true. What was said from the pulpit fit with what they had already been taught. Even the secular culture looked at ministers and priests with respect and their authority to speak on religion was taken for granted

Today, however, the authority of the sermons has shifted from the pastor to the listeners and their experience. David Buttrick in his book, *Homiletic*, develops this openly while many evangelicals accept it uncritically. The foundation for preaching is less often an examination of particular biblical texts. It has become quite common

for evangelical ministers to assemble passages from different parts of the Old and New Testaments, often from different translations and paraphrases that say what the preacher wants to say. The context of the statements is sometimes completely ignored. The texts are selected only because of their wording. These statements are then woven together to provide a tapestry that serves as a cover for practical applications that may actually lack valid Scriptural support. Members of the audience accept or reject the message by whether or not it fits their experience.

Other shifts in preaching have been influenced by the mass media, especially television. Television is every bit a shaper of communication as was the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. Image has replaced speech as a priority on TV. To some degree that has become part of church on Sunday. Film clips and power point are part of many services. The large pulpit has been replaced by a small stand and sermons are preached with few or no notes. That openness resembles the television anchor person or the standup comedian on the late-night shows. Church audiences expect the same kind of delivery from their pastors.

Music and entertainment are the mainstays of media and technology. Ipods without music would not sell. Perhaps that explains why in many congregations the sermon occupies a smaller place in the service and it has been replaced with music. Indeed, it is common for the music in a service to be referred to as “worship” and the musicians as “the worship team.” This implies the preacher is an afterthought and his sermon has little to do with worship. Services and sermons generally are shorter than in the past. The attention spans of listeners—younger listeners especially—have grown shorter. Mass media have certainly contributed to that.

I have only touched the hem of the garment of the changes in preaching that have taken place in the last fifty years. Some of these changes we ignore at our peril and they should be embraced; others must be resisted. We cannot give up on exposition of the Scriptures. Sermons at their core must be biblical. The Spirit answers to His

Word. If we do not have a word from God, preachers don't have anything to say. It is a rape of the Scriptures to misstate what the text says to serve our own agendas. It is arrogance to say in the name of God what God has not said. One of the great needs of the hour is to feed the hunger that exists in our society for a genuine word from God. We must not offer people straw when they are starved for grain. We serve in a wilderness age crying for a voice that speaks from God.

Yet, simply because we have some vital to say doesn't give us the right to be boring about it. Sermons must also be relevant. We don't simply teach the Bible; we teach people the Bible. Just as bread is relevant to hunger and water is relevant to thirst we must apply the Scriptures to the deeper needs in people's lives. Relevance also means that we speak God's truth in the language of the marketplace. The New Testament was written in the koine. Effective preachers today speak in the tones of lively conversation. They shun jargon and code words familiar only to members of the club. To be truly relevant is to address people's deepest needs in words they can understand. All of us give our attention to what we feel we need.

Inhabitants of the ancient world and the modern society at their core have much in common. In that sad, pagan world people lacked hope. Men and women wondered what they had to do to be made right with their god or goddesses. They were not sure which god really mattered. The Athenians hedged their bets by erecting an altar to "the unknown god." People in our society also lack hope and many wonder about the God they do not know. They wonder whether God really exists, and if he does whether he cares about them. Inhabitants of our society carry guilt that they do not know how to deal with. They have secrets that they will not share with another human being. They wear masks that hide what they really are. Something is wrong but they don't know why. People then and now dread death. They draw back from the prospect that they will be thrown into some ditch of a grave and be forgotten. They wonder about life after death. Is this all there is? Is it a tale told by an idiot scrawled on the wall of an asylum, or is there something more? To speak to needs like these is to be relevant.

We have great liberty in experimenting with a variety of sermon forms to speak so that people will listen. The form should fit both our content and our audience. The variety of forms found in the biblical revelation should give us a workable lead toward variety in the way we preach. To talk about a “sermon” usually suggests some particular shape a sermon must take. There is not such thing as a sermon “form;” only forms sermons take. After we have determined what part of God’s truth we will preach then we must ask, “What is the best way to communicate this truth to this audience?” When I began to teach almost fifty years ago, sermon forms reflected the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition. Most sermons were deductive. Now, however, sermons unroll in a manner more natural to human communication. Sermons are often inductive in development and “narrative” both in style and delivery. Effective sermons develop so that the preacher leads the listener from movement to movement. I am grateful for that.

Modern preachers reflect a greater concern and respect for the listener. Preaching is approached more as dialogue than monologue. We no longer talk “at” an audience or even “to” an audience. We talk “with” the listeners. We know that people are more likely to embrace a truth by a change of perspective rather than by long exhortation. When “you must,” “you should,” “you ought” are cut off from the indicative that explains “why” a congregation should respond the sermon sounds like scolding. Persuasive sermons paint pictures on people’s minds and show them in specific ways what a text means and how it should be applied. Whatever forms we use, however, must have the authority of the biblical text because behind the text is God Spirit who alone can probe the deepest caverns of listener’s lives.

That is the most important truth I have learned through the years. When Jesus declared, “Without me, you can do nothing” he spoke what has been true for all Christian preachers for two thousand years. Prayer is not simply preparation for the battle; it is the battle. I believe that far more today than I did when I began my service for Christ. I am still an amateur at prayer. But I know nothing of

significance happens as a result of our preaching if God's Spirit doesn't show up at the service and work in us and in the people as we preach. Prayer has much to do with that.

Times change, the culture changes but there will always be a place for relevant, biblical, Spirit-anointed preachers. After five decades of watching the passing parade I am more convinced of that than ever.

The Current State of Preaching: A View from Britain

by Derek Tidball

(editor's note: Dr. Derek Tidball is Principal at the London School of Theology.)

Britain's Heritage

There never was a golden age of preaching, a time when the British pulpit was universally acclaimed to be in good health. Even in the days of Spurgeon and the other pulpit giants of the Victorian era it had its share of critics and detractors. But one looks back to the mid twentieth century and the immediate years that followed when the London pulpits were dominated by W.E. Sangster (at Westminster Central Hall), D. Marytn Lloyd-Jones (at Westminster Chapel) and John Stott (at All Souls, Langham Place) as rich years indeed. Though different in style, approach and churchmanship, each demonstrated effective evangelical proclamation and, as a matter of theological conviction, was committed to expository preaching. Up and down the land, many faithful preachers sought to imitate the models these “gold standard” preachers offered.

Yet, it would be sheer fantasy to pretend that every church enjoyed such quality. Hundreds of chapels had to put up with “blessed thought” type preaching: preaching which used or abused the text to make a spiritual point whether or not it had anything to do with the primary intention of the text in question. This style of preaching was aggravated by those colleges that taught preachers to preach on a verse, as if it were a motto for the week, rather than to identify the real unit in the scriptural passage. To sustain preaching on a single verse week after week requires a good deal of creativity and imagination, as was frequently evident. (Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones

could do it but were the exceptions which prove the rule and they escaped its hazards because of the broad and deep understanding of doctrine they brought to bear on the verse they chose, a framework often lacking in their lesser imitators).

Still others in evangelical churches listened to sermons of greater weight but ones that read a particular theological perspective into every text, whether it was premillennialism, the message of revival or the need to evangelise. The old saying about some preachers that “ten thousand, thousand are their texts and all their sermons one” proved uncomfortably true more often than one would wish. The evangelical subculture was inhabited, too, by many popular evangelists who patterned themselves on the storytelling of D.L. Moody or, subsequently, the authoritative proclamation of Billy Graham. Many of them were excellent communicators but lacked long-term effectiveness because of their “hit and run” tactics. Though some itinerant preaching evangelists remain they are currently an endangered species. Thousands of parish churches, of course, suffered a weekly diet of thin or dry homilies that were scarcely Bible-based but supposedly based on Christian principles or values. The advent of the charismatic movement, from the mid-sixties onwards, led to an intensification of passion in the pulpit and to sermons laden with personal testimony. It also led, in some churches, to the supplanting of expository teaching for a more immediate and contemporary, often passing, word of prophecy. But this is no longer as common as it was.

The Present Scene and Future Scenario

So, where are we now at the start of the twenty-first century? What prospect is there for the future?

First, it is important to affirm that preaching has not died. The rumours that verbal communication would be superseded by visual communication, or an IT sound bite, have yet to prove true. While other sections of the church have been dying many (not all)

evangelical churches that remain committed to preaching have remained healthy and growing. Furthermore, a multitude of Christian conferences in which preaching remains central is thriving. The long-established Keswick Convention has undergone a revitalisation and expansion in recent years and, while it may no longer hold too tightly to traditional Keswick holiness teaching, remains very firm in its stance on conservative Bible teaching. Its younger contemporaries, in terms of conferences, like Spring Harvest, New Wine or Soul Survivor (to name just a couple of the better known conferences in Britain), also thrive with thousands attending them and with preaching being the main item on the programme each day, even if they each bring their own particular theological edge to their preaching.

Conferences for preachers and training opportunities, like those offered by Proclamation Trust and the Cornhill Training Course, or the Crieff Fellowship in Scotland, are much sought-after. The demands remain great and so, consequently, does the need for good training. Homiletics has never been taught as a serious academic subject within English Universities (it was different in Scotland), but often relegated to a few second-class “how-to” lectures in a practical theology department. But recently well over twenty lecturers met at the University of Durham to confer on teaching homiletics within theological colleges and universities. It was an encouraging development. One of the most valuable comments for me was that of a senior figure in the field who worried that we might be confusing students by setting before them a variety of approaches to preaching rather than meeting the prior need, as he saw it, of drilling some basic disciplines into them. Diversity, I suppose, fits with the postmodern temperament but can only truly thrive if secure foundations have been laid first.

Secondly, preaching demonstrates a great deal of variety, not all of it good. The conferences and organisations mentioned above all bring their own style to their platforms and these, in turn, filter down to the churches of the people who attend them. The style is at least partially shaped by their theological position. Some would

exalt the reformed “doctrines of grace” and seek for repentance from sin whereas others would seek to bring about personal transformation in a way that is more akin to contemporary therapeutic approaches which can be found elsewhere. The continuum stretches from the doctrinally abstract to the existentially light. The former may be well rooted in terms of theology and scripture but is often removed from the real world in which most live. The latter is too at home in the world of the average listener and not always sufficiently at home in Scripture. At one end of the spectrum are those who prize right doctrine but shun good communication while at the opposite end of the spectrum one meets the reverse.

What of the middle ground? A good deal of deductive, linear, expository preaching that is well applied continues. Indeed, some people are returning to it after a somewhat prolonged love affair with more inductive or narrative styles of preaching. The impression given when people discover how good it is to have the Bible taught in a straight (but competent and relevant) way reminds me of an advertisement for Kellogg’s Cornflakes that was on British TV a few years ago. Faced with stiff competition from an exotic range of breakfast cereals, the original cornflakes seemed plain, if not dull, in comparison. The ad featured an attractive, youthful person tasting the cornflakes and commenting “My! I’ve forgotten how good they are.”

But the balance of preaching remains disappointingly superficial, anthropocentric and laced with anecdotes and questionable inductive logic. The way many preachers use the Bible is particularly worrying and their hermeneutic is a far cry from anything taught in seminary. There is an old saying about statistics that says: “People use statistics like a drunk uses a lamppost, more for support than illumination.” That saying can sadly often be applied to the way popular evangelical preaching uses scripture. Time and again one gets the impression that preachers have heard something said at the conference, read the latest fashionable cheap

paperback, or even imbibed a pop psychology article in a national newspaper and they shape their address around it, referring only occasionally to the odd verse in the Bible for support. Scripture, then, is often raided and held hostage, rather than being allowed to speak for itself.

Thirdly, this diversity extends beyond preaching to our understanding of church. Many are currently experimenting with “new ways of being church” and seeking to cast off the shackles of the old institutional church in favour of a more flexible, community-style church that will suit a postmodern generation. The place of preaching in these “emerging churches” (using the word “emerging” in the widest possible way) has yet to be established. Theoretically, the pulpit should be leveled to the height of the pew, the preacher as authority figure should be dethroned to become a guide exploring the way forward alongside other pilgrims; dialogue should replace monologue and certainly should be replaced by tentativeness. But while such experiments are numerous they are all too recent to draw much by way of conclusions. They may prove to be bringing to birth the next generation of faithful believing communities, or they may be a passing fad. Who can tell? Even if it endures, the present experiments will probably undergo massive change in the process of their maturing and preaching is likely to remain an enduring aspect of any church’s culture.

Fourthly, at a local church level I fear that many pastors no longer give the time and priority they need to compose and preach good sermons. I would not wish to tar all with the same brush and there are many exceptions to this general point. But time and again I hear preachers say they are too busy with administration, people or (one suspects) travelling and attending conferences to prepare well. When I ask what they are reading, the replies I receive tend to be the latest offering on how to relate to contemporary culture rather than any biblical commentaries or theological books. Preaching then is often a rehash of something they picked up along the way or

a further bashing of the congregation (under the guise of “exhortation”) to do more, give more, come more, pray more, witness more, and achieve more. But all the while the congregations are being “challenged” they are not being fed. This is a serious weakness in the British church. I am convinced that better Biblical nutrition would lead to healthier Christian living. Pastors might be advised to achieve their goals by more indirect routes and find that they may be more easily reached, better established and certainly more easily sustained that way.

Conclusion

While London may no longer be able to identify three great preachers, Britain has a wealth of good preachers. Perhaps the elite has been democratized somewhat. If so, this is in line with egalitarian trends found in other traditional or institutional forms of authority, such as in education and politics. These days, in Christian circles, celebrity status is more often afforded to worship leaders than preachers but that does not mean to say that there are not plenty of excellent preachers around. There are.

The challenge is to train the next generation with a passion for God’s word and a conviction, born of experience, of its saving and sufficient power so that they can blend good exegesis and hermeneutics with excellent communication skills. Good biblical skills and good communication skills belong together but, unhappily, are too often divorced from each other. How tragic if we were to train a generation of brilliant communicators who have nothing worth saying. And, how tragic if we had a generation of people who had something to say but no one was listening because it was communicated so poorly.

A Bi-Cultural Homiletic: Korean American Preaching in Transition

by Matthew D. Kim

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Abstract

This article is based on findings from a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Edinburgh.¹ The methods employed for this study were questionnaires and semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with Korean American² pastors and second generation Korean American congregants spanning three regions of the United States.³

Introduction

The expansion of the Korean American church has been unprecedented with over 3,500 Korean ethnic churches currently on the North American continent.⁴ Yet, many, if not all, of these Korean American churches are experiencing a state of transition as they evolve from autonomous ethnic churches comprised of mono-cultural first generation⁵ immigrants to co-existing with bi-cultural⁶ second generation⁷ Korean American congregations. This generational shift in the Korean American ecclesial landscape has spawned various ramifications for ministry practice, in general, and for preaching, in particular. In view of this trend, the central thrust of this article will be that second generation Korean Americans are presently experiencing "liminality"⁸ as bi-cultural Americans and Christians and that this phenomenon requires both recognition and sermonic action from Korean American preachers.

To provide background on the Korean American church context, I begin with a short description of cultural anthropologist Gerald Arbuckle's stages of cultural transition and identify six stages of transition for Korean American congregations as pastors and members negotiate this process of co-existing as first and second generation ministries. Next, I turn to a discussion of thematic tendencies in sermons crafted by first generation Korean immigrant preachers whose preaching is influenced heavily by Korean cultural and religious values. Lastly, I introduce some challenges of preaching to bi-cultural second generation Korean Americans and offer two practical steps to facilitate Korean American preachers in more consciously reflecting the contours of second generation Korean American listeners in their preaching.

Arbuckle's Stages for Cultures in Transition

In his seminal work *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership*, cultural anthropologist Gerald Arbuckle contends that cultures and organizations will undergo periods of transition to varying degrees. In particular, he argues that the Roman Catholic Church exists in a state of chaos as a byproduct of the reforms made in the Second Vatican Council.⁹ Rather than dealing with this turbulence straight on, Arbuckle points out that many of the Church's religious leaders have uncritically reverted back to the viewpoints and structures prior to Vatican II in order to mollify the theological and social pressures engendered by its amendments.¹⁰ Responding to this organizational quandary, Arbuckle establishes a model of cultural integration for the Roman Catholic Church consisting of six stages: (1) cultural consensus and integration;¹¹ (2) initial unease and stress;¹² (3) political reactions;¹³ (4) chaos;¹⁴ (5) liminality;¹⁵ and (6) new cultural consensus and integration.¹⁶ In light of Arbuckle's schema, I will seek to re-interpret his model for Korean American congregations which I contend are experiencing their own forms of transition and change.

Stage 1 - Cultural Consensus/Integration

When first generation Korean immigrants initially established ethnic-specific congregations, cultural consensus/integration or Stage 1 was widespread in that these Korean ethnic churches provided the distinctive religious and social needs of first generation immigrants.¹⁷ In fact, Korean ethnic churches have often functioned as an ethno-religious space where first generation immigrants could retain the culture and tradition of their homeland.¹⁸ Meanwhile, second generation children were simply expected to attend their parents' Korean immigrant church.¹⁹ Despite physically attending their parents' churches, many second generation Korean Americans worshipped in separate children's services or youth group gatherings. The paucity of theologically-trained English-speaking Korean Americans led many Korean immigrant churches to appoint part-time white American pastors to direct these departments for the second generation.²⁰ However, within these first generation Korean ethnic churches, emphasis has conventionally been placed on the preservation of Korean cultural values and traditions which helps to maintain cultural consensus and integration even for more Americanized second generation Koreans.²¹

Stage 2 - Initial Unease/Stress

Over time, as identity issues emerged, second generation Korean American young adults began to experience initial unease and stress or Stage 2 of Arbuckle's theory. This initial unease and stress became visible in primarily two ways. First, as second generation Korean Americans matured, they recognized cultural and intergenerational differences between themselves and their first generation immigrant parents.²² Although second generation Korean Americans were generally taught to adopt traditional Korean values in their first generation parents' homes and in Korean ethnic churches, they could not deny the American customs and philosophies to which they had become acclimatized in U.S. society.²³

One fundamental difference between first and second generation Koreans within an ecclesial setting concerns leadership style where Korean immigrants espouse authoritarianism, which is at variance with the second generation's more democratic and open leadership approach inherited from American culture.²⁴ The authoritarian leadership model within the first generation ethnic church has triggered frequent schisms and in-house fighting.²⁵ As a result, cultural unease and stress for second generation young adults has stemmed from the fact that first generation Korean churches were not only established for religious motivations but also for the retention of Korean cultural and social practices.²⁶

A second form of initial unease and stress for the second generation occurred when non-Korean Americans began to attend their ethnic-specific Korean American churches. Since the Korean ethos is latent but at times overt within ethnic-specific Korean American congregations, second generation Koreans commonly felt the unease of being between two cultures. That is, in front of their white American or non-Korean friends, second generation Korean Americans have felt discomfiture when Korean culture was heavily accentuated. Simultaneously, second generation young adults have encountered stress in not knowing how best to make non-Korean congregants feel at ease within an unfamiliar cultural environment.²⁷ Although ethnic identity formation "takes place over time, as people explore and make decisions about the role of ethnicity in their lives,"²⁸ many of these second generation English Ministries have evaded this important stage yet have still proceeded to make structural changes within their ethnic-specific churches.²⁹ This brings our focus to Stage 3 of Arbuckle's model for cultures in transition or what is referred to as "political reactions."

Stage 3 - Political Reactions

Specifically, two main types of structural change have taken place within ethnic-specific second generation congregations as a corollary of this initial unease and stress which include: the development of semi-independent or independent English

Ministries; and the establishment of pan-Asian American or multiethnic churches. The first structural adjustment made within second generation English Ministries was in response to cultural and intergenerational differences with the first generation immigrant church context. Whereas the first generation ethnic church was initially created to preserve the needs of the immigrant cohort through maintenance of their native language and cultural practices, second generation Korean American congregations were established in response to the growing needs of second generation members who had difficulty worshipping with the first generation community due to language and cultural discrepancies.³⁰ The emerging second generation began to incorporate in their worship services the language and traditions of the dominant American society making organizational or cultural changes vital.³¹ Accordingly, English Ministries were established to help second generation young adults "overcome the challenges and conflicts that are unique to their experience" as Americanized, English-speaking Koreans.³²

Predominantly two distinctive types of second generation Korean American English Ministries exist. In the semi-independent or "church within a church"³³ model, the second generation conducts separate English-speaking worship services but share the facilities within the first generation immigrant church.³⁴ Among participating second generation congregations, 19 out of 24 are semi-autonomous Korean American English Ministries. On the other hand, fully independent second generation churches are not affiliated to a first generation Korean immigrant church in any capacity. According to Korean American pastors in this study, 5 out of 24 consider their second generation congregations independent English Ministries.

A second major structural change carried out by some second generation Korean American English Ministries involves reaction to the initial unease and stress of worshipping with non-Korean American congregants. Since second generation Korean Americans are linguistically and culturally fluent in American society, many

begin to question the rationale for being an ethnic-specific Christian community.³⁵ Along these lines, some Korean American pastors have sought to either transform their existing ethnic-specific congregations into pan-Asian American or multiethnic congregations or simply to establish new churches with a multiethnic impetus.³⁶

Interestingly, though some second generation English Ministries have made efforts to welcome non-Koreans into their congregations, the general attitudes of many second generation Korean Americans toward members of other ethnic/racial groups have remained largely unaffected.³⁷ That is, while in theory various second generation congregants support the concept of ethnic and racial diversity, they still appear to find solace in worshiping with fellow co-ethnics and seem less interested in learning about the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of other non-Korean members. For instance, Sally, a second generation Korean American interview respondent explained, "I don't feel comfortable going to a non-Korean church or a multiethnic church....I just find comfort being and worshiping with the same nationality."

What is ironic about her comment is that on several occasions during her interview Sally claimed that she was not Korean but more American in her value system and way of thinking and that many of her close friends were ethnically non-Korean. If this self-description accurately represents Sally's experience, she should be less perturbed when interacting with non-Korean American church members. However, it seems that second generation Korean Americans, like Sally, are amenable to ethnic and racial variety in an ecclesial atmosphere as long as non-Korean parishioners are willing to adopt the Korean ethos and its cultural practices.

It is disconcerting that the ethnicities and cultures of non-Korean American congregants are not discussed or even acknowledged within certain second generation English Ministries. Moreover, non-Korean American parishioners have the potential to adopt the

Korean American culture and lose their own inimitable heritage for the sake of integrating into the second generation Korean American church culture. Since various structural changes have been made during Stage 3 without apposite discourse on ethnic and cultural topics or requisite attitudinal modifications, I contend that many second generation Korean American churches have experienced cultural chaos and liminality.

Stage 4 - Chaos

Cultural chaos is evident first of all within these English Ministries in that many second generation participants express a directionless Christian reality. Although second generation Korean Americans attend services and participate readily in various ministry activities, there appears to be a lack of purpose or vision behind their respective faith journeys.³⁸ Several Korean American pastors describe how their second generation congregants feel aimless and seek to know God's plan for their lives.³⁹ To illustrate, Pastor Francis responds, "They don't know what their life is for. They sense they're supposed to be called to something but they have no passion about any one particular thing they're willing to do stuff for." In Arbuckle's terms, various second generation young adults seem to be experiencing "a sense of drifting without purpose or 'lostness'" in their Christian existence.⁴⁰

Not only do second generation congregants yearn for spiritual vision at an individual level, but also many English Ministries persist without lucid congregational visions. Further, I would argue that cultural chaos is perpetuated by the fact that many second generation English Ministries have not made concerted attempts to discuss how ethnicity and culture fit into the broader picture of their ethnic-specific ministry agendas. In fact, some of these second generation Korean American informants seem content simply in that their English Ministries create a family-type atmosphere where fellow co-ethnics can worship in a comfortable environment.⁴¹

Another example of cultural chaos within these English Ministries is the competitive spirit that inhabits various Korean American pastors. Rather than seeing nearby second generation congregations as potential partners in ministry, some Korean American pastors construe them as competitors seeking to attract high profile second generation young adult parishioners.⁴² According to Arbuckle's descriptors, these Korean American pastors may display signs of co-ethnic factions or feuding by harboring "personal and group envy" when other second generation Korean American English Ministries appear to be more successful.⁴³ This attitude is not uncommon among Korean American pastors because the pool of second generation Korean American Christians is relatively small and Korean American ministries are inherently evaluated by their annual budget and how many congregants convene on Sunday mornings.⁴⁴ Based on these examples, it appears that some second generation English Ministries are experiencing cultural chaos particularly in relation to Arbuckle's chaotic descriptors of spiritual "lostness" as well as co-ethnic factions or feuding.⁴⁵

Stage 5 - Liminality

In response to Stage 4 cultural chaos, religious organizations may take matters into their own hands by taking the escapist route in retreating back to familiar patterns or by attempting the conversionist approach which beckons the creation of new developmental processes. For those second generation English Ministries that vacillate in this liminal or in-between situation (Stage 5), Korean American pastors have typically reverted back to the recognizable spiritual piety of their Korean immigrant parents (i.e., escapist reactions), or they have sought to move ahead by adopting expressions of contemporary American evangelical Christianity (i.e., conversionist reactions) as an act of self-help.⁴⁶

Through re-interpreting Arbuckle's model for the second generation church context, I have attempted to show how many second generation young adults and their English Ministries unsuspectingly remain in a transitional state of chaos and liminality.

That is, neither have they dealt extensively with ethnic identity or cultural issues nor have they made strategic decisions about whether they should adhere to Korean and/or American cultural and religious traditions. Without identifying and addressing this chaotic and liminal situation, I suggest that Korean American preachers will experience difficulties in helping their second generation Korean American listeners reach a new cultural integration (Stage 6).

Preaching to First Generation Korean Immigrants

Since we now have a basic picture of this transitional period for first and second generation Korean American congregations, I will describe the general substance of preaching in the first generation immigrant context. Although preaching styles and sermon content will vary, first generation Korean immigrant preachers' sermons typically bring together biblical themes with the culture and values of Korean immigrants as well as stories from their immigration experience.⁴⁷ As alluded to earlier, what is significant about Korean immigrant religious participation is that many first generation Koreans began attending ethnically Korean churches not necessarily out of religious motivation but simply because they provided services in adjusting to American life and offered cultural activities akin to their homeland.⁴⁸ Thus, first generation Korean pastors regularly emphasize core Korean values throughout their sermons to reinforce and to preserve Korean culture and identity within ethnic church walls. For instance, Pyong Gap Min states:

They [Korean pastors] frequently tie Korean traditional values to a paragraph from the Bible and preach church members to preserve those Korean values to live as sincere Christians....They [Korean pastors] very often pray for the democratization of South Korea, the unification of the two Koreas, the elimination of corruption on the part of government officials, a quick recovery from flood damages in a certain area of Korea, and so forth.⁴⁹

Many Korean immigrant preachers also have a tacit propensity to maintain East Asian values which at times become integrated with Christian tenets and practices. Among the most universal East Asian philosophies preserved in Korean ethnic congregations are those from the religious traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism. For instance, the late Jung Young Lee's *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* is a pioneering text that introduces the topic of preaching in the Korean immigrant church context.⁵⁰ In this particular work, one of Lee's primary objectives is to demonstrate how the East Asian religions of Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism have harmonized to shape Korean consciousness. He maintains that first generation Korean preachers require thorough comprehension of these three major Korean religions.⁵¹ Likewise, Eunjoo Mary Kim's *Preaching the Presence of God* examines Asian American preaching through the lens of East Asian spirituality looking at the ways that Confucianism, Buddhism, and shamanism have impacted the lives of Asian Americans.⁵²

It has often been the case that Korean immigrant preachers have amalgamated the principles of Christianity with these Eastern religions. For instance, first generation Korean immigrant preachers are influenced commonly by two central Buddhist concepts, *karma* and *palcha*. *Karma* explains the causality between one's present circumstances and his or her past and also shows how one's future is determined by present actions.⁵³ This ideology has permeated Korean Christian theology often producing a faith within Korean immigrant churches that accentuates works as opposed to God's grace. As a result, first generation Korean Christians engage regularly in "voluntary suffering" as a way of establishing one's works and thus "experiencing oneness with God through Christ who serves as our cosufferer."⁵⁴ Another influential Korean Buddhist doctrine is *palcha*, the Korean idea of fate, which enables a person "to explain or direct blame in times of misfortune."⁵⁵ This Korean Buddhist principle becomes convenient especially for first generation Korean immigrants who try to justify their high or low circumstances since *palcha* allows them to project responsibility onto someone or something other than the self.

In addition to Buddhist philosophy, first generation Korean immigrant preachers are heavily influenced by Confucian principles. Confucianism was founded primarily on moral virtues and hierarchical relationships. There are five central virtues which Confucius held in high esteem: benevolent love or humanness (*ren*); righteousness (*yi*); proper conduct (*li*); wisdom (*zhi*); and faithfulness (*xin*).⁵⁶ It was believed that these virtues would maintain harmony and social order in society if preserved by members of the five basic relationships: king and subject; father and son; husband and wife; elder and younger; and friend and friend.⁵⁷

Reflected in these human relationships are Confucian notions of collectivity which prioritize hierarchical relations. In general, the Korean immigrant culture endorses Confucian hierarchy where seniority is paramount.⁵⁸ Not only are Korean ethnic churches hierarchical, but they also sanction patriarchal tendencies that downplay the role of women in the church. This does not come as a complete surprise as the deprecation of women is highly consistent with Confucian doctrine.⁵⁹ Another influential Confucian doctrine preserved in Korean immigrant society pertains to filial piety within families. Filial piety places the expectation on children to give allegiance, respect, and devotion to their parents' desires.⁶⁰ Instead of assimilating to the social norms and values of American culture, Korean immigrants often encourage their children to adhere to these Confucian principles.⁶¹

First generation Korean immigrant preachers, thirdly, have been shaped by shamanistic thinking. Shamanism is a folk religion rooted in superstition and shamanic ritual.⁶² Of central importance to shamanism is the direct communication between the shaman priest [in Korean *mudang* for female shaman and *paksu* for male shaman] and the spiritual beings [in Korean *Sin* or benevolent gods] from whom shamans obtain the reversal of calamities and receive various types of blessings.⁶³ Most notably, the shamanistic concept of blessing has permeated the consciousness of some members of both first and second generation Korean American churches where parishioners are taught that God blesses Christians with material

and spiritual wealth.⁶⁴ For example, Tae-Ju Moon writes, "For Korean Christians, however, their pursuit of earthly blessings is rooted in a shamanistic cultural background....In Korean churches, what becomes very apparent is the excessive emphasis in sermons on the believers' earthly blessings."⁶⁵ Traces of shamanism may also be found in first generation Korean immigrant preachers' emphases on prayer and healing which are traditionally vital roles of the Korean shaman.⁶⁶

Since many Eastern principles are handed down either consciously or subconsciously from generation to generation, it is critical that Korean American preachers possess a firm grasp of these influential concepts. However, there is tremendous danger when Korean preachers integrate Christianity with these other religious and cultural traditions. For instance, Lee states: "My suggestion, then, is to preach conversion and total commitment to the Christian faith without exclusivism. In other words, our preaching should aim at our complete commitment, with openness to other faiths."⁶⁷ Therefore, I contend that Lee's syncretistic approach to preaching becomes in danger of compromising the Christian faith.⁶⁸

While first generation Korean immigrant preachers often focus their sermons on Korean culture and religious principles, second generation Korean American preachers are forced to contemplate not only the inherent Korean cultural morals passed down from first generation parents but also the effects of American values instilled in their listeners. The remaining sections will address the complexities of preaching to second generation Korean Americans many of whom possess a bi-cultural, liminal identity that is neither completely Korean nor American.

Preaching to Bi-Cultural Second Generation Koreans

Growing up in American society, second generation Korean Americans have experienced an array of complexity and confusion.⁶⁹ On the one hand, second generation Koreans have been taught in the United States education system to internalize

American social norms and values which emphasize individual interest, rights, and independence.⁷⁰ On the other hand, second generation Korean Americans are often pressured at home by their immigrant parents to preserve ethnic heritage and conventional Korean values.⁷¹ Sociologist Won Moo Hurh explains that Korean family systems usually focus on "family interest, duty, obligation, and mutual dependence among kin based on the social ethic of Confucianism."⁷² In addition, while first generation Korean immigrants possess a clearly defined Korean national identity carried over from their homeland, the bi-cultural/marginal condition of second generation young adults has typically forced them to make sense out of the "complex interplay of two sociocultural systems, the Korean ethnic heritage and the American way of life."⁷³ How, then, have Korean American preachers communicated the gospel to bi-cultural second generation Korean Americans who may struggle with making sense of their liminal situation as ethnic minorities in American society?

Since "authentic preaching is a *contextual* event"⁷⁴ that is circumspect about one's ethnicity and culture, one of the primary objectives in this study has been to ascertain the methods and extent to which Korean American preachers currently investigate the ethnic and cultural dimensions of their second generation Korean American listeners. This section will identify the processes that these Korean American preachers undertake at the moment. At first glance, it seems that these Korean American participants are semi-conscious of the significance that their ethnic background and culture have in the preaching process. For instance, Pastor Owen describes how his style of preaching "has been forever colored by the fact that I have grown up in a Korean American church." In addition, some second generation interview participants communicate the import of their membership at an ethnic-specific Korean American church. As Quentin comments, "I don't think I would have started coming to church if there was no Korean American congregation....I think it definitely reached out to me specifically, personally to me because it was [a] Korean American

congregation." Likewise, Hailey names detailed characteristics about the second generation Korean American church setting that were pivotal in her decision to attend an ethnic-specific Korean American ministry: "We [second generation Korean Americans] share the same humor...[and] we have that common background history....We understand our parents. And I think just the commonality of that makes it easier and more comfortable for me."

In spite of the important functions that ethnicity and culture play in the second generation Korean American church context, further examination reveals that the Korean American pastors in this study lack in-depth methods for analyzing their second generation audiences. Specifically, a few Korean American pastors describe their primary technique for congregational analysis as listening to second generation young adult congregants' stories. This is accomplished mainly by spending time with members, conversing with them at an individual level, or by participating in small group activities. As Pastor Morris states, "I try to spend a lot of time getting to know people...whether it's meeting them for lunch or having them over at my house or just gathering together in various fellowship situations. I think [it] enables me to get to know them better." Similarly, Pastor Stan explains, "In my mind I have the congregation because I interact a lot with them especially at the small group level."

Some Korean American pastors convey the use of alternative procedures for contemplating the unique needs and concerns of their second generation parishioners. According to Pastor Jake, his congregational exegesis takes the form of thinking about what second generation young adults value and how they spend their time and resources. Pastor Xavier examines his congregation by placing himself in his parishioners' shoes because as he puts it "a lot of my struggles are the same struggles they're going through." Interestingly, Pastor Ben reads recurring messages from his second generation young adults' Xanga websites where individuals journal their thoughts on personalized web pages. Further, some Korean American preachers assume that they know their congregation

members and therefore do not feel obliged to integrate formal congregational study into their sermonic tactics. For example, Pastor Kurt comments, "Throughout the whole process I do have the congregation in mind," while Pastor Chad replies, "Maybe you can say I'm in denial and stuff but I think I know them very well. And I know what they're struggling with." As these pastors' comments demonstrate, when it comes to exegeting their congregations, that is, understanding the ethnic and cultural contexts of their audiences, some Korean American ministers tend "to assume more knowledge on their part than they actually possess"⁷⁵ frequently developing "a generalized image of the potential listeners and let[ting] it supply the totality of [their] assumptions about the context."⁷⁶

Without broad and in-depth strategies for determining the sermonic needs of their second generation hearers, I contend that a number of context-specific issues will remain invisible to these Korean American preachers. For example, I asked these Korean American pastors what types of questions they have concerning their listeners. Interestingly, these Korean American preachers would like to know more about some of the following topics: what are their struggles; what are their daily routines like; how do they want to grow spiritually; is the sermon relevant; and what do they really care about? These pastors' homiletical questions suggest that some Korean American preachers are currently uninformed on basic facets of their second generation young adults' lives.

Additionally, as many second generation Korean American congregations welcome increasingly more non-Koreans into their sanctuaries, Korean American pastors in this research have begun to view multiethnic ministry in the way Yancey believes the American people collectively treat the topic of ethnicity or race: "Many Americans wish that we could have a colorblind society. In such an ideal society we would be blind to the importance of skin color in our society. Many individuals believe that acting as if we are a colorblind society is the best way to produce a race-neutral society."⁷⁷ For example, Pastor Todd states, "I try to keep it [my

preaching] as [if] I try to...approach a colorless society or colorless congregation so that people aren't left out." Similarly, Pastor Francis describes the ethnic detachment from his sermons as "de-Koreanization" or a form of ethnic cleansing: "When we set out to be multiethnic one of the first things we did was de-Koreanize everything...[and] we went through that period of cleansing [laughs] the ethnic cleansing sort of speak." As a corollary of these measures, Pastor Francis contends that his sermons have become ethnically neutral: "Interestingly when I preach, I preach to the generic American. I almost don't even think about [being] Korean American." Several other Korean American pastors voice similar processes of de-contextualization in their preaching. For instance, Pastor Xavier explains, "I just try to exegete the passage and preach it without thinking about Korean American culture." Pastor Todd comments, "I try to omit being Korean as much as possible." And finally, Pastor Uriah declares, "I think it's also educating our congregation and challenging them to not be so darn Korean American in everything that they do [sic]." In response to this de-contextualization in second generation Korean American preaching, the following two sections will seek to present two practical steps which may help Korean American preachers address the identity issues, chaos, and liminality of their bi-cultural second generation listeners.

Stage 1 - Engaging Cultural Chaos and Liminality

At the start, I suggest that Korean American preachers identify and reflectively engage with the cultural chaos and liminality of their second generation young adult listeners. A valuable first discussion point for Korean American preachers and second generation young adults may be to determine the profundity of second generation listeners' ethnic identity development. For many second generation participants in this study, being bi-cultural and in-between two different cultures has triggered chaos and liminality in different life situations. The chief objective here is to have Korean American preachers and second generation parishioners begin formal discussions that will both affirm positive perspectives on Korean

American ethnic identity and challenge more harmful or negative conceptions.

At this time, I will highlight one ethnic identity model which may contribute positively to identity formation for these second generation Korean American respondents.⁷⁸ That is, Jean Phinney outlines an identity development model which discusses four major components of ethnic identity: (1) self-identification as an ethnic group member; (2) a sense of belonging to the group; (3) positive and negative attitudes about one's group membership; and (4) the level of ethnic involvement concerning social participation, cultural practices, and attitudes.⁷⁹

In the opening stage, self-identification relates to the ethnic label that a person uses to describe oneself. These second generation young adult participants primarily hold to a self-identification of being Korean American. Thus, in this initial stage, parishioners are encouraged to converse about what their Korean American ethnic identity means to them and why they subscribe to this particular self-description.

The second element for second generation congregants to explore is one's sense of belonging to the ethnic group. By this, Phinney articulates how people choose a specific ethnic label yet may or may not feel a strong sense of belonging to the specific group in question. In the Korean American church context, second generation respondents could discuss the ways in which they feel embraced by or isolated from the ethnic group(s) to which they identify themselves. Discourse could also include personal stories and reflections regarding their dual status as members of both Korean and American cultures.

A third constituent of ethnic identity, for Phinney, relates to personal attitudes toward one's ethnic group. Second generation Korean American participants may articulate positive attitudes such as feelings of pride, pleasure, satisfaction, and contentment with their ethnic group, or instead feelings of animosity or bitterness

toward the same group. Vocalizing these bi-polar attitudes concerning ethnicity is extremely important for these second generation Korean American young adults so that they may be liberated by having venues to express these unmasked feelings.

The final component of ethnic identity, according to Phinney, that invites reflection and dialogue is ethnic involvement concerning social participation and cultural practices. Indicators of ethnic involvement most commonly employed by researchers are those of language, friendship, social organizations, religion, cultural traditions, and politics. For these second generation Korean American participants, conversations could be channeled to discuss personal experiences involving each of these topics in relation to their ethnic identity as Korean Americans. For instance, second generation respondents could express their frustration or success with Korean language facility; discuss what types of people they are friends with and why; speak about their social lives and to what extent they revolve around being Korean, American, or both; talk openly about why they attend a Korean American church and what they like or dislike about attending an essentially homogenous congregation; discuss cultural disparities between Korean and American cultures and how these discrepancies impact bi-cultural people; and lastly, converse about the ways that being bi-cultural shapes their political leanings. As Korean American pastors and their second generation congregants engage with these different ethnic identity themes, they will then have a more solid foundation to build on when other ethnic and cultural concerns emerge in their second generation congregations.

Secondly, since cultural chaos between first and second generation Korean Americans may be provoked or exacerbated by the second generation's paucity of knowledge concerning Korean history and its cultural background, I suggest that Korean American preachers and second generation young adults may profit from first-hand exploration or (re)engagement with Korean history and the immigration experiences of the first generation community.

Specifically, a cerebral analysis of Korean history and immigration would facilitate Korean American pastors and second generation young adults in appreciating and sympathizing with the various hardships suffered by Koreans as a collective people and particularly those experienced by their first generation immigrant parents. As Korean American theologian Andrew Sung Park describes, the Korean immigrant experience has been *han*-ridden denoting "the inexpressibly entangled experience of pain and bitterness imposed by the injustice of oppressors."⁸⁰ Moreover, Park relates that the Korean people have been subject to "[s]ocial injustice, political repression, economic exploitation, cultural content, and war, all of which affect the downtrodden as a whole, [and] raise the collective *han*."⁸¹ For this reason, I suggest that a deeper awareness of Korean strife may assuage some of these festering misunderstandings between first and second generation Korean American Christians and also mitigate the liminal experiences of second generation young adult congregants.

In further attempting to understand the Korean ethos, it would be constructive for Korean American preachers and second generation parishioners to (re)familiarize themselves with East Asian tenets and practices like Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism and others.⁸² As posited by Kelly Chong and other Korean American scholars of religion, East Asian philosophies often become synthesized with the values of the Christian faith.⁸³ In order for Korean American pastors to recognize these undercurrents, some formal study on Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism would prove fruitful and informative. When Korean American preachers explore these East Asian philosophies, it is vital that they seek to understand the ways in which their Christian theology and practice have already been influenced by Buddhist, Confucian, or shamanistic tenets imparted from their first generation parents and to be able to distinguish between useful and detrimental ideologies. As Korean American preachers attempt this first stage of congregational exegesis via surveys or in-depth conversations with church members, it is important to note that chaotic descriptors of liminality will vary from context to context. Therefore, Korean

American preachers are to be especially sensitive to the particular factors that may affect each congregation differently.

Stage 2 - Constructive Dissent

Once Korean American pastors and their second generation listeners are made aware of the liminal chaos in their lives and encouraged to deal with these contextual issues, another step is for both preacher and listeners to be presented with a way to move out of their liminal chaotic condition. This second stage calls for new homiletical roles.

Preachers Becoming Authority Dissenters

This second stage commences with Korean American preachers assuming the role of authority dissenters.⁸⁴ According to Arbuckle, authority dissenters in the Roman Catholic Church "hold officially appointed positions of authority - for example, bishops, pastoral directors and congregational leaders have the power to open and close doors to new and old pastoral endeavours."⁸⁵ For the second generation Korean American church context, Korean American pastors as authority dissenters would undertake what Thomas Troeger calls a more "visionary role"⁸⁶ in preaching which I distinguish as authorizing a creative space for second generation congregants to build a healthy sense of identity, purpose, and mission in the world. The preacher's task here is not to prescribe certain agendas and thus constrain their listeners' capacities but rather to "[jointly] discover and use the gifts of the pathfinding dissenters for the benefit of the Church."⁸⁷

Authority dissenting Korean American preachers will contribute a fresh perspective to the concept of "imagination." In the past, Richard Eslinger explains that "the relationship between homiletics and imagination theory has been more than rocky or unstable."⁸⁸ When their paths converged, however, imagination in homiletics has traditionally involved the preacher's aptitude to develop imaginative illustrations or sermonic themes that engaged and

maintained the audience's attention.⁸⁹ Paul Scott Wilson points out the regularity in which "imaginative preaching becomes identified with narrative form and inductive learning."⁹⁰ In his book *Imagining a Sermon*, Troeger explains how "imaginative theology" in preaching becomes an informative strategy for helping listeners "interpret what faith in God means for them day by day."⁹¹ And coming from a Roman Catholic point of view, Mary Catherine Hilker employs imagination in homiletics to demarcate its binary dialectical and sacramental dimensions.⁹² Placing emphasis on the latter, Hilker interprets "preaching as the art of naming grace in human experience through the lens of a critical sacramental imagination."⁹³

Here, authority dissenting preachers will implement imagination in a manner that distributes a "'foretaste' of the reign of God"⁹⁴ by opening the horizons of possibility of what listeners envision for their future spiritual lives here on earth. Authority dissenting Korean American preachers would broaden the imaginations of their second generation young adult listeners to a life that is externally focused and other-oriented. They will challenge second generation hearers to consider the ways that their gifts and abilities can be used to administer "God's reign of justice, peace, and love"⁹⁵ to a dying and hurting community.

Listeners Becoming Pathfinding Dissenters

In this second stage, authority dissenting Korean American preachers will form active partnerships with second generation congregants who will serve their English Ministries as pathfinding dissenters. Put succinctly, pathfinding dissenters "are dreamers who *do!*"⁹⁶ As Arbuckle states, "They [dreamers] are future-oriented, highly imaginative persons, with new ideas springing from a mind that organizes experiences, facts and relationships to discern a path that has not been taken before."⁹⁷ Yet, pathfinding dissenters are fundamentally different from authority dissenting Korean American preachers in that they do not "hold officially appointed positions of authority."⁹⁸

Nevertheless, pathfinding dissenters will put their "pragmatic imaginations" to work in order to create "alternative ways for the bridging of the gap between the Gospel and cultures."⁹⁹ Second generation pathfinding dissenters will detach themselves from antiquated methods of Korean American ministry and will repudiate the mediocre.¹⁰⁰ They will not uncritically adopt Korean or American models of ministry, but rather they will become innovators who create cutting edge resources for their bi-cultural second generation Korean American situation "by offering new ways of viewing issues or by putting them into [ethnic and cultural] contexts that we did not previously think possible."¹⁰¹ Pathfinding dissenters of Korean American heritage would serve on the front lines of ministry and thereby battle social and political injustices. They will be congregational members who are actively coming to terms with their bi-cultural and liminal situation. Korean American pathfinding dissenters would identify with the Korean American socio-religious experience but also exhibit optimism in forming dialogical friendships and relationships with those outside their ethnic circles and comfort zones. They will be Christians who seek to live out "radical Gospel values."¹⁰²

The road of authority and pathfinding dissenters is not exempt from privation and sacrifice. The task of being "radically creative in ministry"¹⁰³ necessitates a high degree of interdependency and patience. As Arbuckle writes, "Collaborative leadership is generally very messy, because it is a human activity involving cultural change, and the personalities, emotions and quirks of many creative people."¹⁰⁴ Thus, it involves adept listening skills and placing one's neighbor ahead of the self.¹⁰⁵ It may entail relinquishing personal hopes and dreams for the sake of a unified church body. Dissenters should also be willing to handle criticism from opposing forces.¹⁰⁶ For some second generation Korean American young adults, it may also involve abandoning the cultural desires of first generation immigrant parents who have alternative agendas for their lives. Lastly, this important responsibility will necessitate a "critical and evaluative interaction with the world of today,"¹⁰⁷ and "an acknowledgement of our own powerlessness to act without the Lord."¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Preaching to a transitional, liminal second generation Korean American context has myriad challenges that are both visible and murky. This article has merely touched the surface of complexity involved in preaching contextually to bi-cultural second generation congregants. However, as Korean American preachers begin to engage second generation Korean American listeners' chaotic and liminal experiences, ethnicity, and culture, they will fuel their hearers toward a radical Christian existence as they understand that being bi-cultural has intangible qualities that will enable them to bring scores of fellow Korean Americans and others to an intimate relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. May we be able to say and act with confidence that the homiletical task before us is indeed worth the effort.

Notes

1. Matthew D. Kim, "Preaching to Second Generation Korean Americans: Towards a Possible Selves Contextual Homiletic," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2006.
2. The United States Census for 2000 indicates that there are now 1,072,682 Americans of purely Korean ethnic descent or 10.5 percent of the total Asian American population. See the U.S. government census website at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf>
3. Questionnaires and semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 24 second generation Korean American congregations in the United States (i.e., 8 on the East Coast; 8 in the Midwest; and 8 on the West Coast).
4. Tae-Ju Moon, "The Korean American Dream and the Blessings of Hananim (God)," *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, eds. Aida Besancon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 232.
5. First generation Korean Americans will be defined as foreign-born Koreans who immigrated to the United States after the age of eighteen. Members of the first generation prefer to speak in the Korean language and tend to retain Korean culture rather than embrace American culture.
6. Typically the term "bi-cultural" used in an Asian American setting refers to "those who maintain, and move freely in, both Asian and American cultural spheres." Although this definition is valid, this study will define bi-cultural individuals as those whose identity and values are shaped by two disparate cultures. See Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 215.
7. Second generation Korean Americans are Americans of Korean ethnic descent either born in the United States or who emigrated from Korea before the age of five whose primary cultural affinity is American and whose primary spoken language is English.
8. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), 113-118; Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1969), 94-203.
9. Documents of the Second Vatican Council can be found in Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Talbot, 1975).
10. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993), 3-4.

11. People will consent to the cultural status quo in its present form.
12. Cultural symbols are disrupted or challenged during Stage 2 which causes either a sense of nostalgia for earlier periods or produces a fear of identity change.
13. Attempts are made to immobilize previous legislative and structural changes due to feelings of tension or apprehension. Others may seek to initiate further change in legislation in hopes that these alterations will assuage the current circumstances.
14. During Stage 4, chaos erupts because legislative amendments must be accompanied by "attitudinal conversion or adjustment." By chaos, Arbuckle simply denotes a culture's disintegration of meaning systems such as symbols, myths, and rituals which then instigates feelings of insecurity and uncertainty among participants. Arbuckle does not employ the term "chaos" in a pejorative way. Rather he believes that "chaos (if rightly used) can be the catalyst for enormous personal and group growth." Descriptors of chaos may include a range of elements such as: culture/individual identity disintegration; grieving; loss of hope; sense of drifting without purpose or 'lostness'; anger or denial; depression; individualism; faction feuding or labeling; orthodoxy witch-hunting; and the fear of the unknown intensifies. To make the point clear, however, all of these chaotic descriptors may not inhabit any individual simultaneously.
15. The term "liminality," first coined by Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and later extrapolated by anthropologist Victor Turner, is an important anthropological concept that involves the transitional moment that cultures experience when tensions or chaos arise in their communal structure. In other words, chaos and liminality form two sides of the same coin. Whereas liminality is the anthropological description of the objective, outward situation of in-betweenness, chaos is the inner experience that illuminates the liminal condition. Arbuckle indicates two plausible options that emerge in response to cultural chaos: the conversionist perspective seeks to find alternative or creative methods for moving beyond liminality, while the escapist option forces members to retreat back to former patterns out of their need for comfort.
16. Only those organizations or cultures that come to terms with chaos will later be able to create new avenues for cultural change and achieve a new cultural consensus or integration.
17. Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14 (1987): 327.
18. Pyong Gap Min, "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States," *International Migration Review* 26 (1992): 1372.
19. Peter T. Cha, "Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches: Second-Generation Korean American Experiences," *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, eds. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 145.
20. Sharon Kim, "Replanting Sacred Spaces: The Emergence of Second Generation Korean American Churches," diss., University of Southern California, 2003, 28.
21. Karen J. Chai, "Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church," *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, eds. R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple, 1998), 298.
22. Kil Jae Park, "Body, Identity, and Ministry: Toward a Practical Theology of the Body which can Inform the Formation of Korean American identity and the Practice of Korean American Family Ministry," diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003, 142.
23. S. Steve Kang, "Reflection upon Methodology: Research on Themes of Self Construction and Self Integration in the Narrative of Second Generation Korean American Young Adults," *Religious Education* 96 (2001): 408-409.
24. Jason Hyungkyun Kim, "The Effects of Assimilation within the Korean Immigrant Church: Intergenerational Conflicts between the First and the Second Generation Korean Christians in Two Chicago Suburban Churches," diss., Trinity International University, 1999, 138.
25. Eui Hang Shin and Hyung Park, "An Analysis of Causes of Schisms in Ethnic Churches: The Case of Korean-American Churches," *Sociological Analysis* 49 (1988): 234-248.
26. Pyong Gap Min, "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States," *International Migration Review* 26 (1992): 1370-1371.
27. Karen J. Chai, "Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean

- Protestant Church," *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigrants*, eds. R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple, 1998), 304.
28. Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research," *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (1990): 502.
 29. Although 41 percent of second generation questionnaire respondents report that they think about their ethnic identity often or very often and 61 percent feel that ethnic identity is a significant topic that should be discussed in their congregations, 49.5 percent of these informants indicate that their second generation English Ministries discuss ethnic identity issues rarely or not at all.
 30. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore, eds., *Korean American Ministry* (Louisville: General Assembly Council PCUSA, 1987), 233.
 31. Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14 (1987): 323.
 32. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore, eds., *Korean American Ministry* (Louisville: General Assembly Council PCUSA, 1987), 233.
 33. Helen Lee, "Silent Exodus," *Christianity Today* 12 Aug. 1996: 53.
 34. Some English Ministries require financial support from the first generation which empowers immigrant church leaders to retain their decision-making authority over the second generation. See Nak-In Kim, "A Model Ministry to Transitional and Second Generation Korean-Americans," diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1991, 103.
 35. Michael H. Truong, "Race and Religion: Why Do Second-Generation Korean American Christians Attend a Korean Church?" diss., University of California, San Diego, 2000, 1; Sujeong Kim, "Identity, Difference, and Power: The Construction of Identities among Second-Generation Korean Americans," diss., University of California, San Diego, 2003, 135-138.
 36. Robert D. Goette, "The Transformation of a First-Generation Church into a Bicultural Second-Generation Church," *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, eds. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 125-140. Among Korean American pastors in this research, 10 out of 24 expressed some interest in becoming multiethnic or pan-Asian American ministries.
 37. Specifically, some interview respondents explained that the use of Korean language is frowned upon within their second generation English Ministries as well as incorporating humor that excludes non-Korean congregants.
 38. Astonishingly, 90 out of 101 questionnaire respondents indicate service in one ministry function within their congregation. 50 out of 101 respondents participate in more than one ministry capacity.
 39. Interviews with Pastor Ben, Pastor Francis, Pastor Isaiah, Pastor Landon, Pastor Perry, Pastor Todd, Pastor Vince, and Pastor Warner.
 40. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993), 45.
 41. Interviews with Beth, Gail, Tobias, and Ulysses.
 42. Interviews with Pastor Ben, Pastor Chad, and Pastor Ross.
 43. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), 141.
 44. Young Lee Hertig, *Cultural Tug of War: The Korean Immigrant Family and Church in Transition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 12.
 45. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993), 44.
 46. Kelly H. Chong, "What it means to be Christian: the role of religion in the construction of ethnic identity and boundary among second-generation Korean Americans," *Sociology of Religion* 59 (1998): 259-286.
 47. Matthew D. Kim, "Asian American Preaching," *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*, eds. Craig Brian Larson and Haddon W. Robinson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 200-204.
 48. Pyong Gap Min, "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the

- United States," *International Migration Review* 26 (1992): 1385.
49. Min, 1384.
 50. Unyong Kim, rev. of *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation*, by Jung Young Lee, *Interpretation* 52 (1998): 222.
 51. Jung Young Lee, *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 22-38.
 52. Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Preaching the Presence of God: A Homiletic from an Asian American Perspective* (Judson: Fortress, 1999), 33-42.
 53. Sung-Bae Park, "The Impact of Buddhism on the Axiological System Underlying Korean Culture," *Religions in Korea: Beliefs and Cultural Values*, eds. Earl H. Phillips and Eui-Young Yu (Los Angeles: Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, 1982), 83.
 54. Naomi P. F. Southard, "Recovery and Rediscovered Images: Spiritual Resources for Asian American Women," *Asia Journal of Theology* 3 (1989): 625.
 55. In-Gyeong Kim Lundell, *Bridging the Gaps: Contextualization Among Korean Nazarene Churches in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 54.
 56. Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2000), 34.
 57. In-Gyeong Kim Lundell, *Bridging the Gaps: Contextualization Among Korean Nazarene Churches in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 57.
 58. Nak-In Kim, "A Model Ministry to Transitional and Second Generation Korean-Americans," diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1991, 50-51.
 59. Chenyang Li, ed., *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender* (Chicago: Carus, 2000), 1.
 60. Pyong Gap Min, *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 26.
 61. Byung Moon Kang and Cameron Lee, "Differentiation of Self and Generational Differences in the Korean Immigrant Church," *Family Ministry* 14 (2000): 23.
 62. Man Ja Choi, "Feminine Images of God in Korean Traditional Religion," *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 81.
 63. Yunshik Chang, "Shamanism as Folk Existentialism," *Religions in Korea: Beliefs and Cultural Values*, eds. Earl H. Phillips and Eui-Young Yu (Los Angeles: Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, 1982), 27.
 64. Jung Young Lee, *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 31.
 65. Tae-Ju Moon, "The Korean American Dream and the Blessings of Hananim (God)," *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, eds. Aida Besancon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 238, 242.
 66. In-Gyeong Kim Lundell, *Bridging the Gaps: Contextualization Among Korean Nazarene Churches in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 43-48.
 67. Jung Young Lee, *Korean Preaching: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 77.
 68. Timothy S. Warren, rev. of *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation*, by Jung Young Lee, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 381.
 69. Soo-Chan Steve Kang, "Unveiling the Socioculturally Constructed Multivoiced Self: Themes of Self-Construction and Self-Integration in the Narratives of Second-Generation Korean American Young Adults," diss., Northwestern University, 2001, 1.
 70. Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans* (Westport: Greenwood, 1998), 83-84.
 71. Pyong Gap Min, ed., *The Second Generation: Ethnic Identity Among Asian Americans* (Walnut Creek: Altamira, 2002), 2.
 72. Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans* (Westport: Greenwood, 1998) 84.
 73. Kwang Chung Kim, R. Stephen Warner, and Ho-Youn Kwon, "Korean American Religion in International Perspective," *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, eds. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 13.
 74. Timothy C. Tennent, "Evangelical Preaching in the Global Context," *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 199.
 75. Reuel L. Howe, *Partners in Preaching: Clergy and Laity in Dialogue* (New York: Seabury, 1967),

- 31.
76. Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 80.
 77. George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 23-24.
 78. For other helpful identity development models, refer to Donald R. Atkinson, George Morten, and Derald W. Sue, *Counseling American Minorities* (Dubuque: Brown, 1983); William Cross, "The Thomas and Cross Models of Psychological Nigrescence: A Literature Review," *Journal of Black Psychology* 4 (1978): 13-31; James E. Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966): 551-558.
 79. Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research," *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (1990): 503.
 80. Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 9.
 81. Andrew Sung Park, 9.
 82. In addition to Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism, Jung Ha Kim also mentions the influence of Taoism on Korean culture. See Jung Ha Kim, "Cartography of Korean American Protestant Faith Communities in the United States," *Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities*, eds. Pyong Gap Min and Jung Ha Kim (Walnut Creek: Altamira, 2002), 186.
 83. Kelly H. Chong, "What it means to be Christian: The role of religion in the construction of ethnic identity and boundary among second-generation Korean Americans," *Sociology of Religion* 59 (1998): 271; Elaine Howard Ecklund, "Models of Civic Responsibility: Korean Americans in Congregations with Different Ethnic Compositions," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44 (2005): 19-20.
 84. I am aware that the idea of preachers as dissenters or visionaries is not new but has a very long tradition. For helpful historical overviews of dissenting preachers, see Paul Scott Wilson, *A Concise History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992); and O. C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).
 85. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993), 6.
 86. Thomas H. Troeger, *Preaching While the Church is Under Reconstruction: The Visionary Role of Preachers in a Fragmented World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 17.
 87. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993), 6. Esther Reed has written a helpful book on the subject of authority and its relation to the discipline of Christian ethics. Like Arbuckle, Reed defines authority as being more creative than insistent: "while the word authority is today readily associated with the power to enforce obedience, to influence action or belief, it has additional associations with 'authoring' and 'increasing,' 'initiating' and 'establishing.'" See Esther D. Reed, *The Genesis of Ethics: On the Authority of God as the Origin of Christian Ethics* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), 3.
 88. Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 246.
 89. Eslinger, 248.
 90. Paul Scott Wilson, "Beyond Narrative: Imagination in the Sermon," *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred B. Craddock*, eds. Gail R. O'Day and Thomas G. Long (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 136.
 91. Thomas H. Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 27.
 92. Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 15; David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 405-445.
 93. Hilkert, 192.
 94. Hilkert, 15.
 95. Hilkert, 15.
 96. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993) 7.

97. Arbuckle, 211.
98. Arbuckle, 6.
99. Arbuckle, 7.
100. Arbuckle, 7.
101. Arbuckle, 113.
102. Arbuckle, 9.
103. Arbuckle, 1.
104. Arbuckle, 202-203.
105. Susan Hedahl describes the act of listening as a theological activity which is a salient component to church life for both ordained and lay ministers alike. See Susan K. Hedahl, *Listening Ministry: Rethinking Pastoral Leadership* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 48.
106. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Chapman, 1993) 114.
107. Arbuckle, 7.
108. Arbuckle, 222.

The Future of Preaching? An Initial Exploration of Preaching in the Emerging Church

by Nicholas G. Gatzke

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Introduction

What is in store for the practice of preaching as the Western World moves towards becoming a post-Christian society? Over the past ten years the Emerging Church Movement has slowly come to the attention of those in the wider church. Much has been written to promote their ideas about ministry in the postmodern context. There has also been a lot written by way of critique of this movement. Before discussing the broader movement, an attempt at a definition is in order.

What is the Emerging Church? Certainly this question has been hotly debated. The Emerging Church has been quite difficult to define for a number of reasons. First, it is still emerging and not yet in a set, coherent form. Second, the figures involved come from a variety of backgrounds. Educationally, the movement contains people trained in Evangelical schools, Mainline schools, Anglican schools, transdenominational schools and people who have no formal theological training but have studied philosophy, literature, or some other discipline. Moreover, many of the movement's key figures are reacting against their individual perceptions of what the "modern" church is. They carry with them a variety of personal experiences that have attracted them to the Emerging Church.¹ Furthermore, many figures within the Emerging Church have different ideas about how to define postmodernism, different ideas about epistemology (Foundationalist, Modest Foundationalist, Nonfoundationalist), different ideas about the philosophy of

language and theories of truth (Correspondence Theory, Coherence Theory), and some may have entered into the conversation without any opinions about some of the philosophical implications of postmodern thought. After an initial investigation it is not hard to see why the Emerging Church Movement is difficult to define. However, as recent as the past year, work has been done that has allowed us to get a handle on a general definition of this movement.

A handful of helpful definitions now exist. For example, Brian McLaren loosely identifies Emerging Churches as follows:

It is a group of people who are trying to put together two things that have been apart. One of them is a fidelity to the Christian message, and a real concern about it actually being lived out in practice. And we're saying you can't have one without the other.²

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger offer a reasonable definition of the movement. They state:

Emerging Churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses nine practices. Emerging Churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.³

Missiologist Ed Stetzer has provided a helpful description of the various groups with different theological perspectives within the Emerging Church. He believes there are three distinct categories: the *Relevants*, *Reconstructionists* and *Revisionists*. The *Relevants* are those who are attempting to equip their churches to minister in forms that postmoderns can understand. They are often people

with deep theological roots who hold many values that the Evangelical community would affirm. The *Reconstructionists* are those who believe that the current church model is irrelevant to those in the emerging culture. They embrace "incarnational" or "house" models of church. They are reacting to the church trends of the past 20 years and have questioned why America is less churched today that it was two decades ago. The *Revisionists* are those who question a variety of theological issues such as the reality of hell, the nature of the Scripture, the substitutionary atonement, etc. They tie many of our current Christian doctrines to Enlightenment ideology and therefore see a need to rethink the gospel and what it means for our present context. They often are re-engaging in classic theological debates between liberals and conservatives.⁴ It should be noted that some Emerging Church folks reject this broad description because they do not see themselves in any one of these three categories.

The point is this: the Emerging Church Movement is a complex and diverse group of people and fellowships. They are a sundry assortment of people who primarily agree on missional living and the fact that Christians need to alter our ministry strategy because we now live in a different cultural context than we did 20 years ago. They come from an array of theological perspectives and therefore it would be impossible to make specific statements about how preaching is practiced and apply them to the entire movement. This would ultimately prove to be inaccurate and unproductive. However, if one is able to make some general observations about preaching within the movement while recognizing the diversity therein, it could help the reader engage in further exploration and examination of preaching within the Emerging Church. That is what this article intends to do.

Is Preaching Practiced in Emerging Churches?

Emerging Churches practice a variety of worship forms. In some Emerging Churches a form of preaching is included at every gathering. In others, preaching is practiced sporadically. In some,

preaching is rarely or never practiced because it is viewed as a modern way of communication and incompatible with postmodern sensibilities. Instead, some Emerging groups have explored forms of alternative worship (or alt.worship). These are often experience-based activities that are designed for an individual encounter with God. Some alternative worship activities include worship raves, stations designed for prayer and meditation, and a variety of art activities such as painting and drawing and worship labyrinths.⁵ Many of these activities are employed to communicate the message of the Bible in a non-linear fashion through experience and self-expression.⁶

What do Emerging Churches Believe about Preaching?

With such a wide variety of people and churches within the Emerging Movement, one inevitably finds a plethora of opinions about preaching. One Emerging leader writes, "preaching is invariably dull. It is boring...we're stuck in a time warp."⁷ Another Emerging pastor states that the sermon "is often a violent act...It's violence toward the will of people who have to sit there and take it."⁸ Conversely, yet another Emerging leader asserts that preaching "is a central and critical part of our mission, and we cannot push it to the sidelines in the emerging church...The emerging church needs to elevate public reading, preaching, and teaching."⁹

Clearly one's view of the Scripture directly influences how one will approach the proclamation of God's Word. It is not surprising, then, to find a variety of approaches to the Bible within the Emerging Church movement. A survey of a number of websites for Emerging Churches shows that some fellowships clearly communicate their beliefs about the nature of Scripture. One would find such phrases as the Scriptures are "inspired by God and are therefore completely trustworthy" and "the Bible is the final authority on all matters to which it speaks."¹⁰ Mars Hill in Seattle, Washington, believes that the Holy Scriptures are the "verbally inspired word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed."¹¹

Emerging Church leader Doug Pagitt writes of the Bible being an authoritative member in the Christian community. The Bible speaks for itself on a number of issues and it should be listened to. However, when it is used in a traditional preaching model it simply becomes "God's declaration of how things are" and "a cold, dead record of the past." Instead, Pagitt argues that the community should engage with the Bible in dialogue in an attempt to learn from it and learn from each other.¹²

Other churches give a more general description of their beliefs of Scripture without making precise theological statements. For example, Ecclesia in Houston, Texas, states, "We embrace the Scripture as God's primary instrument by which He introduces this message to the world."¹³ A number of significant Emerging leaders state that they "love, have confidence in, seek to obey, and strive accurately to teach the sacred Scriptures."¹⁴ Other churches make no statement about the Scripture at all. Rather, they communicate their values instead of their beliefs or they cite one of the classic creeds.¹⁵ Finally, some Emerging Churches are tied to denominations and therefore adopt the doctrinal statement of their respective denominations.

Without doubt, this is not the place to dive into a discussion about a theology of preaching in an attempt to interact with the various views of preaching and the Bible that some in the Emerging Church proffer. However, it is important to recognize that within the Emerging Church is found a wide variety of beliefs about preaching and about the Scriptures. These beliefs directly influence the place that preaching has in various congregations and the methods and forms that the ministers employ in the crafting and delivery of the message.

Some General Observations about Preaching in the Emerging Church

Despite the fact that it would not be helpful to attempt engagement in the detailed analysis of the preaching of such a diverse group of congregations, some general observations about preaching in the

Emerging Church can be made. These observations can be most aptly explored when broken down into three categories: (1) Narrative, (2) Dialogue, and (3) Experience.

Narrative

Within Emerging preaching there is a significant emphasis on narrative. To clarify, Emerging leaders have written about the importance of narrative in two different ways. First, Emerging leaders place emphasis on "God's story." God's story is a way of describing His involvement in human history. It begins at creation and continues into the present day. His story is preserved in the Scriptures; however, the story has not ended with the closing of the canon. Simply put, God's story is a story about the world.¹⁶

Christian ministry should flow out of God's story.¹⁷ Therefore, a goal of Christian ministry is to take the stories of the individuals in the congregation and the story of the community, and relate those stories to God's story.¹⁸ As a result, the preacher becomes one who proclaims God's story and leads the congregants to see their own stories within God's story.¹⁹

The second emphasis on narrative flows from the first. Because many Emerging leaders see culture, history, and Christianity in terms of story, some propose that the sermon contains a large number of stories. In the handful of preaching articles available from Emerging leaders the message is clear: Use More Stories! Emerging leaders believe that these stories are ways to involve the congregation and communicate in a non-linear, non-propositional fashion.²⁰

Dialogue

A second general observation that can be made about much of Emerging preaching is the importance of dialogue. The primary preaching text to come out of the Emerging church thus far, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, proposes what Doug Pagitt calls "Progressional Dialogue." Pagitt reacts against "speaching," his term

for traditional, monological preaching because the idea that the pastor can see "all the complexities of the Bible reeks of arrogance."²¹ Instead, communication of the Bible should take place in the interpretative community-the church-rather than from the pastor. This happens through give-and-take dialogue with the use of provisional language so that nobody's opinion is eliminated.²² The authority of the message, then, rests within the collective of the people, not with the pastor and not with the individuals.²³

Not everyone within the Emerging Church agrees that the sermon should primarily consist of dialogue. However, a review of the preaching of some Emerging pastors shows that dialogue and verbal audience participation is often incorporated into the sermon. This dialogue often comes in the form of the preacher asking for verbal responses to specific questions in an attempt to fostering congregational involvement.²⁴

Experience

A third observation about some Emerging preaching is that a priority in crafting the sermon is to create an experience. As previously mentioned, some Emerging churches supplant the sermon completely with a variety of activities that foster experiences. However, in many churches that practice preaching, the preacher attempts to foster an encounter with God.²⁵ Perhaps this is best illustrated in Leonard Sweet's EPIC model of ministry (Experiential, Participatory, Image Driven, Connected).²⁶ To accomplish the goal of creating an experience the preacher attempts to engage all five of the human senses.²⁷ He also employs the use of images and art as a means of non-linear communication.²⁸ Furthermore, the preacher uses the aforementioned methods of narrative and dialogue to aid in the forming of the experience.

An Extension of the New Homiletic?

The general observations of some of Emerging preaching prioritizing *narrative*, *dialogue* and *experience* as key components of the sermon causes one to think back to another movement in

preaching that valued the same components in the sermon: The New Homiletic. This poses the question: Is some of the preaching going on in the Emerging Church simply the New Homiletic reborn? Although this article will not be able to investigate fully such a multifaceted question, some similarities and differences can be clearly identified.

Perhaps the best way to explain the connection between the New Homiletic and some Emerging preaching is that their values are indeed very similar, but their methods in showing those values are not. Clearly, one can see the priorities of *narrative* in the work of Eugene Lowry and Charles Rice.²⁹ The priority of *experience* within the New Homiletic is shown in David Randolph's emphasis on the sermon as an event and focus on what the text has to say "anew" to the congregants,³⁰ Lowry's goal of evocation of experience,³¹ and the clear praise from contemporary New Homileticians that it is "the creation of an experience in which both speaker and audience are co-participants in an event of understanding that marks the productive unity of this paradigm shift in homiletic method."³² Furthermore, the priority of *dialogue* is most explicitly demonstrated in Lucy Atkinson Rose's "conversational preaching"³³ and Fred Craddock's attempt at inaudible dialogue through his inductive method.³⁴

There is a striking correlation between the values of the New Homiletic and some of those within the Emerging Church. The way these values are displayed in practice, however, can be quite different, especially with regard to dialogue and experience. Where members of the New Homiletic attempt to engage the congregants in inaudible dialogue through sermon form, movement, provisional language and presenting various points of view, some members of the Emerging Church take it a step further—they foster audible dialogue. Instead of conversational preaching, they have actual conversation and solicit various points of view to contribute to meaning. Where some New Homileticians attempt to evoke experience through narrative plot form, stories or a phenomenological approach, some Emerging preachers use visual

aids, art, silence, sounds, smells and even tastes to create an experience. When asked about the concerns and values of some Emerging preachers, Fred Craddock himself recognized the similarities. He stated that many of their concerns sound like what was happening in the 1960s when he wrote *As One Without Authority*.³⁵

Despite the differences in sermon form between Emerging preachers and New Homileticians, the correlations in values are so clear that one cannot help but wonder if some Emerging preachers (knowingly or unknowingly) actually function as extensions of the New Homiletic in the present day. A more detailed analysis would need to take place to draw a firm conclusion. However, if this is the case, their preaching will likely carry many of the same benefits and many of the same liabilities as the various forms within the New Homiletic. Recent work in homiletics has explored these benefits and liabilities.³⁶

Conclusion

What is the future of preaching in the Western world as we enter a post-Christian society? Has the Emerging Church movement given us a viable option to move forward? The values of narrative, dialogue and experience that many hold within the movement resonate with many preachers. After all, what preacher does not recognize that God chose to reveal himself in vast amounts of Scripture in narrative form? What preacher wants his or her sermons to be lectures rather than meaningful interaction? What preacher does not want people to encounter God through the His Word that is preached?

The jury is out. If Emerging preachers can continue to hold these values without getting trapped in the pitfalls that many New Homileticians have experienced, then there is hope. If they can still hold to these values while engaging in solid exegesis of the Scriptures, clear development of Biblical theology, practical and direct teaching on moral and ethical issues while holding line

against the relativistic tendencies of postmodernity, they may succeed in being a long-lasting voice. If, above all, they can preach the whole message of the Bible in a well-rounded, robust fashion and thereby give their congregants a lens through which this culture can be viewed, then lasting transformation may occur. If, however, they fall into the trap that many New Homileticians have by focusing too much on method instead of content and by relegating the Bible's authority to the listener, they may share the same fate that many churches in mainline denominations who have adopted the New Homiletic are now experiencing. Time will tell what course they will take. Only time will tell what comes forth from preaching in the Emerging Church.

Notes

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Training for the Sound of the Sermon: Orality and the use of an Oral Text in Oral Format

by Adrian Lane

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**How do your sermons sound?
And why are so many sermons so difficult to listen to?**

The problem

Much good attention has been given of late to the sermon's *content*, with the commitment to faithful exegesis of the text, to understanding the text in its Biblical context, and to thinking through the ramifications of the text for the preacher and the sermon's audience. Much good attention has also been given to the *form* or shape of the sermon, with the recognition that different Biblical genres call for a variety of shapes, as do different audiences, places and purposes, and with the recognition that preachers, in the Spirit's power, will each be gifted differently and will thus bring a unique creativity to their sermon. In particular, the integration of learnings from the study of narrative and narrative form has complimented the traditional commitment to propositional forms. Not as much attention has, however, been given to the *sound* of the sermon. On reflection, this is strange, given that sermons are primarily an oral medium, for the ear. Moreover, despite the plethora of preaching texts written in the last few decades, there is a notable shortage of accessible resources to train student preachers for this aspect of homiletical practice, which encompasses far more than "delivery" or "the use of the voice."¹

Many preachers spend hours labouring at their content and its form. However, the value of this work is often lost - at least for the hearers - because the sermon is so difficult to listen to. At a basic

level, there may be projection, diction or other voice issues, such as a lack of voice variety. The sermon may lack appropriate variety in its choice of words, or its conceptual or emotional pace. The sermon may sound read. It may be too dense, making it hard for listeners to determine that which is primary, and that which is secondary, or supportive. Key concepts may thus be lost within a forest of ideas. Greater variety of genre may be required in the sermon - we have all heard sermons that are desperately needing an illustration or application to break up their propositional load. Or it may be impossible for the listener to discern clear relationships between ideas, because conjunctions are not stated plainly enough for the oral context. Or confusion may arise through word juxtaposition which is inappropriate in the oral context, or through the use of homophones, whose variant meanings are obvious in a visual text. Lack of clarity may also come from inappropriate pausing and expression. Distraction and frustration thus occurs. The sermon is endured, rather than engaged with. In all this, memorability is not helped. Indeed, the hard work of listening and responding is made all the harder by the preacher's insensitivity, for whatever reason, to the nature of listening. Thus the sermon's usefulness falls far short of what could or should be achieved.

Some complicating issues

The problem of oral-aural clarity is exacerbated for the trainee preacher, who on entering theological education is required to learn a number of new "languages." In the first instance, the student has to learn to write essays and exams. Essays need to conform to a sophisticated format. For many, even those with undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, this is a new and challenging task. Of course this process is designed to train students in careful thinking, but it can also have the serious side-effect of training students out of oral communication skills or, more commonly, causing them to mix essay and oral modes. In essay mode, for instance, students use different *words* from oral mode, and are specifically discouraged from using idiom, or the full range of the vernacular. Similarly, in essay mode, students use different *constructions* in grammar and

syntax to oral mode. In essay mode, sentences can be much longer and more complicated. Principal clauses can more easily occur at the end of a sentence, as can its subject. Repetition and summative material is not required as often, as the eye can read at its own pace and return to previous points for clarification and reminder. Furthermore, in essay mode there are numerous visual clues to facilitate communication: notably the words themselves in clear standard form, together with punctuation, headings, spaces, varying fonts and font sizes, italics and underlining. With the vast bulk of learning and assessment instruments in theological education in essay mode, how can students maintain and develop able oral communication skills?

In addition to learning "essay" language, many students on entering theological education also learn other languages. This may be a Biblical or related language, a language required for theological study, such as English, French, Spanish or German, or a language for future ministry. Naturally this process has numerous advantages. However, one significant disadvantage for the future homiletics student is that in order to prove one's ability in translation, students learn to give a particularly precise, even wooden, translation. This may be far from idiomatic, even though it may demonstrate an exact understanding of case, tense or voice. While not necessarily inappropriate in translation exercises, this woodenness can easily transfer to the sermon, particularly in the use of certain words, phrases and constructions, such as those beginning with "for," "which" or "in order that."

A related difficulty is the lack of understanding and appreciation of *orality*. The literate nature of much Western culture can mislead us into overlooking or neglecting its many oral aspects. A highly literate society need not preclude an appreciation for oral messages and ability in their delivery. For instance, considerable care is given in the Australian context to speeches delivered at Anzac or Remembrance Day services. Sports commentary has grown into an extremely sophisticated genre, especially on the radio. Cricket, racing and four codes of football commentary are highly developed

oral art forms, requiring skill in their delivery and in their understanding! Theatre and comedy flourish, with major festivals and competitions. And at a popular level, there is great respect and enjoyment of the able story or joke-teller. On the other hand, it is very easy in the Australian context for oral communication to cross a line and be considered inappropriately "high-brow," probably reflecting our historical sensitivity to class issues. Training in oral communication in secondary schools is often marginal - for the enthusiast, and at tertiary level is only found in highly specialised professional courses, usually in performance studies. These mixed messages: a respect for certain oral forms of communication, yet a caution towards it and an ignorance regarding its delivery and appreciation can transfer to an uneasiness and diffidence in the homiletics student when considering the sound of the sermon.²

Related to the above is a lack of conviction about the oral medium *per se*. Commentators such as Postman have alerted us to the highly pervasive influence of television in transforming many aspects of society, including news, politics, teaching and religion into entertainment, with a strong emphasis on the visual.³ As a result, there appears to be a loss of confidence by some in the power and effectiveness of the spoken word alone. This has led, for instance, to sermons necessarily accompanied by pew sheet outlines with a range of visuals.⁴ It has also led to complex arrangements of sermons with PowerPoint presentations which include both text and non-text visuals.⁵

There can be little doubt that Western culture has been significantly influenced by the movement from text-based mass media such as newspapers to image-based mass media, such as television and film. This is seen in both the content of the media and its form. An example of this is the movement in content and form of newspapers away from text oriented formats to magazine formats, with a significantly higher proportion of illustrations, photographs and graphics. With the continuing increase occasioned by technology in the number and variety of forms of mass media it will be interesting to see how the balance between text, aural and

image based media changes in ensuing years. This balance will no doubt change in terms of frequency of use, impact and effect on content and form. However, when considering the movement from text based to image based mass media, it is easy to suggest "the death of the book" or the newspaper without recognising the rise of other text based mass media, such as the internet, email and text messaging, which in some cases have made the written word more accessible, or used. In other words, the written word continues to influence, albeit in a different form.

Furthermore, what seems to be often lost in the above debate is the ongoing influence of sound, including the spoken word. Television and film remain highly reliant on words and other sounds. The foretold death of radio remains a major unfulfilled prophecy and the power of music is extraordinarily significant culturally.⁶ Even the ubiquitous computer makes sounds! In fact, while it is true Westerners live in screen-filled visual cultures, they also live in noisy ones, with many competing voices! Webb argues that one of the main reasons for the continuing influence of sound is the pre-eminent intimacy of sound over the visual, since hearing, in contrast to sight, "establishes a more intimate relationship between source and perception."⁷ Compare, for example, the difference between flashing lights and sirens; between a picture and a tune; between seeing someone and talking with them. The implications of this are very significant, and call for the Christian communicator to think long and hard about appropriate means of Christian communication.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that we are not "captive to culture." Jesus' commission to his followers to be salt and light calls on us to critique culture, to often stand against it, to transform it, and to provide new ways forward. Our Biblical and theological heritage alerts us to the amazing power of God's creative, sustaining and transformative word.⁸ This heritage should also make us cautious about the image, which has so often failed to communicate, or even worse, been misunderstood, especially when unaccompanied by words.⁹ Thus, while being alert and sensitive to

the visual aspects of our culture, particularly in our evangelism and in our understanding of how worldviews and behaviours are formed, we need to remind ourselves of the enduring power and presence of the spoken and written word. In particular, we need to remind ourselves of the enduring power and presence of the spoken and written word of God, notably in the creation and sustaining of the world, and in its future re-creation; in the creation, transformation and glorification of the church; and, as part of that work, in our own re-creation, transformation and glorification. This word may have come to us in its written inscripturated form, or through preaching, or by some other means, such as in conversation or in a dream.¹⁰

Not all, however, can identify a transformative experience in their lives occasioned by the word of God through preaching. Not only, then, do trainee preachers need to think through the theological issues related to the power and place of God's word, spoken and written, they also need to *experience* transformation through able proclamation of that word. Good preaching is infectious - we long to come under its sound again, and we long for those whom we love to come under its sound. And some of us dare to hope that we might be used of God to preach effectively. But bad preaching leads to a disillusionment, to a seeking of other ways, to sleeping in, and to a half-heartedness, a "prove-it" attitude towards the preaching class.

Unfortunately, too, not all students have had the experience of seeing congregations and communities transformed through the preached word of God, or have the faith to believe that this could happen, even though church and missions history is replete with such examples.

A way forward

If greater attention is to be given to the sound of the sermon by preachers and trainee preachers, then students will need to be alerted to the different "languages" they are learning during theological study, and the particular purpose of each. Furthermore, students should be encouraged, in the great Reformed tradition, to

speak in the vernacular to their audiences, or, perhaps more appropriately, in a style sometimes termed "high conversation". The goal is for "natural, honest, enlivened speech."¹¹ An understanding and appreciation of orality and its place in the culture they seek to serve will also be needed, notwithstanding the fact that that culture may also be highly literate. Students will also need to think carefully about the place of the spoken and written word in relation to the visual image. To what extent is it pre-eminent and determinative? In particular, the Biblical truths about the creative, sustaining and transformative power of the spoken and written word of God need to be wrestled with. Is it pre-eminent and determinative? And if so, how is that word of God to be communicated to His world? Through preachers, as Paul asserts in Romans 10:8-15? If the preacher is to have confidence in preaching per se, these Biblical claims need to be believed and owned before the preacher can explore their own giftedness in preaching and come to a place of confidence in exercising this ministry. Finally, all preachers need to experience Spirit-empowered preaching which is personally transformative and transformative of communities, if this foundational ministry of the word is to be passed on to ensuing generations. Such sermons give attention to how they are heard. The preacher recognises that the sermon is an oral-aural event, and so attends to the sermon's sound, for the sake of the listener, for the sake of the church, and for God's glory.

The Value and Importance of Attending to the Sound of the Sermon

Attention to the sound of the sermon will not necessarily guarantee a good sermon. Good sermons require good content, good form and good delivery, and it is the sum of the interaction between content, form and delivery which will determine the sermon's ultimate sound. However, attention to the sound of the sermon will generally be a mark of a good sermon. Furthermore, it will significantly help in making the sermon effective, through the Spirit's enabling.

Since the sound of the sermon is determined by the interactive sum

of the sermon's content, form and delivery, attention to the sound of the sermon will have implications for each of these three areas. Firstly, and interestingly, it will influence and aid the preacher in the *preparation of content*. In the oral context, speech units - the words between breaths - cannot be long. Ideas need to be expressed crisply, and the relationship between ideas needs to be crystal clear. In the written context, greater complexity in the relationship between ideas can be sustained, as there are so many more visual clues to help communicate meaning. Properly preparing for the oral context forces the preacher to be simple and clear, especially in communicating the relationship between ideas. Are the sermon's ideas in parallel, such as those sometimes found in a Psalm of praise or in a collection of commands; or are the ideas sequential or consequential, as in arguments and narratives? Are they a question, a statement, an exhortation or an imperative? Each will require a different sound. This preparation takes time and careful, logical thought. It will also require oral rehearsal.

Furthermore, in the oral context, careful attention also needs to be paid to the use of individual words. This is a different sort of care to that applied to words in the written context. Words in the oral context need to be varied and evocative, to maintain engagement. However, this variety must not lead to confusion or distraction. Sometimes precision is called for, requiring use of exactly the same words, each with a unique meaning. Sometimes deliberate ambiguity is called for, especially when the Biblical text, or an illustration, is working at a number of levels, such as in the parables. When words that should be precise are ambiguous, confusion occurs. When words that should be ambiguous are precise, the loss of the full range of meaning occurs.

Attention to the sound of the sermon will also have implications for, and aid the preacher in determining *form*. By form I am referring here to the overall shape of the sermon. What shape will best achieve the sermon's aim and maintain engagement?¹² Tension and climax will be crucial considerations here, as will consideration of the sermon's genre, or mix of genres. In Schlafer's and Lowry's

terms, is it in argument, story, image or mixed style?¹³ If the sermon is in argument style, is it deductive or inductive? Again, different shapes will require different sounds. Propositional or didactic material sounds very different from illustrative or applicatory material. Indeed, most audiences can only sustain listening to propositional material for a limited time before illustrative or story material is required, since story somehow gives the attentive ability required for propositional material an opportunity to "rest." A sermon's shape will therefore be made up of varying sections or episodes, each with their own distinctive sound. As the preacher comes to the end of each section, different sounds will signal whether the material is climactic, summative or conclusive. Transitions between these sections or episodes will also need to be considered, as will the transition's sound. Is it expectant, reflective, contrastive, cumulative or conclusive? As the preacher wrestles with the sound of the sermon, different meanings and shapes will be considered, consciously and unconsciously, leading to greater clarity, engagement and effectiveness of communication.

Naturally, attending to the sound of the sermon finds its fulfilment in the sermon's *delivery*. Delivery refers to the use of the body, particularly the voice, and the use of other instruments to communicate the sermon. The voice has available to it a cornucopia of interesting and engaging sounds which can be expressed in a wonderful range of pitch, pace and volume. In their various arrangements, when coupled with pausing, an astounding array of meanings is produced. Determining during preparation how content will be communicated orally is hard enough work for the preacher, but seeking to ensure that in their delivery, the sounds produced are heard by the listener in the way the preacher intended is also no mean feat. The same words can either be a delight to listen to, or a disaster! One speaking of them cannot but help draw in the listener, whereas another speaking works as a turnoff.¹⁴ Preparing for delivery will be considered more fully in the next section.

One aspect in the preparation of content, form and delivery is consideration of the sound of the original Biblical text and its

varying translations, for these sounds will have implications for its exegesis and preaching. Since the Scriptures were originally written to be read aloud, oral rehearsal will thus be crucial to understanding their meaning.¹⁵ Furthermore, if preachers are to be faithful in communicating the full sense of God's word, some oral congruence between the genre of the Biblical text and the sermon needs to be heard. This is particularly pertinent when preaching on poetic or prophetic texts, or songs of worship, such as in the Psalms, the birth narratives or the Revelation.

On the other side of the pulpit, attention to the sound of the sermon will aid audiences in their listening and in their understanding. Key ideas will be heard to be key, through verbal highlighting, the use of pause, the use of climax, headlining and endlining, repetition, and summative and conclusive language. Supportive or illustrative material will be plainly secondary. The relationship between ideas will be clear. Moreover, the listeners' energy can be devoted to understanding the content of the preacher's message and its implications, rather than on attempting to discern what the preacher is actually saying! Distraction and confusion will be minimised, and a sense of the text as originally given will be conveyed.

For both the preacher and the congregation, attention to the sound of the sermon will aid memory. Form and flow, headlines and endlines, repetition, summation and the choice of easily remembered words and clauses will be crucial here, though perhaps the most effective example of this is the classic technique used in the African-American pulpit at the climax of the sermon, sometimes called whooping.¹⁶ Here the theme of the sermon is transposed into a song that is incorporated into ensuing worship and the community's ongoing life. For all these techniques to be effective, however, the preacher must have determined crisply the sermon's "big idea" before embarking on the sermon's text, so that what is to be remembered is clear.¹⁷

Finally, attention to the sound of the sermon encourages opportunity to express God-given creativity in oral

communication.¹⁸ Care needs to be taken lest the focus move unduly to the preacher or the medium, but in our current context an over-application of this fear has led to a lack of imagination and innovation. Preachers have also felt inhibited. This has been to the detriment of the preached word and its effectiveness, especially with certain audiences. It has also been to the detriment of our understanding of God.

Training for the Sound of the Sermon

Oral text

To assist preachers-in-training to learn skills in attending to the sound of the sermon a key tool is the use of a *full oral text in oral format*. A *full oral* text refers to all the words and sounds that will be spoken in the preaching event by the preacher, including all associated introductory comments, Bible readings, prayers, or instructions to others. It is produced for the oral-aural context, for the preacher's mouth, and for the listeners' ears. It will necessarily be in the vernacular, and idiomatic. This is in contrast to an essay text, which is designed to be read privately and conforms to the conventions of print culture. An essay text is written for the eyes of others.

The benefits of a full oral text in oral format have been found to be highly significant, even for students who have been preaching regularly.¹⁹ The full text enables students and commentators to examine closely the complete preaching event. Obviously this should be done initially by the student. It can then be done with others, both before and/or after delivery.²⁰ The *full* text also enables detailed written feedback on the content, shape and sound of the sermon. On preparing a full oral text students are regularly surprised at how often they repeat the same language, when variety would assist communication and engagement.

The requirement for a *full* oral text helps students develop their skills in distinguishing essay text from oral text and pay careful

attention to language and delivery.²¹ It asks the question, "How does the sermon sound?" rather than, "How does the sermon read?" Those who take a manuscript into the pulpit in essay or mixed text often seek to translate into oral text "on the run," creating unnecessary anxiety and using energy better directed elsewhere. Furthermore, a full oral text facilitates the particular process of contextualising language, and adapting to various styles of orality in the congregation.²² Words that might be quite appropriate in an essay text, for instance, may sound inappropriate when placed together in an oral text. Quicke calls this full oral text a "stereo draft" and notes that by being able to test a sermon aloud, "preachers become their own listeners and experience their sermon."²³ Thus the process of producing an oral text is a process of training preachers to be able to hear themselves, especially in the preparation phase. Quicke also notes the additional advantage of helping with time-keeping, given that most preachers speak about 100 words a minute.²⁴

The requirement for a full oral text is not designed to necessarily set a pattern for the student's preaching career. Rather, it is intended to be a stage in a learning and growth process where the most detailed attention can be given to each of the sermon's components. It is certainly not designed to preclude extemporaneous changes to the sermon, often triggered by audience factors, or simply the reflective interlude between completion and delivery. Incidentally, often these changes make helpful teaching grist, given that sometimes they are highly appropriate, but that at other times they work against the integrity of the sermon. However, the full oral text does facilitate a more intentional and thoughtful process, and enables those students who rely strongly on their extemporaneous abilities to move beyond a particular plateau of competence. Having a full oral text in oral format, preachers can then move on to a variety of delivery modes, depending on the preacher's gifting and style, and audience factors. Quicke considers six modes of delivery, including his preferred mode, after over thirty years of preaching, of "memorising the structure."²⁵ It is significant to note that this delivery mode comes *after* Quicke's writing of a full "stereo-draft."

Oral format

Oral format refers to the arrangement of the oral text on the page.²⁶ It is written for the preacher's eye, to direct the oral production, and for the eyes of commentators. The arrangement is thus designed to reflect how and when the words will be spoken. In particular, each time a breath is to be taken a new line is begun. A speech unit extending longer than a line alerts the preacher that this group of words is probably too long for a single breath. It therefore may need to be broken up. Secondary and tertiary material is suitably indented. Pauses are indicated by space proportional to their relative length. The relationship between words is indicated. For example, words in parallel may be under each other, or contrasted words may be highlighted. Rubrics may be noted in the text or margin. For instance, maintaining or raising the pitch at the end of a line can be indicated by an arrow above the words, or movement towards a climax may be indicated by a south arrow in the margin. The shape of the words and rubrics on the page thus reflects how the sermon will *sound*.

A short example of oral text in oral format from a sermon on Luke 17:7-10, "The Parable of the Servant and the Master," appears below:

It's not fair!

What about a bit of give and take here?

It all seems so pompous!:

Here's the master, sitting up by himself at the table;

And here's the servant:

hungry as a bull,

cooking and serving the food,

and hanging around until his master finishes,

before he can start on his own meal.

And after dinner? What happens?

Does the master thank the servant for his hard work?

Of course not!

The servant has simply obeyed orders and done his duty.

But you didn't say "*Of course not!*" did you?

My bet is this master's getting up your nose.

He could at least have said "Thank you.!"

Ever since you were a baby you've been taught to say "Thank you."

And you've come to expect it!

And that's our problem, isn't it!

We want to be noticed.

We want to be appreciated.

We want to be honoured.

We want to be congratulated.

And we are *worlds* away
from the world of this parable.

Obviously the oral format cannot indicate exactly the sound of the sermon. However, production of the oral format will greatly assist the preacher in preparation and delivery. In the first instance, it helps the preacher discern the length of appropriate speech units. The preacher then needs to think through carefully the relationship between these speech units, and their consequent physical arrangement on the page. Ostensibly the preacher is working on the sound of the sermon. However, because the preacher is working on an oral text in oral format, necessitating shorter and clearer speech units with clear and crisp conjunctions, the preacher is of necessity working on the clarity, logic and arrangement of the sermon's ideas. This is further enhanced as punctuation is resolved and rubrics are added. Thus the process of producing oral text in oral format aids in the preparation of clear content in engaging form. Furthermore,

producing orally formatted text aids in the speaking aloud of these ideas; that is, it aids delivery: the ultimate *sound* of the sermon. As such it will greatly help in rendering those benefits indicated above which flow from giving attention to the sound of the sermon, such as understanding, engagement, memorability and creative appreciation.

Childers reminds us that while punctuation helps the reader make sense of essay formatted text, it "may or may not give him or her good advice about how to package the message for the ear."²⁷ This is because "punctuation directs the eye to meaning and phrasing directs the ear."²⁸ Thus, although essay format gives some indication of how a written piece should sound if read aloud, it does not give as many indicators to the speaker as oral format, and indeed, may distractingly give some indicators that do not apply in the oral context, such as some commas. Orally formatted text should therefore only include punctuation pertinent to the oral context. In other words, preachers must not let the punctuation of an essay formatted text, such as the Bible, or a quote from a book, determine their "phrasing decisions,"²⁹ or, to put it another way, the length, place and expression of speech units in the oral format.

Further limitations of essay format are that repetition in essay format is clumsy and that essay format requires the eye to move across the whole page, and to find a different location along both the vertical and horizontal axes on the page each time the eye is lifted. In an orally formatted text, if the preacher is familiar with the text through practice, the eye can simply move down the vertical axis on the left hand side of the page to be reminded of the next speech unit. This enables maximum eye contact with the audience and generally dispels much, if not all of the sense of the manuscript being read.

Naturally the oral text in oral format needs to be practiced aloud. This aids the preacher's memory, especially "muscle memory." However, in so doing, the preacher will also be alerted to words, phrases or clauses that do not "sound right." The speech unit may

be too long, the juxtaposition of words may jar, or unintentional meanings may be communicated. During practice, the preacher may further be alerted to a need for a change of genre. If, for instance, the preacher has been communicating much propositional or didactic material, an illustration, or applicatory material may be called for. As the preacher practices aloud the oral text in oral format new ways of speaking the material in an aurally engaging manner will often emerge, and the text can be so edited. Appropriate gestures, or physical illustrations, can then be experimented with, practised and marked in the text. As with learning and developing the use of any new language, learning to use oral texts in oral format may at first be a little self-conscious, but with time will become natural, and "second nature". Those used to a prayer book tradition, where prayers and responses have some sense of orality, both in text and in format, will generally already have an intuitive ability. Of course, it is not simply enough to be able to deliver the text well. Rather, its internalization needs to be expressed, "a function of desire and concentration."³⁰ Prayer, love and a decision to give of oneself are also required.

Salter has made a call for today's pastor to "rediscover the revolutionary precision of speech exemplified by Abraham Lincoln."³¹ Indeed, Salter argues that "imprecision through lack of spiritual preparation, careless thought, or the inability to seize the significance of the moment, is a sin."³² These are strong words, but preachers will do well to pray and meditate on this charge. In particular, they will do well to not only work hard at the content and form of their sermons, but also to be alert to the oral-aural nature of the culture in which they serve and, consequentially, to the oral-aural nature of their sermons. In developing the skills required for oral presentation, the full oral text in oral format serves as an excellent tool for trainees and trainers, and for practitioners. May the Lord delight in giving to His people not just sound sermons, but sound sermons sensitive to their sound.

Notes

1. My own experience with Robert G. Jacks, *Getting the Word Across: Speech Communication for*

Pastors and Lay Leaders (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995a), and Robert G. Jacks, *Just Say the Word: Writing for the Ear* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995b), for instance, is that they are too bulky and clumsy in their application. Literature associated with the fields of communication and performance studies can sometimes be adapted for homiletical use. However, wisdom is needed to differentiate between the skills required for acting, where the audience knows this is theatre and expects the performer to act - and not preach! - and the skills required for preaching, where the audience is suspicious at any sign of acting on the preacher's part. Integrity and congruence between the preacher's words, style and person are particularly necessary in our contemporary world for any preaching which seeks to call itself Biblical. Jana Childers examines the relationship between preaching and theatre in her stimulating and insightful book, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), but theologically conservative students may be so distracted by her theological position that they do not sufficiently attend to her helpful practical applications. Richard Ward, in *Speaking of the Holy: The Art of Communication in Preaching* (St Louis: Chalice, 2001), draws helpfully on insights from oral performance studies, focusing on the public reading of Scripture, but is thin on adapting this oral work to a whole sermon, especially a sermon with a manuscript. Stephen H. Webb, in *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), seeks to provide a comprehensive theology of sound and oral proclamation, with a substantial historical survey. Similarly, Charles Bartow also seeks to provide "a practical theology of proclamation" (Bartow, 3) in *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), though in both Bartow and Webb the tools for the practical application of their work for students preparing sermons are not provided.

2. For a discussion of some theological and personality-based objections to considering the sound of the sermon, see Adrian Lane, "Please! No more boring sermons!" An Introduction to the Application of Narrative to Homiletics" in x (Melbourne: Acorn, forthcoming).
3. See Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 116. Postman's prophecy that "the danger is not that religion has become the content of television shows but that television shows may become the content of religion" (Postman, 116), has unfortunately been realised in more ways than one.
4. Some commentators have argued that including and adapting to the use of PowerPoint has added at least an extra half-day to the preparation of sermons. Apart from the implications of the significant shift away from the oral, including the simplification of content, and the time and sophisticated presentation skills required for PowerPoint presentation, the question must be asked if this half-day would be better spent in another aspect of the sermon's preparation. This is not to suggest that sermons cannot be creatively combined with PowerPoint. Indeed, PowerPoint will often be ideal for certain didactic material. However, it is a call for the considered use of the various media available. For a short treatment of the use of PowerPoint, videos and other visual media in sermons, see Kenton Anderson, "In the Eye of the Hearer," in Haddon W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (eds), *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 607-609.
5. At the congregation I attend in Melbourne, Australia, even a song's words on the screen are considered necessitative of an accompanying visual, which is often distracting and, necessarily, at best reductionistic. Similarly, compare the difference between a book and its movie.
6. For a stimulating and comprehensive discussion of the relationship between radio and preaching, see Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Visually Speaking: Radio and the Renaissance of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999). In particular, Mitchell argues that "preachers need to move on from simply speaking visually to speaking experientially." (Mitchell, 195)
7. Webb, 47.
8. See, for example, Gen 1:3; Heb 1:1-3; 1 Thess 2:13; Jas 1:18, 21; Eph 1:13; Col 1:5-6, 23.
9. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between word and image, see Peter Adam, *Hearing God's Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), Chapter 5, especially 139-162.
10. For a fuller discussion of the various means by which God speaks, see Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), especially 22-23. For an overview of Barth's position, see Webb, 167-181. Adam also provides a

helpful exploration of the various ministries of the word, with particular reference to Calvin, Baxter and the ministry of the word in the New Testament in *Speaking God's Words*, 59-84. This approach affirms the foundational nature of the ministry of the word, as taught in Ephesians 4:11, but also recognizes that this ministry will be accomplished in a range of contexts and styles, affirming different giftedness, purposes, audiences and styles of learning. Paul evidences this in Acts 20:20.

11. Childers, 84.
12. For a fuller discussion on engagement and form, see Adrian Lane, "Please! No more boring sermons!"
13. See David Schlafer, *Surviving the Sermon* (Cambridge: Cowley, 1992), 59-76; and Eugene Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 73-74, 84-88 and 108-111.
14. For a fuller discussion of the use of the voice, see Childers, 80-91.
15. Childers argues that "there are aspects - important aspects - of the meaning and liveliness of the text that can only be known through speaking the words of the text aloud." (Childers, 50)
16. See Evans E. Crawford, *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 51-71; and Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 105.
17. See Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 35 and 103-106.
18. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between preaching and creativity, see Childers, 22-24 and 101-103. In particular, Childers reminds us of the theological truth that "the human capacity for creativity is God-given and reflects God's imprint on our natures." (Childers, 101.)
19. This material is based on my more extensive discussion of evaluative methods in the Homiletics class. See Adrian Lane, "Some Principles and Methods of Sermon Evaluation used in the Introduction to Homiletics class," 2002. Manuscript available in the Leon Morris Library, Ridley College, 160 The Avenue, Parkville, Vic 3052, Australia.
20. For a more extensive theoretical discussion on the relationship between student preacher and teacher, see Allen Demond, "Beyond Explanation: Pedagogy and Epistemology in Preaching," *Homiletic* 27:1 (Summer, 2002): 8.
21. See also Vernon Grounds, "Some Reflections on Pulpit Rhetoric," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 1:1 (Dec. 2001): 6-8; Jacks, 1995a, 215-226; 1995b, 18-54; and Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 179-183.
22. For examples of wrestling with the implications of preaching to primarily oral cultures, see Tex Sample, *Ministry in an Oral Culture: Living with Will Rogers, Uncle Remus, and Minnie Pearl* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 13-28 and 73-84; Grant Lovejoy, "'But I Did Such Good Exposition': Literate Preachers Confront Orality," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 1:1 (Dec. 2001): 25-31; and Crawford, 78-84.
23. Quicke, 180.
24. Quicke, 182.
25. Quicke's six delivery modes are: Reading a manuscript; Using notes from a full manuscript; Reciting a manuscript; Memorising the structure; Interactive preaching and Impromptu preaching (Quicke, 185-186). Unfortunately Quicke does not clarify whether his comments regarding "Reading a Manuscript" apply to a manuscript in essay or oral text, in essay or oral format. My sense is that they presume a manuscript in essay format, and his comments on this delivery mode need to be considered with this in mind.
26. See also David J. Schlafer, *Playing with Fire: Preaching Work as Kindling Art* (Cambridge: Cowley, 2004), 112-115.
27. Childers, 82.
28. Childers, 82.
29. Childers, 82.
30. Childers, 88.
31. Darius L. Salter, "The Impact of Words about God," *Preaching* 18:1 (July/August 2002): 23.
32. Salter, 23.

The First Christmas Carol: A Sermon

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

(editor's note: Baptist pastor and preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon [1834-1892] served at London's Metropolitan Tabernacle and founded a pastor's college which continues its mission of training pastors.)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 20, 1857, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men."

Luke 2:14

Introduction

It is superstitious to worship angels; it is but proper to love them. Although it would be a high sin, and an act of misdemeanor against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and unseemly, if we did not give to holy angels a place in our heart's warmest love. In fact, he that contemplates the character of angels, and marks their many deeds of sympathy with men, and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his nature — the impulse of love towards them. The one incident in angelic history, to which our text refers, is enough to weld our hearts to them for ever. How free from envy the angels were! Christ did not come from heaven to save their compeers when they fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of heaven, Christ did not stoop from his throne to die for them; but he left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that he took not up angels, yet they did not murmur when he took up the seed of Abraham; and though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angel's form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when

they found him arrayed in the body of an infant. How free, too, they were from pride! They were not ashamed to come and tell the news to humble shepherds. Methinks they had as much joy in pouring out their songs that night before the shepherds, who were watching with their flocks, as they would have had if they had been commanded by their Master to sing their hymn in the halls of Caesar. Mere men, men possessed with pride, think it a fine thing to preach before kings and princes; and think it great condescension now and then to have to minister to the humble crowd. Not so the angels. They stretched their willing wings, and gladly sped from their bright seats above, to tell the shepherds on the plain by night, the marvelous story of an Incarnate God. And mark how well they told the story, and surely you will love them! Not with the stammering tongue of him that tells a tale in which he hath no interest; nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move the passions of others, when he feeleth no emotion himself; but with joy and gladness, such as angels only can know. They sang the story out, for they could not stay to tell it in heavy prose. They sang, "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Methinks they sang it with gladness in their eyes; with their hearts burning with love, and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves. And, verily, it was good news to them, for the heart of sympathy makes good news to others, good news to itself. Do you not love the angels? Ye will not bow before them, and there ye are right; but will ye not love them? Doth it not make one part of your anticipation of heaven, that in heaven you shall dwell with the holy angels, as well as with the spirits of the just made perfect? Oh, how sweet to think that these holy and lovely beings are our guardians every hour! They keep watch and ward about us, both in the burning noon-tide, and in the darkness of the night. They keep us in all our ways; they bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our feet against stones. They unceasingly minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation; both by day and night they are our watchers and our guardians, for know ye not, that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him."

Let us turn aside, having just thought of angels for a moment, to think rather of this song, than of the angels themselves. Their song was brief, but as Kitto excellently remarks, it was "well worthy of angels expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in words so few, that they become to an acute apprehension, almost oppressive by the pregnant fulness of their meaning" — "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." We shall, hoping to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, look at these words of the angels in a fourfold manner. I shall just suggest some instructive thoughts arising from these words; then some *emotional thoughts*; then a few *prophetical thoughts*; and afterwards, one or two *preceptive thoughts*.

I. First then, in the words of our text, there are many Instructive Thoughts.

The angels sang something which men could understand — something which men ought to understand — something which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built upon this foundation. They sang of Christ, and the salvation which he came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was this: they said, first, that it gave glory to God; secondly, that it gave peace to man; and, thirdly, that it was a token of God's good will towards the human race.

1. *First, they said that this salvation gave glory to God.* They had been present on many august occasions, and they had joined in many a solemn chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were present at the creation: "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They had seen many a planet fashioned between the palms of Jehovah, and wheeled by his eternal hands through the infinitude of space. They had sung solemn songs over many a world which the Great One had created. We doubt not, they had often chanted "Blessing and honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be unto him that sitteth on the throne," manifesting himself in the work of creation.

I doubt not, too, that their songs had gathered force through ages. As when first created, their first breath was song, so when they saw God create new worlds then their song received another note; they rose a little higher in the gamut of adoration. But this time, when they saw God stoop from his throne, and become a babe, hanging upon a woman's breast, they lifted their notes higher still; and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic music, they gained the highest notes of the divine scale of praise, and they sung, "Glory to God *in the highest*," for higher in goodness they felt God could not go. Thus their highest praise they gave to him in the highest act of his godhead. If it be true that there is a hierarchy of angels, rising tier upon tier in magnificence and dignity — if the apostle teaches us that there be "angels, and principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions," amongst these blest inhabitants of the upper world — I can suppose that when the intelligence was first communicated to those angels that are to be found upon the outskirts of the heavenly world, when they looked down from heaven and saw the newborn babe, they sent the news backward to the place whence the miracle first proceeded, singing

"Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your downward flight to earth,
Ye who sing creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth;
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King."

And as the message ran from rank to rank, at last the presence angels, those four cherubim that perpetually watch around the throne of God — those wheels with eyes — took up the strain, and, gathering up the song of all the inferior grades of angels, surmounted the divine pinnacle of harmony with their own solemn chant of adoration, upon which the entire host shouted, "The highest angels praise thee." — "Glory to God in the highest." Ay, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent was that song. Then, note, if angels shouted before and when the world was

made, their hallelujahs were more full, more strong, more magnificent, if not more hearty, when they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be man's redeemer — “Glory to God in the highest.”

What is the instructive lesson to be learned from this first syllable of the angels' song? Why this, that salvation is God's highest glory. He is glorified in every dew drop that twinkles to the morning sun. He is magnified in every wood flower that blossoms in the copse, although it live to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness in the forest air. God is glorified in every bird that warbles on the spray; in every lamb that skips the mead. Do not the fishes in the sea praise him? From the tiny minnow to the huge Leviathan, do not all creatures that swim the water bless and praise his name? Do not all created things extol him? Is there aught beneath the sky, save man, that doth not glorify God? Do not the stars exalt him, when they write his name upon the azure of heaven in their golden letters? Do not the lightnings adore him when they flash his brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol him when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt him, from the least even to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till thou hast exhausted thyself, thou canst not afford a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle — Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger, than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the throne of the Most High. Pause Christian, and consider this a minute. See how every attribute is here magnified. Lo! what *wisdom* is here. God becomes man that God may be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. Lo! what *power*, for where is power so great as when it concealeth power? What power, that Godhead should unrobe itself and become man! Behold, what love is thus revealed to us when Jesus becomes a man. Behold ye, what *faithfulness*! How many promises are this day kept? How many solemn obligations are this hour discharged? Tell me one attribute of God that is not manifest in Jesus; and your ignorance shall be the reason why you have not seen it so. The

whole of God is glorified in Christ; and though some part of the name of God is written in the universe, it is here best read — in Him who was the Son of Man, and, yet, the Son of God.

But, let me say one word here before I go away from this point. We must learn from this, that if salvation glorifies God, glorifies him in the highest degree, and makes the highest creatures praise him, this one reflection may be added — then, that doctrine, which glorifies man in salvation cannot be the gospel. For salvation glorifies God. The angels were no Arminians, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest." They believe in no doctrine which uncrowns Christ, and puts the crown upon the head of mortals. They believe in no system of faith which makes salvation dependent upon the creature, and, which really gives the creature the praise, for what is it less than for a man to save himself, if the whole dependence of salvation rests upon his own free will? No, my brethren; there may be some preachers that delight to preach a doctrine that magnifies man; but in their gospel angels have no delight. The only glad tidings that made the angels sing, are those that put God first, God last, God midst, and God without end, in the salvation of his creatures, and put the crown wholly and alone upon the head of him that saves without a helper. "Glory to God in the highest," is the angels' song.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before. "Glory to God in the highest," was an old, old song; they had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But, now, they sang as it were a new song before the throne of God: for they added this stanza — "*on earth, peace.*" They did not sing that in the garden. There was peace there, but it seemed a thing of course, and scarce worth singing of. There was more than peace there; for there was glory to God there. But, now, man had fallen, and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man, there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ. Wars had raged from the ends of the world; men had slaughtered one another, heaps on heaps. There had been wars within as well as wars without. Conscience had fought with man;

Satan had tormented man with thoughts of sin. There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But, now, when the newborn King made his appearance, the swaddling band with which he was wrapped up was the white flag of peace. That manger was the place where the treaty was signed, whereby warfare should be stopped between man's conscience and himself, man's conscience and his God. It was then, that day, the trumpet blew — “Sheathe the sword, oh man, sheathe the sword, oh conscience, for God is now at peace with man, and man at peace with God.” Do you not feel my brethren, that the gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found, but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain, and thou shalt never find it. Go, thou, that trustest in the law: go thou, to Sinai; look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair; for peace is nowhere to be found, but in him, of whom it is said, “This man shall be peace.” And what a peace it is, beloved! It is peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the pardoner; this marvelous at-one-ment between the sinner and his judge, this was it that the angels sung when they said, “peace on earth.”

3. And, then, they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said, “Good will to man.” Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man; but I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had much good will toward man, or else his works would never have been so constructed for their comfort; but I never heard of any man who could risk his soul's peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them, who are quite sure that God has a good will towards men; and if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, “He has good will toward man for he gave his Son.” No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and his subjects can possibly be afforded than when the Creator gives his only begotten and well beloved Son to

die. Though the first note is God-like, and though the second note is peaceful, this third note melts my heart the most. Some think of God as if he were a morose being who hated all mankind. Some picture him as if he were some abstract subsistence taking no interest in our affairs. Hark ye, God has “good will toward men.” You know what good will means. Well, Swearer, you have cursed God; he has not fulfilled his curse on you; he has good will towards you, though you have no good will towards him. Infidel, you have sinned high and hard against the Most High; he has said no hard things against you, for he has good will towards men. Poor sinner, thou hast broken his laws; thou art half afraid to come to the throne of his mercy lest he should spurn thee; hear thou this, and be comforted — God has good will towards men, so good a will that he has said, and said it with an oath too, “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live;” so good a will moreover that he has even condescended to say, “Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” And if you say, “Lord, how shall I know that thou hast this good will towards me,” he points to yonder manger, and says, “Sinner, if I had not a good will towards thee, would I have parted with my Son? If I had not good will towards the human race, would I have given up my Son to become one of that race that he might by so doing redeem them from death?” Ye that doubt the Master’s love, look ye to that circle of angels; see their blaze of glory; hear their son, and let your doubts die away in that sweet music and be buried in a shroud of harmony. He has good will to men; he is willing to pardon; he passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin. And mark thee, if Satan shall then add, “But though God hath good will, yet he cannot violate his justice, therefore his mercy may be ineffective, and you may die;” then listen to that first note of the song, “Glory to God in the highest,” and reply to Satan and all his temptations, that when God shows good will to a penitent sinner, there is not only peace in the sinner’s heart, but it brings glory to every attribute of God, and so he can be just, and yet justify the sinner, and glorify himself.

I do not pretend to say that I have opened all the instructions contained in these three sentences, but I may perhaps direct you into a train of thought that may serve you for the week. I hope that all through the week you will have a truly merry Christmas by feeling the power of these words, and knowing the unction of them. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

II. Next, I have to present to you some Emotional Thoughts

Friends, doth not this verse, this song of angels, stir your heart with happiness? When I read that, and found the angels singing it, I thought to myself, "Then if the angels ushered in the gospel's great head with singing, ought I not to preach with singing? And ought not my hearers to live with singing? Ought not their hearts to be glad and their spirits to rejoice?" Well, thought I, there be some somber religionists who were born in a dark night in December that think a smile upon the face is wicked, and believe that for a Christian to be glad and rejoice is to be inconsistent. Ah! I wish these gentlemen had seen the angels when they sang about Christ; for angels sang about his birth, though it was no concern of theirs, certainly men ought to sing about it as long as they live, sing about it when they die, and sing about it when they live in heaven for ever. I do long to see in the midst of the church more of a singing Christianity. The last few years have been breeding in our midst a groaning and unbelieving Christianity. Now, I doubt not its sincerity, but I do doubt its healthy character. I say it may be true and real enough; God forbid I should say a word against the sincerity of those who practice it; but it is a sickly religion. Watts hit the mark when he said:

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

It is designed to do away with some of our pleasures, but it gives us many more, to make up for what it takes away; so it does not make them less. O ye that see in Christ nothing but a subject to stimulate

your doubts and make the tears run down your cheeks; O ye that always say:

“Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supplies.”

Come ye hither and see the angels. Do they tell their story with groans, and sobs, and sighs? Ah, no; they shout aloud, “Glory to God in the highest.” Now, imitate them, my dear brethren. If you are professors of religion, try always to have a cheerful carriage. Let others mourn but:

“Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?”

Anoint your head and wash your face; appear not unto men to fast. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say unto you rejoice. Specially this week be not ashamed to be glad. You need not think it a wicked thing to be happy. Penance and whipping, and misery are no such very virtuous things, after all. The damned are miserable; let the saved be happy. Why should you hold fellowship with the lost by feelings of perpetual mourning? Why not rather anticipate the joys of heaven, and begin to sing on earth that song which you will never need to end? The first emotion then that we ought to cherish in our hearts is the emotion of *joy and gladness*.

Well, what next? Another emotion is that of *confidence*. I am not sure that I am right in calling that an emotion, but still in me it is so much akin to it, that I will venture to be wrong if I be so. Now, if when Christ came on this earth God had sent some black creature down from heaven, (if there be such creatures there) to tell us, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,” and if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his message, if I had been there and heard it, I should have scrupled to believe him, for I should have said, “You don't look like the messenger that God would send — stammering fellow as you are — with such glad news as this.” But when the angels came

there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it; they told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that a legacy was left you, and should come to you with a solemn countenance, and a tongue like a funeral bell, saying, "Do you know so-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why you would say, "Ah! I dare say," and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room, and exclaim, "I say, what do you think? You are a rich man; So-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why you would say, "I think it is very likely to be true, for he looks so happy over it." Well, when these angels came from heaven they told the news just as if they believed it; and though I have often wickedly doubted my Lord's good will, I think I never could have doubted it while I heard those angels singing. No, I should say, "The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from God's lips; they have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news." Now, poor soul, thou that art afraid lest God should destroy thee, and thou thinkest that God will never have mercy upon thee, look at the singing angels and doubt if thou darest. Do not go to the synagogue of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, whilst he tells you that God has good will towards men; I know you won't believe what he says, for he does not preach with joy in his countenance; he is telling you good news with a grunt, and you are not likely to receive it. But go straightway to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night, and when you hear the angels singing out the gospel, by the grace of God upon you, you cannot help believing that they manifestly feel the preciousness of telling. Blessed Christmas, that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in God's good will to men!

III. I must now bring before you the third point. There are some Prophetic Utterances contained in these words.

The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." But I look around, and what see I in the wide,

wide world? I do not see God honored. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols; I mark the Romanist casting himself before the rotten rags of his relics, and the ugly figures of his images. I look about me, and I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men; I see God forgotten; I see a worldly race pursuing mammon; I see a bloody race pursuing Moloch; I see ambition riding like Nimrod over the land, God forgotten, his name dishonored. And was this all the angels sang about? Is this all that made them sing "Glory to God in the highest?" Ah! no. There are brighter days approaching. They sang, "Peace on earth." But I hear still the clarion of war; and the cannon's horrid roar: not yet have they turned the sword into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook! War still reigns. Is this all that the angels sang about? And whilst I see wars to the ends of the earth, am I to believe that this was all the angels expected? Ah! no, brethren; the angels' song is big with prophecy; it travaileth in birth with glories. A few more years, and he that lives them out shall see why angels sang; a few more years, and he that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Christ the Lord will come again, and when he cometh he shall cast the idols from their thrones; he shall dash down every fashion of heresy and every shape of idolatry; he shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway; he shall reign, when like a scroll, yon blue heavens have passed away. No strife shall vex Messiah's reign, no blood shall then be shed; they'll hang the useless helmet high, and study war no more. The hour is approaching when the temple of Janus shall be shut for ever, and when cruel Mars shall be hooted from the earth. The day is coming when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, when the leopard shall lie down with the kid; when the weaned child shall put his hand upon the cockatrice den and play with the asp. The hour approacheth; the first streaks of the sunlight have made glad the age in which we live. Lo, he comes, with trumpets and with clouds of glory; he shall come for whom we look with joyous expectation, whose coming shall be glory to his redeemed, and confusion to his enemies. Ah! brethren, when the angels sang this there was an echo through the long aisles of a glorious future. That echo was:

“Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign.”

Ay, and doubtless the angels heard by faith the fulness of the song:

“Hark! the song of jubilee
Loud as mighty thunders' roar,
Or the fulness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore.”

“Christ the Lord Omnipotent reigneth.”

**IV. Now, I have one more lesson for you, and I have done.
That lesson is Preceptive.**

I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year, would keep it as the angels kept it. There are many persons who, when they talk about keeping Christmas, mean by that the cutting of the bands of their religion for one day in the year, as if Christ were the Lord of misrule, as if the birth of Christ should be celebrated like the orgies of Bacchus. There are some very religious people, that on Christmas would never forget to go to church in the morning; they believe Christmas to be nearly as holy as Sunday, for they reverence the tradition of the elders. Yet their way of spending the rest of the day is very remarkable; for if they see their way straight up stairs to their bed at night, it must be by accident. They would not consider they had kept Christmas in a proper manner, if they did not verge on gluttony and drunkenness. They are many who think Christmas cannot possibly be kept, except there be a great shout of merriment and mirth in the house, and added to that the boisterousness of sin. Now, my brethren, although we, as successors of the Puritans, will not keep the day in any religious sense whatever, attaching nothing more to it than to any other day: believing that every day may be a Christmas for ought we know, and wishing to make every day Christmas, if we can, yet we must try to set an example to others how to behave on that day; and especially since the angels gave glory to God let us do the same.

Once more the angels said, "Peace to men" let us labor if we can to make peace next Christmas day. Now, old gentleman, you won't take your son in, he has offended you. Fetch him at Christmas. "Peace on earth," you know: that is a Christmas Carol. Make peace in your family.

Conclusion

Now, brother, you have made a vow that you will never speak to your brother again. Go after him and say, "Oh, my dear fellow, let not this day's sun go down upon our wrath." Fetch him in, and give him your hand. Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have an opponent in trade, and you have said some very hard words about him lately. If you do not make the matter up today, or tomorrow, or as soon as you can, yet do it on that day. That is the way to keep Christmas, peace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if thou hast anything on thy conscience, anything that prevents thy having peace of mind, keep thy Christmas in thy chamber, praying to God to give thee peace; for it is peace on earth, mind, peace in thyself, peace with thyself, peace with thy fellow men, peace with thy God. And do not think thou hast well celebrated that day till thou canst say:

"O God, With the world, myself, and thee
I ere I sleep at peace will be."

And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing, *good will* towards men. Do not try to keep Christmas without keeping good will towards men. You are a gentleman, and have servants. Well, try and set their chimneys on fire with a large piece of good, substantial beef for them. If you are men of wealth, you have poor in your neighborhood. Find something wherewith to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and make glad the mourner. Remember, it is good will towards men. Try, if you can, to show them good will at this special season; and if you will do that, the poor will say with me, that indeed they wish there were six Christmases in the year.

Let each one of us go from this place determined, that if we are angry all the year round, this next week shall be an exception; that if we have snarled at everybody last year, this Christmas time we will strive to be kindly affectionate to others; and if we have lived all this year at enmity with God, I pray that by his Spirit he may this week give us peace with him; and then, indeed, my brother, it will be the merriest Christmas we ever had in all our lives. You are going home to your father and mother, young men; many of you are going from your shops to your homes. You remember what I preached on last Christmas time. Go home to thy friends, and tell them what the Lord hath done for thy soul, and that will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire. If you will each of you tell your parents how the Lord met with you in the house of prayer; how, when you left home, you were a gay, wild blade, but have now come back to love your mother's God, and read your father's Bible. Oh, what a happy Christmas that will make! What more shall I say? May God give you peace with yourselves; may he give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies, and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest. I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish every one of you, when the day shall come, the happiest Christmas you ever had in your lives:

“Now with angels round the throne,
Cherubim and seraphim,
And the church, which still is one,
Let us swell the solemn hymn;
Glory to the great I AM!
Glory to the Victim Lamb.
Blessing, honour, glory, might,
And dominion infinite,
To the Father of our Lord,
To the Spirit and the Word;
As it was all worlds before,
Is, and shall be evermore.”



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Center for Preaching
 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

~•••~•~ *Book Reviews* ~•••~•~

A Mirror for the Church: Preaching in the First Five Centuries. By David Dunn-Wilson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 0-8028-2866-3, 224 pp., \$22.00, paperback.

David Dunn-Wilson, a Methodist minister for over forty years and professor emeritus at Kenya Methodist University, has put us in his debt. Few can research the preaching of the Fathers of the western church as he has done; yet all of us need to know of them and learn from them—both from their strengths and their weaknesses. In eight chapters Dunn-Wilson summarizes each successive era—its challenges from the world, the foibles of the church, the nature and content of its most notable preachers, and their contributions to the craft. The brief cameos increased the number of my own homiletic heroes without glossing over weaknesses such as anti-Semitism and dubious views of women. Dunn-Wilson engages in self-confessed mirror reading as the title attests, letting sermons “reveal the preoccupations both of those who preach and those who listen, illuminating the interaction between them” (xv). He disciplines himself to keep to his topic, but supplies a plethora of notes and a very impressive bibliography, helpfully divided into various subtopics (195-219). The detailed index (220-226) also adds value for the reader. With these, readers can explore related subjects more fully, an intentional feature Dunn-Wilson notes in the acknowledgements instead of the introduction where we might expect it.

The book is engaging and wastes no words. Indeed the two chapters that deal with the New Testament era put us on notice that coverage will be very abbreviated and direct citation limited. They also reveal a format choice that for this book seems unfortunate. Instead of footnotes there are endnotes—sixty-nine pages of them. At the top of each page of notes the reader learns the corresponding pages in the text itself, but turning back 10-20 times per page is tiresome. As one who gave up and stuck with reading the text, I was shocked to find the four-page epilogue begin on page 121, just barely halfway through the book.

Dunn-Wilson’s comments about preachers and those they serve are cryptic and perhaps too brief to give the reader confidence that the preacher’s real character had been grasped. His interaction with primary and secondary sources left me largely reassured concerning his conclusions, but I would have liked far more representative direct quotations. For instance, on page 118 he writes, “‘Preaching,’ [Chrysostom] warns them, ‘does not come by nature but by study,’ and even if ‘a man reaches a high standard of it,’ he will lose his gift unless he ‘cultivates his power by constant application and exercise.’” This is more citation than almost anywhere else in the book, but even here we are left to wonder about the original context. Happily Dunn-Wilson tells us where to find the whole quote and in the final analysis whets my appetite to explore further where he has opened a way.

All things considered, this is a valuable resource, one I am happy to have in my library.

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Believing in Preaching. By Mary Alice Mulligan, Diane Turner-Sharazz, Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm, Ronald J. Allen. St. Louis: Chalce Press, 2005, 978-0-827205-02-3, 216 pp., paperback.

Believing in Preaching gives attention to what some preaching books choose to ignore: the listener. Bravo! This subject has been long and wrongly neglected. What homiletician can afford to ignore the people in the pews? Preachers who look past their audiences soon become passé. It will not be long until the issues they speak about and the style they employ are disconnected from the very people who have come to listen. When preachers fail to speak to the people listening, they fail to communicate. We preachers need to pay attention to our audience, and this book helps us do so—with some success.

The four authors utilized a four-year Lilly grant to individually interview 128 churchgoers from 28 congregations about how laypeople listen to sermons. While the authors apparently went to great lengths to ensure that their respondents “varied by denomination, size, setting, worship style, and ethnic make up” (1) they did not canvas the evangelical community. Ronald J. Allen admits that “most of the congregations in the study are in denominations or movements that are coming to recognize that the Bible itself contains a diversity of theological viewpoints, some of which are in tension with each other” (15-16). It would have been helpful for this study to include congregations who understand that Scripture speaks with “a singular voice.”

A benefit of this theological restriction is the added emphasis that this provides for its findings. One might suspect that people who worship at churches with a less conservative view of Scripture might express a low view of preaching. Not so: “One of the most persistent themes in the interviews is the high degree of importance that most of these listeners place on the sermon. When asked what would be missing if there were no sermon, one listener voiced a thought shared by many, ‘I wouldn’t want to come’” (14).

It seems that people want sermons. Not just religious talks or reflections, but Bible-based sermons. As one respondent stated, “I feel strongly that preaching should come from the Bible . . . if you don’t start there, I’m not sure what you’d be preaching about” (25). Another stated bluntly “God’s word is the primary authority. Yes, I like sermons that are connected to that” (32).

People also want clear sermons. They want the preacher to have a clear point that

arises out of the biblical text. This seems, to the authors at least, to have been an unexpected finding. One wrote with apparent dismay that “since the 1970s, many preachers and writers in the field have recommended inductive approaches . . . that leave listeners in the position of coming to their own conclusions regarding the meaning of the sermon . . . however, many of the persons in our interview sample state a preference for sermons that communicate straightforwardly the possibilities of belief and witness” (19).

People want biblical preaching that can be remembered. People of all theological stripes continue to demand and enjoy clear biblical communication.

This book may be limited in scope, but I think you will be encouraged as you read it. Any fears you may have had about unemployment will evaporate as you read how listeners value good preachers and sermons. Homileticians should not fear obsolescence. People continue to place a very high value on sermons that explain a biblical passage and show how that passage relates to contemporary life. If you can teach your students to do that, you will have a job for life.

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Making the Word Come Alive: Lessons from Laity. By Mary Alice Mulligan and Ronald J. Allen. St. Louis: Chalice, 2005.978-0-827205-03-1, \$15.99, paperback.

This volume is the fourth of the four book series called “Channels of Listening.” The series is based on the 2002 Lilly Endowment/Christian Theological Seminary survey of 263 listeners to sermons. The participants in the survey came from 28 congregations, predominantly mainline denominations, and represent diversity of race, age, and gender. Each of the four books “slices the data in a different way” (vii). *Making the Word Come Alive* slices to expose large scale similarities in listeners’ responses. The twelve chapters expose twelve qualities listeners find appealing in sermons. I found none of the twelve surprising and all of the twelve helpful. They are good reminders. Here is what listeners ask of preachers:

- Help us figure out what God wants.
- Walk the walk (let your behavior match your teaching).
- Speak from your own experience.
- Make the Bible come alive.
- Show how the Gospel helps us.
- Keep it short.
- Make it plain.
- Talk about everything.
- Don’t oversimplify complex issues.
- Help us get it right.

- Talk loud enough so we can hear.
- Don't forget to put in your teeth (a potpourri of advice not covered in other chapters such as know the congregation, use a variety of sermon forms, and use humor).

Each of the chapters expands on these catch phrases so that a chapter like “Talk Loud Enough” is actually a full discussion of delivery including eye contact, gestures, and vocal variety.

While the listeners' feedback is not univocal (there will always be different opinions among listeners), certain responses predominate, and the authors call these “themes.” I would like to know more about research methodology used in determining the themes. Did the authors use content analysis? How did they know which category to place individual pieces of feedback? The sampling group is too small to draw scientifically warranted conclusions, but I doubt that a survey of 100,000 listeners would produce significantly different results. All of the feedback is to be expected, and as I say, a good reminder. About half of the book is transcription of interviews, and it is helpful to hear laypeople express themselves. Two sample sermons conclude the book, in which each author attempts to demonstrate how she/he incorporated the feedback from the previous chapters.

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BibleWorks 7. BibleWorks LLC. Norfolk, VA, \$349.00.

In a comment now found within the brochure for *BibleWorks 7*, I previously agreed with the product's claim to be the “Premier Biblical Exegesis Software Tool” and stated that in my opinion “there is no better software program available for the direct and independent study of the biblical texts themselves.” This latest version has numerous improvements over the previous ones and my opinion regarding the status of this product still holds, although the competition is becoming much hotter.

Using *BibleWorks* basic word searches are as simple as left clicking or right clicking on a word on the screen. To see an instant list of every place where a word (or exact form of a word) appears in a given biblical text or translation one merely double-clicks on the word in its context. If one would like to see every place where any form of that word appears in the Bible one can simple right-click on the word and then choose “Search on Lemma.” Simply by selecting a phrase on the screen with one's cursor and then right-clicking and choosing “Search for String” one will instantly see all the places in the Bible where that exact phrase appears. By using the Advanced Search Engine one may search for virtually any grammatical construction that can be imagined.

Simply by placing the cursor over a Hebrew or Greek word one sees a temporary popup window with the lexical form of the word, its parsing and English glosses (possible translations) for the word. That same information also appears in an auto-info window elsewhere on the screen along with the entry for the word in the lexicon of your choice. BibleWorks has simplified the use of Greek or Hebrew for those who have not studied those languages (or who have forgotten what they learned).

The latest version of *BibleWorks* comes with a new user interface which provides much greater flexibility in arranging the different windows of the program and the ability to keep different projects open at the same time. The editor has also been greatly improved through the addition of many new features, including full support for exporting Unicode texts and files that are fully compatible with Word and WordPad.

It also comes with more texts than ever including the 27th edition of Nestle-Aland. It also comes with Rahlfs' text of the Septuagint and the BHS Hebrew text. The works of Philo, Josephus, and the early Greek fathers are now included in both Greek and English translation.

One may browse through one's favorite Bible text or translation or see a series of texts and translations at the same time in the order of one's choosing (for example, the Hebrew Bible, followed by the Septuagint and then your favorite translations). Inserting a biblical text into a Word document is as easy as pressing control-shift-B and entering the reference for the desired text.

The program comes with all the most popular English Bible translations. It also comes with Bible translations in about 24 other languages. Included are three Hebrew lexicons and six Greek lexicons. The very best Hebrew and Greek lexicons (*HALOT* and *BDAG*) are not included but may be purchased as separate modules. For a full list of the contents see the *BibleWorks* website: <http://www.bibleworks.com/content/full.html>.

BibleWorks has clear focus on the analysis of the biblical texts themselves and it is still my first recommendation for anyone interested in carrying out their own thorough but rapid lexical or grammatical searches/analyses of the biblical texts. This new version includes sentence diagrams (with some notes) for the Greek New Testament which will undoubtedly help folks work their way through texts that would otherwise be unfathomable. But besides its primary emphasis on language, *BibleWorks* also helps the exegete study culture, geography, etc. A feature I enjoy is a great set of satellite maps that makes it easy to find anyplace mentioned in the Bible and to zoom in especially in Israel (and more so in Jerusalem).

This software package has far too many features to be described adequately in a brief review. It comes with a 30-day return guarantee, but I cannot imagine anyone

wanting to return it. It is one of the first programs I start up at the beginning of my workday and one of the last ones I shut down.

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Scholar's Library: Silver - Logos Bible Software 3. Logos Research Systems, Inc., Bellingham, WA \$999.95

There is far more that could be said about Logos Bible Software's new Logos 3 and about the contents included in the newest version of the Scholar's Library: Silver than there is space for in this review. It comes with 520+ titles and hundreds of features that could be mentioned. This review will limit itself to highlighting some key features of interest to pastors and preachers. See www.logos.com/silver for the complete list of contents.

Twenty English Bibles or New Testaments are included (among them: KJV, NIV, NLT, NASB, ESV, NET, CSB, NRSV, NKJV) as well as a variety of Hebrew and Greek texts (including the NA27 and *BHS*) and interlinear and reverse interlinear texts to help those with limited or no knowledge of the original languages. There is a "Bible Word Study" feature that lets one go from an English word to the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic words that it is used to translate and from there to a wealth of information found in various resources in the Logos Library, including a list of the places where those words are used in the Old or New Testament (with texts are shown in the original language and translation). Numerous Bible dictionaries, lexicons and theological dictionaries (including the full and abridged versions of *TDNT*) are also included.

The program comes with a variety of search options, from simple quick searches to much more technical and advanced analyses, including new programs and databases for searching for parallel syntactical structures and words used in specific syntactical roles. Those interested in learning or refreshing their knowledge of the biblical languages will find several Greek and Hebrew grammars to help them.

It comes with a number of commentaries, including the New American Commentary series (31 Volumes), the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament* (10 vols), *The Pulpit Commentary* (77 Volumes), *The Teacher's Commentary*, the *New Bible Commentary*, and commentaries by Matthew Henry, J. B. Lightfoot, and Warren Wiersbe.

There are numerous books on virtually every imaginable aspect of pastoral ministry, such as preaching, prayer, administration, finances, worship, etc. (including, for example, the entire Leadership Library Series). There are books of

quotations, illustrations and sermon starters, as well as a variety of devotionals. There are also useful books on biblical and systematic theology as well as apologetics.

There are tremendous advantages to having access to all of these works through the Logos Libronix system as opposed to buying or reading hard copies of the books. The text size can be adjusted to suit the reader's needs, so that any book can be seen in large or small print depending on your preference. One can easily copy and paste from any of these works into sermon or lecture notes. Finding favorite passages is not usually a problem since all the volumes in one's Logos library can be searched, individually or in customized collections (e.g., your favorite commentaries or dictionaries), for words, exact phrases or more complex searches (including searches for particular topics or scripture references). Notes and highlighting may be attached to any passage you want, and then they can be changed or deleted later if you change your mind. Try that with a regular book!

The user interface is fully customizable and you can have several books open at the same time, layered on top of each other with tabs at the bottom, allowing one to choose which resources should be on top at any given moment. Different books can be linked together so that they all move along with you as you scroll through one Bible or commentary. Key Link associations can be set up so that, for example, one click on a Greek or Hebrew word will automatically bring up the entries on that word in your favorite theological dictionaries and lexicons.

The books included within this package include both cutting-edge research tools and commentaries and some old and outdated materials (including books that are over 100 years old). Books from the 19th century may still have some value to preachers today, but they should only be used with caution and their understanding of the biblical text should be compared with more up-to-date resources.

When deciding whether to purchase one of the Logos 3 base products (e.g., Original Languages Library, Scholar's Library, Scholar's Library: Silver or Scholar's Library: Gold) it is important to consider the contents of each product that you are most likely to use and the price difference between the products in light of the cost to purchase the different desired elements piecemeal. Some of the contents included in this Silver edition that are not found in the more basic Scholar's Library (or the Original Languages Library) include some special morphologically tagged New Testament texts, Keil & Delitzsch, The Pulpit Commentary series, the New American Commentary series, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, the English translation of the early Church Fathers (37 vols.) some systematic theologies and four volumes of sermon starters by Spiros Zodhiates. The list price for the Original Languages Library is \$419.95 and the price for the Scholar's Library is \$629.95. The list price for the Scholar's Library: Gold (which includes a number of commentaries and other academic reference works) is

\$1379.95. Students and professors may be able to arrange academic discounts on this and other Logos products.

There are many Bible research programs available today and each one has its own strengths and weaknesses. One of the tremendous strengths of the Logos products is the incredible number of reference works available either in a package like this one or in separate products that can be added to one's library. No other program comes close to providing us with so much valuable (and searchable) material. Anyone who spends much of their life studying, teaching and preaching the Bible will want to have this program or one of its sisters (the Scholar's Library or Scholar's Library Gold). Such programs are rightfully becoming an essential part of any preacher's (or scholar's) tool kit.

Roy Ciampa

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The Effective Invitation: A Practical Guide for the Pastor. By R. Alan Streett. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004, 0-8254-3799-7, 280 pp., \$13.95, paperback, (originally published Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1984).

Alan Streett is professor of evangelism/pastoral ministry at Criswell College, Dallas, Texas and editor of the *Criswell Theological Review*. This volume began as his Ph.D. dissertation at California Graduate School of Theology. He revised it for Revell twenty years before the present edition. Before he came to Criswell College, Dr. Streett served ten years as a pastor. There he preached verse by verse through Bible books. This may be an important clue as to why he believes every sermon should have an appendix with a new text appropriate to a call to repentance and faith in Christ.

The first chapter defines New Testament terms such as *proclaim* and *evangelize*. The second specifies the content of the invitation in terms of repentance and faith. Chapters three and four answer in the affirmative the question of whether adding a call to public decision is biblical and historical. Streett believes that he has established that the practice is grounded in both Scripture and church history. Most of the book is a defense of that tradition, but his case is not convincing.

One of his proof texts is Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, which might just as well be used to support *not* calling for a public commitment until the people cry out "What shall we do?" (Acts 2.37). He suggests that Spurgeon supported the practice of adding an altar call to the end of every sermon. He did not, of course. Spurgeon opposed the new practice. Martin Luther likewise is cited as one who used the call-to-public-response appendix to his sermons. He did not. Reading transcriptions of Luther's sermons makes it clear that he typically moved from explaining the text to a list of announcements—not an appeal for public commitment.

This is the great weakness of the book; it strains Scripture and church history to justify a tradition relatively recent in the history of preaching. To be sure, many of Streett's historical evidences indeed support sermons that call souls to the Savior, but he uses them as proof of the invitation appendix. An example of Streett's argumentation can be seen in his citation of the preaching of John the Baptist and of Jesus (Luke 15:11-32). First they preached; then they called to repentance, but Streett never seems to make the distinction between a sermon that is a call to Christ and one that adds a call to public response at the end.

After a chapter on Billy Graham's use of the altar call and another answering D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's nine objections to the practice, Streett returns to reasons why the public invitation should prevail. In addition to Scriptural and historical arguments he adds practical, logical, psychological, and other reasons. Chapters 8 and 9 give instruction on how to extend the invitation: "You should select a motivating theme for each invitation....Find scriptures that deal with [this new] topic....Plan to intersperse these scriptures with fitting exhortations.... Next, you must plan an approach that will...move them to act" (160-161). From a homiletical point of view, this sounds like a second sermon. Two final chapters turn to the questions of the place of music and the propriety of appeals to children. He favors both. The following paragraph is typical of the logic prevailing in this work:

What effect does music, during the worship or evangelistic service, have on drawing people to Christ at invitation time? Apparently the apostle Paul believed music to be an important instrument in soul winning. Although Scripture does not reveal what songs Paul and Silas sang during their imprisonment at Philippi (Acts 16:25), it does record the amazing results of their singing. The jailer cried out "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)." (187)

There are five appendixes. The first two list illustrations and Scriptures dealing with repentance and with faith. The third is a list of acceptable motivating themes for invitations. There is no mention of inappropriate motives. The fourth appendix is an essay answering "thoroughgoing Calvinists" who critiqued an earlier edition of this work. Streett believes that he has studied the evidence carefully and cannot "improve on the New Testament method of calling people to Christ" (244). The fifth is a list of thirty-seven selected invitational hymns.

In spite of the book's flawed polemic, it is worth reading because it represents a common tradition on an issue of vital concern to preachers and those who train them.

Austin B. Tucker

Shreveport, LA

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Preaching the Gospel: Without Easy Answers. By Robert Cummings Neville. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005, 0-687-33176-5, 168 pp., \$18.00, paperback.

The gospel isn't easy. Good preachers know it. The best preachers own up to it in their preaching, struggling with the implications of their proclamation so as to encourage a deep and powerful response. Robert Neville Cumming's *Preaching the Gospel* is a collection of sermons, united in their attempt to apply the gospel to the hard questions of contemporary life.

Neville is Dean of Marsh Chapel (Boston University). These sermons feel like they were prepared for a university crowd. These are highly theological, inductive sermons, tuned for the mind. They are well informed by Scripture, though the biblical text is not always the sermon's genesis or governing dynamic. Sermon texts are derived from the lectionary, providing examples and insight for a preacher who follows the church calendar.

Neville does not serve as an example of homiletical creativity or innovation in communication. He tends rather, to aim his preaching at the comfortable mainline Christian he is accustomed to in his chapel, working to press the gospel on listeners sometimes embarrassed by its implications.

Of course, evangelicals are not immune to such embarrassment. While we might fancy ourselves to be faithful to the Scripture wherever it leads, the truth might shame us on occasion. We could profit, for instance, from heeding Neville's 4th of July sermon, "God is Not Mocked," in which he challenges his listeners to evaluate their faith for evidence of a civil religion that does not correspond to what we find in Scripture.

I would have preferred a more cogent description of "the gospel" from a book so strongly titled. But perhaps that was not truly Neville's aim. This is a book about the ethics of Christian faith and as such, is worth consideration.

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Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition. By Calvin Miller. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006. 0-8010-1290-2, 285 pp. \$21.99 hardback.

Calvin Miller is professor of divinity and pastoral ministry at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. *Preaching* is a basic homiletical textbook with emphasis on narrative style. It is the most recent of over forty books from his pen. If a member of EHS can buy only one more book this year, let it be Miller's *Preaching*. Miller is a wordsmith and an out-of-the box thinker. Taking a cue from Craddock, he shuns stuffing pages with long quotes. Endnotes give quotes, guidance for further study, and credit where it is due.

Miller gives us nine chapters in three groupings. *Part 1 Analysis: The Exegesis of All Things*, has four chapters. Chapter 1, “Who’s Talking,” exegetes the preacher who should be a person of faith, of information, a mystic, and a shepherd. Chapter 2, “Who’s Out There?” deals with audience analysis. Chapter 3, “Whadda Ya Hear Me Sayin’?” is about “substance analysis . . . relational analysis [and] spiritual formation analysis.” Chapter 4, “So What’s to Be Done Now?” addresses sermon application. Most people would rather listen to sermons than act on them. Each chapter includes worksheets designed to develop the skills discussed.

Part 2, Writing the Sermon: Three more chapters take us through the stages of sermon preparation. Chapter 5 deals with the text, title, theme, pacing, and preparing. “The sermon must not speak for God, it must allow God to speak for himself” (101-102). “A great thesis,” says Miller, “is kindergarten in its clarity and Harvard in its force” (107). Distinct from the thesis, Miller recommends the “motif” as a kind of rhetorical call that keeps the sermon on track (108-109). The motif for a sermon on Balaam becomes “Disobedience to God is a reckless path.”

“Pacing” is the matter of sermon intensity, balancing passion and relief in sermon content and in delivery. “Preparing” readies the preacher’s own mind and soul as well as the message. The chapter also gives guidance on the use of supporting Scriptures and a brief treatment of preaching in series.

Chapter 6, “Digging for Treasure,” is about the art of exegeting Scripture. The sermon may begin in the Bible or in the congregation. “Long ago I learned that more than half of any pastor’s congregation come to church broken and in the grip of some life issue that is eating at their well-being”(127). Preachers are advised to preach the text confessionally. Live in openness with the flock, but never betray or embarrass anyone. The preacher’s own testimony about the text should be transferable to the hearers.

Stories are the stuff of persuasion. One of the most creative features of the volume is Miller’s guidance on how to give narrative presentation to a biblical precept. He knows that the congregation holds both left-brained and right-brained listeners. In Chapter 7, “Imagining the Argument,” Miller calls for the text to control all sermon narratives. How can that happen? Metaphor and narrative spring from word study. A word from the original language of the text or from the definition and history of English words may suggest narratives. Building story characters is also an important part of narrative. Some homileticsians want hearers to be free to draw their own moral from a story; Miller insists that the point be crystal clear.

Part 3, Preaching the Sermon, contains two chapters on delivery. This is about one-sixth of the whole work. Both chapters sparkle with humor and practical guidance. In “Delivering the Sermon,”(Chapter 8), Miller encourages a natural style with passion which does not imitate our heroes. Passion is not volume but intensity of

feeling. Mary Magdalene's Easter morning visit to the empty tomb remarkably illustrates "six purveyors of passion"(184-85). "Seven axioms of delivery" include nitty-gritty details such as illumination of the pulpit and working with sound technicians who like to play with the volume control.

Chapter 9 continues the delivery theme. In stressing the altar call as a place of encounter with God, Miller admits, "I realize that the word *altar* used by a Baptist homiletician scares Episcopalians to within an inch of their Edwardian confession" (202). He delivers a trainload of practical advice on everything from body language to creating community.

An appendix on "Mentoring from the Contemporary Masters" selects one indispensable element of sermon form or style identified with each of ten homiliticians: Robinson, Pitt-Watson, Chapell, Taylor, Long, Stott, Lowry, Buttrick, Coggan, and one more. Miller is brash enough to put himself on the list at the end, because he does not find anyone else stressing the altar call as an essential element of form in sermons.

Austin B. Tucker

Shreveport, LA



The Word Made Plain: The Power and Promise of Preaching. By James Henry Harris. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004, 0-8006-3687-2, 160 pp., \$17.00, paperback.

In *The Word Made Plain*, James Henry Harris proposes that African American sermons are characterized by artistic creativity and cultural relevance. First, he argues that artistic creativity is normative to the content and form of preaching. Artistry is the preacher's aim. In Chapter 5, he highlights the importance of "story-telling" as a form of artistic expression. He points out its differences with narrative preaching because of its blend of historical, cultural, and folk traditions. He contends that the preacher should be an expert in telling the story imaginatively and compellingly. However, the astute preacher not only cares about what words are used, but *how* they are used (chapter 4). Harris believes that form (delivery) and content (the story) are the same. What are the words *and* how do the words sound? What is communicated, but also, what is the rhythm and cadence of the message? What does one say *and* what gestures does one use?

His second emphasis is on cultural relevance. By cultural relevance, we mean close correspondence with the context of the listener. *The Word Made Plain* is a reference to the frequent statement heard in congregations, "Make it plain, preacher!" The title of the book suggests that context is central to Harris's homiletic. Listeners expect the preacher to clearly interpret the Word in a way that "speaks to the heart and soul" (ix). Harris comments further on the interaction between preacher and congregation in Chapter 3. In Chapter 6, we are introduced to the "Harris Method," his way of making the Word plain. In his view, preaching plainly

involves interpreting the text *and* interpreting the context. Sermons that do not interpret both text and context are destined to fail.

This book is actually two books in one. The first part (Chs.1-2) is largely autobiographical and focuses on how the preacher is influenced. Harris writes broadly about self-understanding and specifically about the preachers that influenced him (King, Ellison, Proctor, and Jones). Only the person that is interested in the background of Harris's theology and in these particular preachers will find this section compelling. The second part of the book (Chs.3-6) deals with methodology. What it lacks in substance in the first section, it makes up for here. It is less anecdotal and more substantive. Its emphasis is on the formation, delivery, and context of the sermon. His discussions of orality (Ch. 4) and imagination (Ch. 5) are especially insightful. Any student of preaching interested in learning more about imagination, application, and story-telling in African American preaching should read this book. However, if you are looking for a broader overview of preaching in this tradition, consult books by Cleophus J. LaRue or Henry H. Mitchell.

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Weary Throats and New Songs: Black Women Proclaiming God's Word. By Teresa L. Fry Brown. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003, 0-687-03013-7, 251 pp., \$24.00, paperback.

Weary Throats and New Songs is a window into the preparation and proclamation of God's Word among women preachers in the African American tradition. Teresa L. Fry Brown, an African American Homiletics professor at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, presents the findings of a survey of 116 ordained and non-ordained respondents covering a broad range of issues including calling, obstacles, preparation of sermons, verbal and non-verbal delivery, and mentoring. She quotes, critiques, and meticulously analyzes this diverse group of "sistah preachers" (9) throughout the book.

Chapter 1 is a historical sketch of the earliest African American women preachers dating back to the 1800s. Chapter 2 catalogues the opportunities and challenges modern women face in responding to God's call on their lives to preach. Chapter 3 is an evaluation of their sermon preparation. Chapter 4 deals with the content of the sermon. Chapters 5 and 6 cover style and context. Chapter 7 is a brief conclusion and suggestions for further research. Every chapter includes direct quotations from respondents and concludes with a representative sermon.

The results of the survey lead Brown to make two significant conclusions. First, her analysis leads her to make an important disclaimer about her findings. Although race and gender play a critical role in their preaching, Brown is the first to admit that

there are also other factors that shape them as preachers. Being black and being a woman are major influences, but there are also others such as age, denomination, geographical location, ministry duration, and access to mentoring. In the words of Brown, these women are “as diverse as they are in number” (218). Although they share similarities, there are also compelling differences between them.

Secondly, her analysis leads her to challenge women in this tradition to overcome oppressive influences and to preach “new songs.” The obstacles of race and gender have hindered and shackled them historically. Brown is inviting them to break into pulpits, churches, and denominations that were formerly exclusive with a message of inclusive, liberating, truthful, and hopeful preaching. She seeks to empower her readers to live out their calling with renewed assurance and steadfast determination.

The fundamental strength of the book is that it is a study of an under-explored segment of the African American preaching tradition. There are few resources in this subject area, especially ones that use recent findings. Its primary weakness is that it runs long. It is more exhaustive than it needs to be. It could use fewer quotations from survey respondents to make it a faster, more engaging read.

Although Brown suggests otherwise, her audience is fairly narrow: African American women preachers. If this describes you, it is a must-read. It would also be an insightful, helpful book to any homiletician outside this tradition who is interested in exploring the obstacles created by gender. In addition, any student that has an interest in African American preaching in general would appreciate it because of its attention to an under-explored segment of this tradition.

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The Witness of Preaching, Second Edition. By Thomas G. Long. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 97800-664-22943-6, 267 pp., \$24.95, paperback.

Some homiletics texts focus on the methodology of preaching. They provide practical advice on mechanics of sermon preparation. Others focus on theology and philosophy, aiming for the heart of the preacher. Thomas Long’s *The Witness of Preaching*, manages to do all of this and more, offering concrete direction on the techniques of preaching as it kindles a fire in the bones of the preacher.

The preacher is in a unique position, according to Long. Those who preach stand before the congregation; but they also come from the congregation. As a member of the congregation the preacher has an obligation to those who hear, functioning as a sympathetic advocate who will listen to the text on their behalf and as a faithful mediator who will bear witness to its truth.

Long examines the primary images that govern what the church thinks a preacher ought to be and do. As a “herald,” the purpose of preaching is “to be the occasion for the hearing of a voice beyond the preacher’s voice, the very word of the living God” (20). As a “pastor,” the preacher focuses on the listener. “The herald has one job, remaining faithful to the message” Long explains, “but the pastoral preacher must think about what parts of that message hearers need at this moment and what aspects of the gospel they can receive amid the pain and clutter of their lives” (29). As a “storyteller,” the preacher seeks to engage the imagination.

The image that Long feels is most suited to the character of preaching is that of a “witness.” The witness image emphasizes the authority of the preacher’s personal experience of the Word of God. “When the preacher prepares a sermon by wrestling with a biblical text, the preacher is not merely gathering information about the text” Long explains. “The preacher is listening for a voice, looking for a presence, hoping for the claim of God to be encountered through the text.”

Biblical conservatives will be disturbed by the neo-orthodoxy that seems to underlie some of Long’s statements about the Bible. Long asserts: “Every text is a product of a particular time and place and reflects cultural attitudes and assumptions that are not necessarily the gospel” (57). As a result, Long contends, there are times when the preacher must bear witness *against* the text. Long also warns that the culture of the interpreter introduces “static” and may cause the preacher to force his own culture upon the text. It seems odd, then, for him to say that texts which “scream cultural bias” should be interpreted by the community (58).

Long seems to have more confidence in the Holy Spirit’s ability to guide the preacher and the community of faith in their work of interpreting the text than he does in the Spirit’s ability to control those who wrote the biblical text in the first place. He does not think that Scripture is necessarily “perfect, inerrant, completely consistent, or historically precise” (55).

Despite this weakness, Long’s book deserves its status as a best selling homiletics text and is worthy of the reader’s careful attention. His practical suggestions are simple and helpful, but his thinking on the nature of preaching makes this book stand out among the crowd.

John Koessler

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From the Housetops: Preaching in the Early Church and Today. By Bruce E. Shields. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000, 0-8272-1031-0, 180 pp., \$19.95, paperback.

As a scholar in orality studies, Bruce Shields brings a welcome connection between the communicative context of the first century Roman world and the resulting

Scripture that grew out of that world. Moving away from modern (read Enlightenment) approaches which Shields sees as too dominated by literacy, the author attempts to demonstrate the oral ground under much of the gospels and epistles of the New Testament. Although he claims no exhaustive treatment, his lively survey of dozens of contextual snapshots shows how both the apostles and their original audiences conceived the gospel as spoken first and written only secondarily.

Influenced by Walter Ong, John Austin, Marshal McLuhan and other scholars of orality, Shields sets out to recover some of the lost power that reigned when spoken words were primary and sermons were less lectures and more speech events of performative utterance and prophetic announcement. For Shields, the medium of the message is inseparable from the content of the message and cannot be relegated to suitcase status.

Disproportionate emphasis on the sermon as a stand-alone composition will keep it sterile and disconnected from a live audience. Shields also advocates more emphasis on reading Scripture out loud to liberate it from it from the printed page, and the use of narrative and dramatic forms to loosen literacy's grip on the homiletic event. Focusing on Romans 10:17 as a model of the oral/aural approach, preaching is nothing less than the dispensing of God's grace through the air (as opposed to text).

For those unaccustomed to conceiving of Scripture orally, this is a worthy introduction to the topic. I found chapters 1 and 11 the most interesting with their linkage of language and rhetorical theory to homiletics. One issue that deserves more thought is the relationship between the visual world of multi-media and the worlds of text and speech. Shields welcomes multi-media as an ally in the struggle against too much literacy. Yet in many senses the video/TV world is more linked to the eye than the ear. Though more flashy, it has many of the weaknesses of literacy in its "finished" and generic style. Ironically, too much video could pull preachers away from the oral/aural world Shields so passionately advocates.

Nevertheless, this book helps orient the reader to the tensions in modern/post-modern homiletics and orality studies. But any book advocating orality is itself a contradiction. To be internally consistent, Dr. Shields should be invited to explain his approach in person over a cup of tea, which would no doubt be an afternoon well-spent.

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Preaching: An Essential Guide. By Ronald J. Allen. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 0-687-04516-0, 135pp., \$16.00, paperback.

Do not let this slim volume fool you. *Preaching: An Essential Guide* is bursting at the spine with practical exercises, probing questions, and frequent recommendations “for lay pastors and beginning seminary students who are new to preaching” (9). While Allen suggests this book can also serve as “an update on current thinking about preaching” (9) for experienced preachers, those who are familiar with Allen’s writings will recognize, between the covers of this work, his previously stated homiletical theory.

In the introductory pages, Allen presents a sample sermon of his own which is used to illustrate his homiletical theory in subsequent chapters. The following seven chapters lead the reader through a series of questions that are intended to help inexperienced preachers prepare sermons. These seven questions are: (1) What is the good news from God in the sermon? (2) Does the sermon honor the integrity of the Bible or the topic? (3) Is the sermon theologically adequate? (4) Does the sermon relate the text or topic to the congregation in a responsible way? (5) What is the significance of the sermon for the congregation? (6) Does the sermon move in a way that is easy to follow? (7) Does the preacher embody the sermon in an engaging way? Allen closes with four useful appendices that feature a sequence of steps to prepare a sermon, a summary of questions to guide sermon feedback, four options for planning one’s preaching, and a brief annotated bibliography of resources for beginning preachers.

Preaching: An Essential Guide may be useful as a catalyst to spur both beginning and experienced preachers, especially from non-Evangelical traditions, toward rethinking the purposes of preaching and the process of preparing sermons. It also is effective in providing “a model for conducting a feedback session” (9).

Nevertheless, this is not a book I would readily give to one of my beginning students or to a lay preacher since it seems willing to substitute the role of the biblical text in preaching with a “full-bodied understanding of the possible meanings . . . of the origin and manifestation of the topic” (28). Although Allen states, “I join most other people who teach preaching in believing that expository preaching should be the usual focus of parish preaching” (29), one wonders if Allen’s treatment of topics, as if they are on par with biblical texts, can accomplish what he identifies as the basic purpose of preaching, namely, “to bring good news from God to the congregation” (19, emphasis mine). Furthermore, most seminary students would benefit from a more comprehensive homiletical textbook, a claim Allen seems to acknowledge and account for with his brief annotated bibliography in Appendix D.

Shawn D. Radford

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From Pew to Pulpit: A Beginner's Guide to Preaching. By Clifton F. Guthrie. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, 0-687-06660-3, 116 pp., \$13.00, paperback.

This earthy little book makes few assumptions of its readers. In fact, Guthrie intentionally targets readers who have no formal education, few solid or up-to-date preaching resources, and who can enjoy the freedoms of an itinerant lay-preacher. Simply put, “This book is meant for folks . . . whose backsides have not forgotten the feel of the pew” (xi). Guthrie’s objective is to take these uneducated and inexperienced preachers through a process of formulating and “embodying” a sermon that he has personally found both functional as well as applicable for his seminary students.

The opening chapter briefly highlights the “many and curious ways” that God calls ordinary people to preach. Special encouragement is given to women and lay preachers who might be reluctant to participate in a ministry from which they have often been barred. Chapter 2 encourages preachers to embrace the communal nature of preaching by recognizing that one preaches within a local community of faith, with a community of fellow preachers (especially due to the developments of the lectionary and internet), and within the community of saints. Nevertheless, even within this fellowship, the preacher is encouraged to trust one’s experiences as a hearer of sermons, especially sermons that “created or evoked intense emotional experiences” (14).

Chapters 3 through 10 outline the how-to-do-it topics one would expect to find in an introductory homiletics book such as how to choose a text or subject, how to hear the Bible again for the first time, how to engage in constructive study, how to focus the message, how to decide what sermon form to adopt, how to craft the message, and how to embody the sermon. The final two chapters address the process for continued growth through self-evaluation and input from trustworthy people.

Most experienced preachers and teachers of homiletics will not find much new within this book. Ultimately, you may be disappointed with the absence of citations, the deficient and outdated nature of the information on the recommended website, as well as the truncated nature of the discussions at some points. Nevertheless, there is a gem to be found within the pages of this little volume. Rarely will you find such comprehensive, practical, and superb advice on how to read the Bible afresh and enter into both a devotional and a fruitful dialogue with its Author.

Shawn D. Radford

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What Makes This Day Different? Preaching Grace on Special Occasions. By David J. Schlafer. Boston: Cowley, 1998. 1-56101-156-8, 171 pp., \$14.95, paperback.

This is a book about preaching on special occasions. David Schlafer, an Episcopal priest who has taught preaching at three of his denominational seminaries, highlights the special-ness of this kind of preaching: “What makes this day different?” An answer to that question is also what Christians seek in a sermon on a special occasion Different concerns come to the fore at different times” (3).

Schlafer’s book is filled with good advice on preaching on such occasions. He observes the following about the special occasion sermon: “A special occasion sermon works together with its occasion, lifting up the day’s significance” (10). Schlafer also notes, “Instead of applying scripture texts to the situation like Post-it notes, or illustrating it with personal anecdotes, the preacher is called to interpret the scripture and the situation in light of each other” (41).

The book is divided into four parts. Part One: Special Occasions as Grace-Catchers; Part Two: Individuals as Preaching Prisms; Part Three: Days as Preaching Prisms; and Part Four: Circumstances as Preaching Prisms.

Schlafer advises preachers to hold “up one facet of grace that is unique to a particular occasion” (5). He advocates that the special occasion preacher is not to preach around, about, or at an occasion, but through it—to understand the history, to be sensitive to the movement and flow of the occasion, and to use the occasion as a “homiletical window” for the sermon. This “window” is the fresh perspective on the grace of God for the occasion.

As for “Individuals as Preaching Prisms,” Schlafer focuses on weddings and funerals, which he defines as “rites of passage.” He also examines under “Preaching Prisms” preaching at baptisms, ordinations, and celebrations of new ministries. Finally, he examines preaching the lives of saints. What Schlafer hints at but does not define specifically is what he means by “preaching prisms.”

The third section of the book is dedicated to preaching on Holy Days, Festival Celebrations, and Civic Holidays. The final division considers preaching in difficult social or theological situations, in different congregational circumstances, retreats, and mission preaching.

The book is flavored by Schlafer’s Episcopalian heritage. He speaks of preaching at baptisms, weddings, funerals, ordinations, and saint’s days. The church year figures prominently in the pages of the book. And, as noted above, almost one fourth of the book is dedicated to preaching at church year-related services. A preacher not familiar with the church year will benefit from reading this book.

Schlafer takes the perspective of “grace” for preaching. That is, the book instructs the preacher how to preach grace through special occasions. At times Schlafer is clear about what it means to preach grace while at other times the reader is left wondering. All preachers want to bring the grace of God to the special occasion. We also want to bring the Word to the occasion that respects the intention of the text. Schlafer is not always clear in this respect. However, his book will give preachers a fresh perspective on the preaching of special occasion sermons, especially if their preaching at such events is routine.

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Preach the Word: A Pentecostal Approach. By Aldwin Ragoonath. Winnipeg: Agape Teaching Ministry of Canada, 2004, 0-9734468-0-3, 239 pp., \$19.95 U.S., paperback.

Ragoonath accurately identifies the distinctives and values of Pentecostal preaching.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4 he gives a summary description of the theology, history, and hermeneutics of Pentecostal preaching—wise inclusions because you cannot understand Pentecostal preaching apart from them. Chapters 5 through 9 cover: types of sermons; preaching, healing, and deliverance services; outlining a sermon; sermon delivery; and culture and preaching.

What I found most interesting was the emphasis the author placed on William J. Seymour, the African American point man at Azusa Street, providing not only a brief biography of him but also examples of his sermons and his doctrinal statement.

The book shows that central to understanding Pentecostal preaching is the term that for the author is synonymous: *apostolic preaching*. Pentecostals base their theology and practice and preaching in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles as reflected in the Gospels and Acts. From that follows one of the key emphases of Pentecostal preaching: that the teaching and proclamation of the Word is of one piece with the prayer and ministry time that follows as well as the worship that precedes it. As much as its doctrinal distinctives, that is a key mark of Pentecostal preaching.

The author shows that bound up inextricably with the idea of apostolic preaching is the importance of seeking, through prayer and fasting and faith, the power of God for changing lives. The goal is to preach in a way that builds up faith and leads to prayers that intercede successfully for healing, deliverance, sanctification.

Another key element highlighted by the author especially as it relates to hermeneutics of Pentecostals is the importance of experience. Not any experience. Not extra-biblical experience. Ragoonath says that Pentecostal preaching is based on the preacher first re-experiencing the text. The Holy Spirit helps the preacher not only to understand the text but to be moved by the text and convinced of its truth. In common terms, Pentecostal preachers don't preach a text until God speaks to them in that text. It has to come alive through the Holy Spirit.

In what may strike some readers as curious, the author takes to task deductive and inductive logic, "Aristotelian logic" (31,73). At first I wasn't sure what he meant by this. Surely an author who stresses the importance of homiletics as he does is not lobbying for illogical outlines. Is this one more expression of the stereotypical, anti-intellectual sentiment of Pentecostals? No, Ragoonath beats the drum repeatedly for the value placed by Pentecostals on biblical preaching. He says Pentecostals believe the structure of the sermon should reflect the form of the text. In Pentecostal preaching the moves come from the text rather than from *theological reasoning*. Pentecostals may not put much stock in intricate theology, but they know and love their Bibles. For them, preaching is all about, "The Bible says...."

The book has weaknesses, which need not be fatal. Ragoonath makes some sweeping generalizations ("A sermon may not always originate from a text—that is too Calvinistic," [81]) I could not agree with all his terms, categories, and definitions ("The Bible has a spirit worldview. It has two worlds of understanding—the physical [logical] and the spiritual [non-logical]," [31]). His assumptions and occasional prescriptions may rankle non-Pentecostals ("One of the invariables in anointed people is that the supernatural follows their preaching," [27]). He does not always develop ideas as well or fully as needed.

But if your goal is to understand, not necessarily to agree with, Pentecostal preaching, you will be glad you read this book. And if you feel your preaching or homiletics classes have gotten dry, this book may present a way of approaching preaching that brings renewed vitality.

Craig Brian Larson

Christianity Today International
Carol Stream, IL

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Famine in the Land: A Passionate Call for Expository Preaching. By Steven J. Lawson. Chicago: Moody 2003, 0-8024-1121-5, 128 pp., \$14.99 hardback.

Steven J. Lawson, founding pastor of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church in Mobile, is author of numerous books and commentaries and has served as a guest lecturer at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Master's Seminary. In *Famine in the Land*, he offers preachers a devotional challenge for biblical preaching. He sets forth his purpose in the Introduction, "These pages are intended to fortify the

allegiance of all who proclaim the Word, . . . to rally all who are in the trenches faithfully preaching and teaching the Scripture to discern and deflect the many threats that have arisen . . . against expounding the full counsel of God” (19).

The book is structured in four chapters with alliterated subtitles concerning biblical preaching: the priority, the power, the pattern, and the passion. The author writes that these chapters “are expositions of the Scripture, actually modeling what they call for, namely, a God-centered message extracted from a biblical text” (19). Lawson is true to this intention. Chapter 1, “Feast or Famine,” deals primarily with Acts 2:42-47. Chapter 2, “The Need of the Hour,” follows the book of Jonah. Chapter 3, “Bring the Book,” focuses on the experience of Ezra and Nehemiah. The final chapter, “No Higher Calling,” draws on 1 Timothy 4:13-16.

As the title of the book suggests, Lawson sees today’s preaching as in crisis. He writes that the pulpit today “is now being overshadowed by . . . everything from trendy worship styles to glitzy presentations and vaudeville-like pageantries” (25). He asserts that preachers today are “forsaking a steady diet of biblical exposition” (27), that “evangelical churches desperately need to return to the primacy of the apostles’ teaching” (34). Pastors seem content to deliver “secular-sounding, motivational pep talks aimed at soothing the felt needs of restless church shoppers or, worse, salving the guilty consciences of unregenerate church members” (39).

Lawson sees the heart of this crisis as “a loss of confidence in God’s power to use His Word” (57). As a result, he charges, “Most of evangelical preaching has become increasingly impotent, and sadly, too few realize it” (57). Their use of the Bible in preaching, he says, has become like the singing of the national anthem at a ballgame, just a ceremonial item that isn’t critical to the program.

The solution to this “famine” of biblical preaching involves a return to the zeal, the methods, and teachings of the apostles. It requires a confidence in the power of God’s word to do its work. A corollary to this confidence is a commitment to the centrality of God’s word preached in the power of the Spirit. Lawson advocates in his final chapter a whole-hearted devotion to the high and holy calling to preach the Word.

One suggestion especially resonates with this reviewer. Lawson appeals for an emphasis on the public reading of Scripture in worship. Though this practice is seen throughout the biblical account, today’s worship services often give little or no attention to the reading of the Word.

One strength of *Famine in the Land* is its use of Scripture passages as the basis for the writer’s thought. At the same time, that may be a weakness because the book sounds a lot like a series of sermons. The writer’s passion for his subject is evident, but the devotional tone of the book leads more to inspiration than practical help.

It seems obvious, however, that Steven Lawson intended to exhort rather than to teach. In this he has accomplished his purpose.

Wayne McDill

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Preaching and Worship. By Thomas H. Troeger. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003, 0-8272-2978-X, 137 pp., \$19.99, paperback.

Preaching and Worship is part of the “Preaching and its Partners” series, published by Chalice Press. In the book’s first chapter, Troeger thoughtfully examines “Culture as a Constellation of the Senses.” The remaining chapters probe, specifically, the impact of our cultural understandings upon the: eye, ear, body, language and meaning. His examination is multidisciplinary and grounded in significant pastoral experience, mostly in mainline denominational settings. For pastors who take the design of congregational worship seriously (as, of course, all pastors should), there is much here that is thoughtful, provocative, and evocative.

There are also a couple of things that will likely disappoint evangelical pastors who are seeking guidance on the interface between preaching and worship. First, the book does not really deal with the subject suggested by the book’s title. Something like *Culture and Worship*, it seems to this reviewer, would summarize its contributions to pastoral ministry. There are, to be sure, numerous issues raised that have some implications for preaching. But, for the most part, this book is about becoming aware of how culture affects our approach to worship, to communication, to theology, and to interacting with the world around us.

Secondly, evangelical readers will probably be disturbed, at least at times, by the author’s approach to issues of biblical authority and to the nature of the Bible itself. Some of his comments proved quite frustrating to this reviewer. For example, citing Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 14:15 that “I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will also sing praise with my mind,” Troeger argues that Paul, because of his cultural baggage, was nervous about music and wary of its power (61). These remarks disappoint on three levels. First, the exegesis of the passage in question is dubious. Second, this notion flies in the face of Paul’s comments elsewhere (e.g. Eph. 5:18ff; Col. 3:16). Third, the argument betrays an approach to biblical inspiration and authority that most evangelicals will find most inadequate.

Still, this little book raises many thoughtful questions about the tremendous impact our cultural upbringing has upon our approach to worship, both as participants and as pastoral leaders. Those of us who have moved mostly within the various American evangelical subcultures do well to hear from thoughtful folks like Troeger, who have moved largely in different circles. A book like this, if read well—that is, with an open and discerning mind—can help us recognize the

strengths and limitations of our own cultural tendencies and those of our fellow congregants. Thus, though it may be titled misleadingly, the book can still prove to be significant for evangelicals engaged in parish ministry in these days when we are being increasingly alerted to the diversity and complexity of the cultures in which we live and labor.

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Wonderous Depth: Preaching the Old Testament. By Ellen F. Davis. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 0-664-22859-3, 162 pp., \$19.95, paperback.

In this compressed and creative effort Ellen Davis, Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, offers both advice and exemplars for preaching Old Testament Scriptures that were first offered in her 2003 Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School. Her purpose is to link Bible interpretation to preaching by viewing both disciplines as closely related arts. This is needed given a mutual aversion between academic exegetes and applied preachers, so she proposes the exercise of “disciplined imagination” to bridge the gap between them. How is this done? She answers by inviting readers to the pre-Enlightenment era for principles and to a pair of noted English preachers, Lancelot Andrewes (Tudor-Stuart era) and John Donne (early Stuart era), as models. Why this leap backwards? Because her students lack the positive “astonishment” that should stir readers of the Old Testament, in part because their critical exegetical training presses them to see the distance between the original texts and our own era as too broad and complex to offer any practical benefits for today.

Davis offers a solution to this tension by adopting a premodern reading of the text. This reflects her canonical approach—treating texts as they stand in the Bible apart from historical-critical assessments. This supports use of the Old Testament as an “immediate presence” able to shape lives. She explains her use of a disciplined imagination in Chapter 1 and displays it in the second chapter by applying it to the Psalms followed by the premodern exemplar of Donne’s sermon on Psalm 63:7. She repeats the exercise in chapter three—“An Abundance of Meaning”—as applied to other Old Testament genres through the use of moderated allegory. The chapter concludes with the example of Andrewes’ sermon on Lamentations 1:12 which she supports with introductory comments. The book concludes in a fifth chapter with four examples of Davis’s own Old Testament sermons accompanied by brief explanatory features that link the content of the book to each of the sermons. A short index of cited Scriptures is included.

The strength of her approach is that the Old Testament Scriptures are treated as a powerful resource for life. Her suggestions are likely to be most useful to seminarians in schools where historical-critical emphases and historico-social

concerns are so much a part of the exegetical program that a given Bible text may lose narrative coherence and personal immediacy. A bit of academic bias is still apparent in the book as Davis—after noting that her egalitarian views are meant for her teaching and not her preaching—attributes the composition of Psalm 39 (designated in the text as “a Psalm of David”) to a woman. And, again, as her sermon on Genesis 21, preached at Yale Divinity School, is discussed as part of the “Elohist” tradition. By contrast seminarians trained in schools that treat the biblical traditions as essentially reliable will already have a more text-centered exegetical approach. The benefit of Davis’s canonical work is that the two traditions—mainline, post-liberal; and evangelical, conservative, are both able to preach the Bible with a shared devotion to the face-value reading of the text.

Yet any consolidation of seminary approaches to preaching the Old Testament is not yet fully supported by Davis’s discussion. Her approach to premodern readings of the text begins by adopting Origen’s multiple-meaning hermeneutic. This third century preacher famously made the literal meaning the least appreciated meaning of any text. Davis holds that his approach is a way forward in unleashing creative allegory. Given this she looks for more creative depths of meaning—happily she prefers Christological themes as a centering point; but for those who prefer the insistence of early Protestant reformers that a narrower authorial intention must remain prescriptive, there is room for some skepticism—albeit with many points of appreciation—about the overall value of Davis’s contribution for the evangelical seminarian and preacher.

R. N. Frost

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Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square. Edited by Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 0-664-22750-3, 167 pp., \$24.95 paperback.

Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square is a collection of essays written by fourteen faculty members from Princeton Theological Seminary. The stated purpose of the book is “to continue thinking about the implications of what we have learned about lament for the way we worship and pray, the way we do pastoral care, what we believe about God, how we think theologically, and how we respond to a world increasingly marked by the ravages of calculated political and religious violence” (xvi). The scope of interests represented among the authors includes, but is not limited to, the discipline of homiletics.

Part One, entitled *Reclaiming Lament in Christian Prayer and Proclamation*, emphasizes two themes. First is the need to permit, indeed encourage, people to fully vent their grief and anger in prayer to God. Nancy Duff argues “that the practice of lament needs to be recovered in the church and that psalms of lament

can be used to encourage the Christian church today to allow room for true lamentation in our corporate and individual lives of prayer and worship” (4). She takes issue with our tendency to rush people through the grief process (5), and with the notion that “for Christians, continued expressions of grief after a death are considered a sign of weak faith” (4-5).

Second, is the need to understand the precise nature of lament and to recognize how lament differs from other similar types of prayer, such as the dirge. Patrick D. Miller notes, “The term *lament*, which is a modern invention, is in some ways an unfortunate one for the Psalms. The Bible knows lament and speaks specifically about lament, but it is the dirge for the dead that is in mind there The lament encountered in the Psalms and elsewhere is a prayer for help, and to pray that way is not simply to lament our condition and complain to God” (18).

Part Two, entitled *Loss and Lament, Human and Divine* is an assortment of essays. In this section, C. Clifton Black takes a very different approach to that of William Stacy Johnson on the subject of Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22:1 from the cross. Johnson maintains that the evangelists had in mind the entire text of Psalm 22—especially the psalm’s triumphant ending—as they laid out their theology of the cross. He presents this as evidence that God did not abandon his Son as he suffered on the cross. “The cumulative weight of these parallels is quite impressive, making it hard to avoid the conclusion that the whole psalm is being invoked by Mark to make his theological point: Jesus cried out to God not in despair but for deliverance” (81-82).

Black comes to the opposite conclusion: “We must beware of evasive maneuvers that would dull the knife-edged offense: for instance, the suggestion that a quotation from Psalm 22:1 is overwhelmed by that lament’s confident conclusion (vv. 22-31). I confess that such an interpretation has never persuaded me It is no less true—from the evangelists’ point of view—that Jesus ultimately, faithfully prayed to a God whose presence he could not perceive” (51).

Taking together all of Johnson’s arguments, he appears to be replacing the doctrine of substitutionary atonement with a gospel of mere solidarity, “Knowing that God is *for* us, because God is for the crucified; and knowing that God is *with* us, because God is with Jesus in his cry; so we also know, by the power of the resurrection, that God is always at work among us, calling us to be *for* and *with* one another” (91).

Part Three, entitled *Reclaiming the Public Voice of Lament*, focuses primarily on lament as it relates to societal and international suffering and evil. With the exception of Brian K. Blount’s sermon on Revelation 6:9-11, the authors in this section depart from biblical lament and turn to other sources such as African American Spirituals, *The Iliad*, and 4 Ezra as the basis for their reflections.

This book contains some thought-provoking chapters on the nature of lament and grief. These essays stretch beyond a superficial response to painful losses, both in the lives of individuals and in the world. Other essays in the volume were less helpful. As a possible resource for a course in homiletics, the book would probably be most appropriate as an additional resource for the reserve shelf for students who wish to refine their understanding of lament.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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