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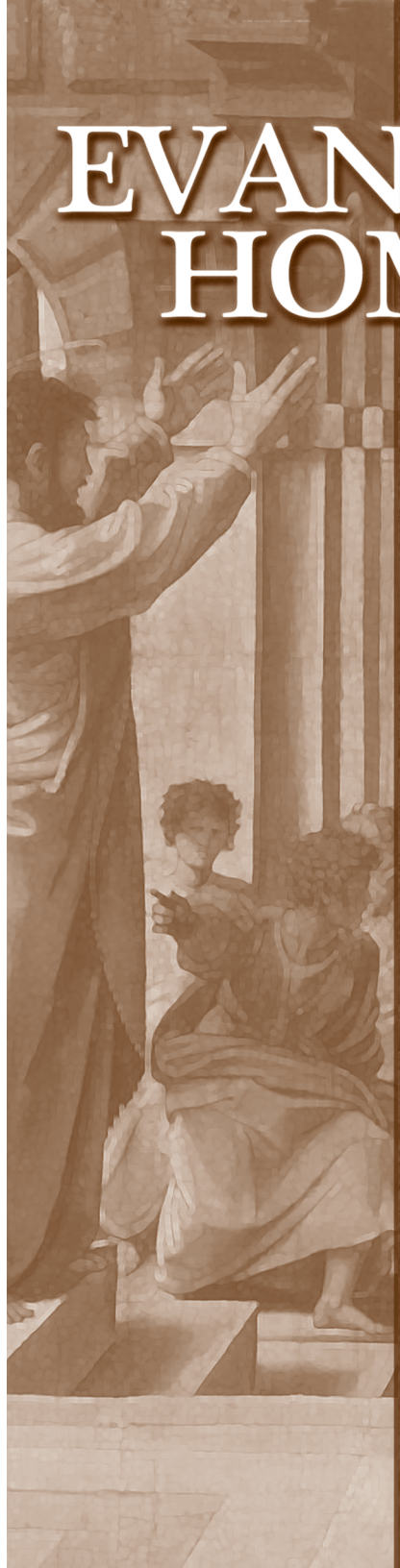

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Manuscripts: Though most articles and book reviews are assigned, submissions are welcome. They must by typed and double-spaced. All articles will be juried to determine suitability for publication. Please send articles to the General Editor, Scott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

Publishers should send catalogs and review copies of their books to Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, 3909 Swiss Avenue, Dallas, TX 75204.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A NEW ERA

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

This edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* begins our second decade of publication. With it we introduce a redesign that we trust will enhance the presentation of our professional journal. The cover and layout of the journal have changed but the quest for content and quality continues. We are grateful to Abe Kuruvilla and the design team at Dallas Theological Seminary for their assistance.

The first article is by Stephen Tu, who was presented with the Keith Willhite Award at the 2010 Evangelical Homiletics Society annual meeting at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. The award is given for the outstanding paper presented at the annual meeting determined by a vote by members of the society. The Keith Willhite Award is given annually in memory of the late co-founder and second president of the Society, Dr. Keith Willhite.

The next two articles are by Michael Quicke, the Charles W. Koller Professor of Preaching and Communication at Northern Baptist Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. Michael Quicke, one of our own society members, gave the plenary addresses at the 2010 meeting. The addresses are provided in two articles that challenge readers to consider the connection between preaching and worship.

Next is an article by Jared Alcántara and Jeffrey Arthurs that examines the impact of ambient technology upon preaching and worship. Readers will be challenged and stimulated by their suggestions.

Following is an article by Matthew D. Kim on the inability some preachers have in coming to terms with the kind of congregational exegesis that takes into consideration ethnic analysis. Without careful assessment of one's listeners—all listeners—the preacher is in danger of overlooking certain segments of those who hear the preacher preach.

Next, the sermon in this edition of the *Journal*, "The Perils of Persuasive Preaching," was preached by outgoing Evangelical Homiletics Society president Ervin Stutzman at the October 2010 annual meeting. Stutzman provides a particular question for preachers to consider as they reflect on the matter of preaching and persuasion. His insights are helpful and will encourage any preacher who reads this sermon.

The articles and sermon are followed by a fine collection of book reviews. The variety of the books included, as well as the insights of the

reviewers, allow readers a look into the important books on preaching of the day.

The era we are entering is one into which the Evangelical Homiletics Society can move with engagement and analysis. Homiletics scholars have the privilege and responsibility to address the issues that arise in the practice of preaching and in the wider development of the field of homiletics. We need thoughtful and critical scholarship that will engage the biblical, theological, philosophical, historical and practical considerations that comprise our field.

The new era is upon us. We look forward to engaging with it.

FROM PULPIT TO iPOD: DISCONNECTING PREACHING FROM WORSHIP

STEPHEN J.H. TU
Senior Pastor, Trinity Pacific Church, Vancouver, BC

ABSTRACT. The benefits of making sermons widely accessible by disseminating them over the Internet are easily articulated. However, the consequences of separating the sermon from the context of gathered worship in the Sunday service have not been adequately explored. Drawing on the work of media ecologist Marshall McLuhan, this paper considers the consequences of disconnecting preaching from worship and concludes that the long-term effects of cyberpreaching pose a serious problem to the local church.

For my most recent birthday my wife got us third row tickets to see the Canadian men's hockey team take on Team USA in the preliminary round of the Vancouver Olympic games. Despite the fact Canada, our home and native land, wound up losing—though "we" would go on to win the gold medal rematch—Laura and I had a terrific time. Seeing the size, speed, and athleticism of these world-class athletes up-close was a treat.

Now, we could have just as (if not more) easily gone to a friend's home and watched the game on television. We could have recorded the game, taken a nap, and watched it back later. Why did we go to all the trouble and expense of seeing Canada-USA in person? The answer is intuitive. There is something about being there, live, in the arena, that cannot be replicated or transmitted via electronic means. There is something about being on hand to witness the actual, physical, flesh-and-blood bodily presence of these athletes competing that is lost when the spectator is at home.

This simple truth explains why music lovers are willing to pay tens, if not hundreds of dollars more than the price of an audio recording to see their favorite bands perform live. Watching a recording of a concert on YouTube or listening to one on your iPod is not the same thing. There is something about the band actually being there, and you, being amidst the throng, that simply does not transfer digitally. This explains why we are willing to spend more money to attend a play than we are to see a movie. Our physical proximity to the actors in the theatre matters; that we are willing to pay so much more for that experience is evidence of this truth. The special effects at a Broadway play pale in comparison to those of a Hollywood blockbuster film, but this is of little consequence if we get to sit and watch the actors, themselves, up on

stage. We do not need 3D glasses if the leading man is standing so close to us that we can feel his spittle upon our cheeks.

Given the choice, we almost always prefer to be there live, in attendance, when it comes to sporting, musical, and dramatic performances. If, however and for whatever reason, we cannot be there, a recording serves fine enough as a substitute. It is no replacement, to be sure, but better that than nothing. Most everyone would readily agree.

Can the same be said about preaching? Is anything lost when we transmit our preaching electronically, either via an audio recording or a video telecast? More importantly, is anything intrinsic or essential to preaching lost when the listener is not there at the actual, original, preaching event? Is it merely preferable to be there in person or is there a sense in which a person needs to be at the preaching event for it to really be preaching? Daniel Boorstin calls products of mass media (like the Internet) "pseudo-events."[1] If cyberpreaching (that is, preaching that is transmitted via cyberspace technologies) is a pseudo-event, is it also pseudo-preaching? In other words, is it still preaching in any meaningful way? These are important questions.

Many North American churches today record their sermons and make them readily available for download via the Internet. Some, with greater technological resources, even videotape the sermon so you can both listen and watch from the privacy of your own home, and at your own leisure. Several "multi-site" churches have one lead preaching pastor who speaks at one location while his message is either simultaneously broadcast via satellite to the other campus sites or else recorded to be televised on tape delay at these other venues in following weeks. Should the church embrace these means of disseminating the proclamation of the Word?

On the one hand there are those who believe nothing is lost when preaching is communicated through electronic means and that the church should readily make use of these cyber technologies to reach the lost. "Our message must never change," says Rick Warren, "but the way we deliver that message must be constantly updated to reach each new generation."[2] Dave Ronne, a pastor in Lawrenceville, GA, argues, "We're all geared to watch screens now. Everybody has a plasma TV or a flat screen at home. We're just leaning into where the culture is now." Ed Young agrees. "I don't think you lose a thing. I would argue you could see me better when you're at a venue made for screens." One of Young's parishioners, in fact, *prefers* watching his pastor preach via satellite: "I feel closer to the sermon than I would if I ever attended in person. The screen is so big; it's almost lifelike. I would rather see Ed . . . on the big screen than somewhere live."[3]

Is this the perspective that those of us concerned about the church's worship and mission ought to adopt? Are technologies merely neutral tools that we are tasked with redeeming and using for the sake of the proclamation of the good news?

In the late 1990s, Christian televangelist Bill Keller sat down with a bunch of Internet porn publishers. He wasn't there to convert them; he just wanted to learn how to post videos on the Internet:

> "Pornographers were pretty much the people who spearheaded broadcasting on the Internet," says Keller. . . . "They were the only guys doing it, so we basically duplicated what they were doing, in terms of applications."[4]

Not all would agree that this is a positive co-opting of digital technologies.

THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

Enter Marshall McLuhan, "the high priest of popcult and metaphysician of media."[5] McLuhan's work in media ecology, largely unknown or ignored by the contemporary church, warns us of the dangers of unreflective technological appropriation. One of his central insights is that when we use any particular technology the mere use of it alters the way we live, interact, and understand the world. His famous aphorism, "the medium is the message,"[6] suggests that the way a particular medium used is far less important than the impact the use of that medium has on an individual and society.

There is no clearer place that he articulates his theoretical ideas than in a 1977 interview with Pierre Babin. Drawing on insights from Gestalt psychology he says:

> In Gestalt, reality presents itself to the mind as a *figure* detaching itself from a *ground*. We notice the *figure* first and most often it dominates our whole field of consciousness. However, the ground is at least as important and often is even more important. . . . The real message is what we call the secondary or side-effect of the medium, not its obvious effects. Side-effects are always hidden, like the ground. We are not aware of them. That is also the essence of Gestalt psychology: the *figure*, the gestalt, is visible while the *ground* remains invisible. Human perception encourages us to pay attention to the *figure* (a painting) and to ignore the *ground* (its frame, the wall, etc.). . . .
>
> The real message is all the secondary effects produced by the services and disservices that the medium demands. And these are the social and psychic changes that the medium causes in the lives of its users. . . . If you want to change the effects of radio and eventually protect yourself from them, you shouldn't overly focus on the content, the radio program. The effects have already produced themselves regardless of radio's content.[7]

So, "Forget the ostensible content, say, of a television program," says author and McLuhan biographer, Douglas Coupland. "All that matters is that you're watching the TV itself, at the expense of some other technology. . . . Those mediums we *do* choose to spend our time with continually modify the way we emphasize our senses . . . on a scale so large and spanning so many centuries that it took at least a decade after Marshall's death for him to be proven right, with the triumph of the internet."[8]

What McLuhan suggests for us is that what matters is not that so many more people are hearing the Word via cyberspace, but that they are being shaped by the medium through which they are hearing the Word. That—the digital medium, the ground as opposed to the figure—is the real message. That is the gospel that is being proclaimed.

McLuhan was only saying what the church has always said (though, seems to have forgotten). In his book on worship, Bryan Chapell makes this clear:

> We may think that "the medium is the message" is a modern insight, but the ancient church practiced such communication principles long before Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase. Church leaders understood that if the message was inconsistent with the means by which it was communicated, then the message could easily get lost. Thus, they painted the message of the gospel with every communication brush their structures would provide: building architecture, decoration, pulpit design, furniture placement, the position of worship leaders, and even the placement of participants in the worship service.[9]

Were McLuhan, a devout Catholic, alive today he would ask, "If the medium is the message what happens when the medium by which a sermon is communicated is a discarnate, disembodied voice streamed over the Internet or downloaded onto a portable music player? What effects—especially long-term—might we expect from the increasing adoption and proliferation of cyber technologies to preaching and worship? What happens, in short, when we disconnect preaching from the context of worship? What are the effects on our local churches? On individual Christians?"

Regrettably, the church has not addressed these questions with any significant attention. But if "man cannot trust himself when using his own artefacts"[10] we must question whether we have been wise in making sermons available for download and streaming our preaching through cyberspace. In his own day, McLuhan was surprised and saddened that so few pastors and theologians considered the impact of their technological appropriation.

He was continually amazed at the reluctance, often the downright

> refusal, of people to pay attention to the effects of media, and at their hostility to him for what he revealed. They included those, clergy and lay, who enthusiastically embrace the latest technologies without regard for their effects. Such people are blindly eager to make the Mass or the sacraments, or the congregation the content of each new gadget or technology that comes along—in the interest of "bringing the Church up to date" and "making the Church relevant." They are quite innocent of the power of these forms to transform their users—innocent but not guiltless. They share the Protestant attitude, "if God gave them to us they must be good."[11]

McLuhan saw clearer than we do the great power and concomitant danger of the electronic media to shape us for ill. "When electricity allows for the simultaneity of all information for every human being, it is Lucifer's moment. He is the greatest electrical engineer."[12] In other words, those sermons we make available for download on our churches' websites and those videos of preachers proclaiming the gospel that we broadcast to our satellite campuses are not what they appear to be. There is something insidious in the very media.

How might McLuhan respond to our sermon MP3s and video recordings? What might he say to the ease with which we have made it for people to listen to our preaching without joining us in gathered worship? With rebuke, no doubt: "Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot."[13] The proliferation of cyber technologies in the day-to-day life of the church shows no signs of abating. What does this mean for the future of preaching? The future of the church? We dare not let these questions go unasked. "The electronic media represent a challenge to the preacher unlike any in the church's history. The challenge is one that needs to be faced by preachers and hearers alike. It is not only the preaching event that is being challenged, but the Christian mind and the Christian way of life which preaching is designed to cultivate."[14]

LAWS OF MEDIA

McLuhan's work suggests, in the words of Sven Birkerts, that how "we receive information bears vitally on the ways we experience and interpret reality."[15] We need, then, to seek to discern the implicit message of the Internet, our cyber medium. What are we really "plugging" into? What is its ethos? Here are four observations:

1. Cyberspace exalts the individual. It is no coincidence that the "i" is rampant in the digital age. From iPods to iPads to iTunes, the Internet celebrates the iPerson. The individual has the power to choose what to read,

watch, download, and consume in the privacy of her own home. Navigating from one web site to another is as simple as a click of a hyperlink. You choose. You are sovereign. If you are not satisfied with a particular "app" you have downloaded, another click of the mouse and it is gone.

2. Cyberspace privatizes. The Internet fosters a false sense of community. We do not have friends in cyberspace, we have Facebook friends. Ursula Franklin notes, "Viewing or listening to television, radio, or videos is *shared experience carried out in private*."[16] This truth is carried out to its extreme in cyberspace. You can publish a blog (or microblog), for instance, and be in contact with people the world over, inviting anyone with an Internet connection into the most private details of your life (or at least, those details you choose to reveal and keep private). Despite the popularity of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter, then, cyberspace does "tend to be anti-social."[17]

3. Cyberspace fosters shorter attention spans. That is the thesis of Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows*.[18] The Internet has rewired our brains and we are unable to pay attention for any substantial amount of time. Our minds are constantly racing, unable to think deeply, content simply to wade in the shallows of the Web we have grown used to surfing. David Gordon observes astutely:

> Electronic media flash sounds and images at us at a remarkable rate of speed; and each image or sound leaves some impact on us, but greater than the impact of any individual image or sound is the entire *pace* of the life it creates. We become acclimated to distraction, to multitasking, to giving part of our attention to many things at once, while almost never devoting the entire attention of the entire soul to anything.[19]

We have always wanted what we want when we want it, but now we can actually get it. We possess the digital means to instantly gratify our desires. The world is at our fingertips and we can summon it as we please. Turn your computer on and you are instantly connected because the Internet never sleeps. As J. I. Packer and Gary Parrett observe regarding the demise of catechetical instruction:

> During the past century mechanization and technology have increased the pace of Western life, leaving us all wanting to do things more quickly so as to get on with whatever we see as next business. The hurrying mindset has led to the fast-food revolution, in which we wolf snacks as we go along rather than treat meals as big deals in the way our grandparents did.[20]

We live in "an instant society."[21] Gordon concludes, "Our inability to read texts [like the Bible] is a direct result of the presence of electronic media . . . because such reading is time-consuming and requires the concentration of the entire person."[22] We simply cannot pay attention.

4. Cyberspace is the domain of infotainment. Information is literally a click away, but that does not automatically translate into knowledge. As I have heard one pastor say, "The Internet is the friend of information and the enemy of thought." We surf, but we do not understand. Cyberspace is not a serious, but a trivial medium where the emphasis is on appearance and image rather than character and substance. It is simply impossible to convey matters of weightiness in a virtual world.[23] The Internet is entertainment packaged as information.

To summarize, with Twitter-appropriate constraints (and with thirteen characters to spare): The message of cyberspace is, You are sovereign and the (digital) world exists to satisfy your desire for instant infotainment.

In order to understand the consequences of this digital medium for our cyberpreaching we turn to McLuhan's tetrad. These laws are "a heuristic device, a set of four questions . . . [that] can be asked (and the answers checked) by anyone, anywhere, at any time, about any human artefact. The tetrad was found by asking, 'What general, verifiable (that is, testable) statements can be made about all media?'"[24] McLuhan discovered that there are four:

1. What does the technology enhance or intensify?
2. What does it render obsolete or displace?
3. What does it retrieve that was previously obsolesced?
4. What does it produce when pressed to the extreme?

His contention is that every medium, every technology, is an extension of man.[25] For instance, the hammer extends our hands, the wheel extends our feet, and the telephone extends our voice. But, with every extension comes a corresponding amputation. So, while the phone may amplify our voice (we can be in two places as it were), it renders our times of privacy, solitude, and silence obsolete.[26]

When we apply the tetrad to cyberpreaching it is simple enough to see that the Internet *enhances preaching across distance*. Time and space are no longer constraints. Our influence can stretch beyond the lives of those who sit in our pews on Sunday mornings. Anyone, anywhere, can hear (or see) us preach, and at any time. From this light it is easy to understand the Internet's appeal. It holds the promise of reaching so many more people than we might otherwise reach, including some who have no direct access to a faithful, Biblical expository preacher.

We can also see, with little effort, that the Internet *retrieves the primacy of the Word*. In some emerging church circles preaching has been devalued and its primacy in the life of the congregation and its place in the Sunday worship service have been all but eliminated. When we put our sermons

online, available for download, we say, "The Word is important and it is worth your time to listen to it."

What is not as clear upon immediate examination is what cyberpreaching renders obsolete and what it threatens to reverse into when taken to the extreme. This requires further reflection.

DISCARNATE MAN AND THE INCARNATE CHURCH

First, let us observe with Phillips Brooks that:

> Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching. The truest truth, the most authoritative statement of God's will, communicated in any other way than through the personality of brother man to men is not preached truth. Suppose it written on the sky, suppose it embodied in a book which has been so long held in reverence as the direct utterance of God that the vivid personality of the men who wrote its pages had well-nigh faded out of it; in neither of these cases is there any preaching...[It] lacks personality... And preaching is the bringing of truth through personality...This was the method by which Christ chose that his gospel should be spread through the world. It was a method that might have been applied to the dissemination of any truth, but we can see why it was especially adapted to the truth of Christianity. For that truth is preeminently personal. However the gospel may be capable of statement in dogmatic form, its truest statement we know is not in dogma but in personal life. Christianity is Christ... Truth through personality is our description of real preaching. The truth must come really through the person, not merely over his lips, not merely into his understanding and out through his pen. It must come through his character, his affections, his whole intellectual and moral being. It must come genuinely through him.[27]

Brooks is saying what McLuhan is saying. The medium is the message. And if the message of our gospel preaching is Jesus Christ—God in human flesh; God incarnate, crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, and ascended—then there is something essential to the preacher's bodily presence in preaching. The Apostle Paul tells us as much in Romans 10:14: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And

how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

The medium is the message and Christ is its archetype: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In Him, the medium and the message are truly one and the same. How do we communicate the message of the incarnate Christ? By preaching, which is the bringing of truth through an incarnate person.

When we attempt to proclaim the incarnate Christ as disembodied voices or images we disembody Christ and we proclaim a different gospel. The same sermon, preached to a congregation of people on Sunday morning is, in fact, *not* the same when someone listens to it on his iPod on Monday morning. When we disconnect preaching from worship we have the opposite of Incarnation. We have a discarnate God.

> Electric man [that is, the person who lives in this electric world] is a "super angel." When you are on the telephone you have no body. And, while your voice is there, you and the people you speak to are here, at the same time. Electric man has no bodily being. He is literally *dis*-carnate. But a discarnate world, like the one we now live in, is a tremendous menace to an incarnate Church, and it's theologians haven't even deemed it worthwhile to examine the fact.[28]

McLuhan continues:

> Isn't the real message of the Church in the secondary or side-effects of the Incarnation, that is to say, in Christ's penetration into all of human existence? Then the question is, where are you in relation to this reality? Most people prefer to avoid the question by side-stepping it. The message is there but they want no part of it. So they eliminate it by plugging into another channel. They hypnotize themselves with the *figure* so as to better ignore the *ground*. They prefer to study the words rather than the questions that Christ asks everywhere, and of every human being. . . . In Jesus Christ, there is no distance or separation between the medium and the message: it is the one case where we can say that the medium and the message are fully one and the same.[29]

When we disconnect preaching from the bodily presence of the preacher we communicate the inconsequence of the Incarnation; this is a gross distortion of the gospel and docetism is scarcely further than a mouse

click away.

Consider, too, that our bodies have the capacity for conveying the gospel. In his various letters to the earliest Christian churches, the Apostle Paul refers to his physical body on several occasions as evidence of the message he has proclaimed (see, for instance, 1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 11:23–28; Gal 6:17).

Second, and closely related, when pastors disconnect preaching from worship they fail in an important way to call their people to imitate them. The Pauline letters are filled with places where the Apostle calls his readers to watch his life and follow him (1 Cor 4:15–17; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thess 3:7–9; 2 Tim 3:10–11; cf. 1 Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7–8). Surely these instructions apply to those times he is preaching. Preaching, then, is rightly seen as a form of pastoral care.[30] Our people should see something of how we live through both our transparency and our teaching from the pulpit, and they should hear us summoning them to follow us as we follow Christ. They should be submitting to the authority of their God-ordained leaders. Part of this involves sitting under the preaching of their own pastor. However, my anecdotal research suggests that many Christians are listening to popular preachers online and then bemoaning their own pastor's lack of exegetical precision or oratorical skill in comparison to the celebrity preacher. How do we exercise pastoral authority in these circumstances? What is the celebrity preacher's responsibility to those who are not a part of his flock? How does the celebrity cyberpreacher communicate to people that he is not God, even while he continues to build his celebrity through his cybersermons?

The problem of celebrity is a serious one and is well-expressed by contemporary songwriter, Ross King, in a song titled "Happy":

> Fourteen thousand members and me
> Watch the preacher up on the screen
> I have never shaken his hand
> My two-dimensional pastor man
> Welcome to America
>
> Doesn't matter if I am here
> In this crowd I could disappear
> Pastor man is all that we need
> Preaching via satellite feed
>
> I can watch it all from my pew
> Till the presentation is through
>
> You will have to pardon me
> This cannot be all there is

I can't imagine God would be
Happy about this. . .

The church is now the body of Christ
And every part is equally prized
The eye can never say to the hand,
"All we need is this preacher man"

Would you notice if I was gone?
How easy would it be to move on?

What is the long-term effect of the popularity of celebrity preachers? One shudders to imagine a future where the preaching pastor of the small and mid-sized church has become obsolete. As cyber technologies become more affordable, these churches will opt to save the money they might pay a preaching pastor and spend a fraction of it instead installing the necessary tools to televise satellite feeds of the celebrity megachurch pastor across the city or country. Just as video killed the radio star, cyberpreaching threatens to kill the local church pastor, or at least have him searching for a different vocation.

This leads to a third conclusion. When pressed to the extreme, cyberpreaching threatens to obsolete the church. If you can hear the Word of God proclaimed, sing along with the most popular worship bands in the world, and even take communion[31] all from the comfort of your own home, it is not long before the church, herself, at least as we know her, is gone. Disconnecting preaching from the context of worship communicates that the church is unimportant. When you can practice your faith in private, the demands of a community on your life are meaningless or nonexistent. Our sense of responsibility to her, to the body of Christ, vanishes. McLuhan saw this coming. He "[foresaw] a long, painful process in which technology shifts would trigger massive identity collapses around the world, which would generate new and terrifying sources of disassociation between the reality of what was physically available to individuals and the unreality of a world depicted by electronic media."[32]

Fourth, when people listen to or watch preaching via cyberspace, that is, when they are not physically present at congregational worship, they lose something of their ability to grasp the truth of the gospel. Hubert Dreyfus argues that "the actual shape and movement of our bodies play a central role in our making sense of our world, so that loss of embodiment would lead to *less of the ability to recognize relevance*."[33] This is in keeping with our modern Western tendency to unbiblically dichotomize and separate the soul from the body. But we are a body-soul unity. Every person is "an embodied soul or (one could say) an ensouled body" from conception to death, just as Christ

was.[34] Dreyfus challenges us to ask, "What would be gained and what, if anything, would be lost if we were to take leave of our situated bodies in exchange for ubiquitous telepresence in cyberspace?"[35] Less of the person's senses are engaged when she is not physically present in corporate worship.

Fifth, when we upload our sermons to the Web we say through their very presence on the Internet that the gospel is simply one more philosophy in the digital marketplace of largely frivolous ideas. The sermon becomes nothing more than a religious lecture, an academic exercise. It is no longer preaching. Ironically, then, when we disconnect preaching from worship we say that preaching, itself, is unimportant. While it is true that in the short-term cybersermons retrieve the primacy of the Word, in the long run preaching is obsolesced as it becomes just another podcast lecture. When the sermon can be paused and returned to at the listener's leisure, it is no longer an event-in-time. It is no longer preaching.

Sixth, if Phillips Brooks calls our attention to the necessity of a preacher for there to be preaching, Martyn Lloyd-Jones would have us see that preaching also requires hearers. There is no unction without a congregation. "The very presence of a body of people in itself is a part of the preaching. . . . It is not a mere gathering of people; Christ is present. This is the great mystery of the Church. There is something in the very atmosphere of Christian people meeting together to worship God and to listen to the preaching of the Gospel."[36] As Packer puts it:

> Because he [Lloyd-Jones] believed so strongly that the true heart of evangelistic and pastoral Christian communication was God's ordinance of preaching, and that the direct impact of the preacher, living each moment in the power of his message, was the true heart of preaching, he was at first unwilling to be taped; and when finally he gave in on this point he constantly insisted that listening to a speaker 'canned', if one may so speak, on tape was spiritually far less fruitful than being in the same space with a live expositor of God's Word.[37]

Finally, disconnecting preaching from worship has a deleterious effect on preachers, themselves. We compare ourselves to those with different gifts and feel envious or discouraged. We begin to take shortcuts. We plagiarize. We turn to the Tim Kellers or John Pipers (or Rob Bells) of the virtual world before we turn to God and Scripture. Gordon asks, "What kind of ministers does such a culture [swamped by the inconsequential, bombarded by images and sounds that rob us of the opportunity for reflection and contemplation that are necessary to reacquaint ourselves with what is significant] produce?" His answer:

> Ministers who are not at home with what is significant; ministers whose attention span is less than that of a four-year-old in the 1940s, who race around like the rest of us, constantly distracted by sounds and images of inconsequential trivialities, and out of touch with what is weighty. It is not surprising that their sermons, and the alleged worship that surrounds them, are often trifling, thoughtless, uninspiring, and mundane. . . . The great seriousness of the reality of being human, the dreadful seriousness of the coming judgment of God, the sheer insignificance of the present in light of eternity—realities that once were the subtext of virtually every sermon—have now disappeared, and have been replaced by one triviality after another."[38]

This is the sobering virtual reality that we now inhabit.

CONCLUSION

More than twenty years ago Neil Postman articulated the inherent problem of television as a medium for conveying spiritual truth in his seminal book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Substitute "the Internet" for "television" and we have an apt description of our present age:

> [O]n television, religion, liked everything else, is presented, quite simply and without apology, as an entertainment. Everything that makes religion an historic, profound and sacred human activity is stripped away; there is no ritual, no dogma, no tradition, no theology, and above all, no sense of spiritual transcendence. On these shows, the preacher is tops. God comes out as second banana. . . .
>
> [T]his fact has more to do with the bias of television than with the deficiencies of these electronic preachers, as they are called. It is true enough that some of these men are uneducated, provincial and even bigoted. They certainly do not compare favorably with well-known evangelicals of an earlier period, such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield and Charles Finney, who were men of great learning, theological subtlety and powerful expositional skills. Nonetheless, today's television preachers are probably not greatly different in their limitations from most earlier evangelicals or from many ministers today whose activities are confined to churches and synagogues. What makes these television preachers the enemy of religious experience is not so much *their* weaknesses but the weaknesses of the medium in which they work.
>
> Most Americans, including preachers, have difficulty accepting the truth, if they think about it at all, that not all forms

> of discourse can be converted from one medium to another. It is naive to suppose that something that has been expressed in one form can be expressed in another without significantly changing its meaning, texture or value. Much prose translates fairly well from one language to another, but we know that poetry does not; we may get a rough idea of the sense of a translated poem but usually everything else is lost, especially that which makes it an object of beauty. The translation makes it something it was not.[39]

Postman's assessment, accurate in my judgment, is enough to cause the most even-tempered person to despair as she evaluates the current state of affairs, almost three decades after we were warned against "amusing ourselves to death." What, if anything, is our hope? Penultimately, we must cultivate the metaphor of preacher-as-artist. For McLuhan, "The artist is the man in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his own time. He is the man of integral awareness."[40] This means we ought to develop a radically counter-cultural lifestyle. It means unplugging from cyberspace as much as we can and encouraging our people to do likewise. It means immersing ourselves with real people over real meals, sharing real struggles, and, as far as possible, using non-electronic technologies. To the extent that we need to be "plugged in," we should recognize that the media we use exert an invisible and powerfully transformative role in our lives.

Ultimately, however, we should be neither utopian nor dystopian in our attitude toward cyber technologies. Even as we seek to exercise wisdom and caution with respect to cyberpreaching of all kinds, let us remember our true hope is that Christ will one day set everything right. All the distortions that digital media have created and will continue to create in our lives will be undone and we will be made whole. In the final assessment McLuhan was right in saying, "I have never been an optimist or a pessimist. I'm an apocalyptic only. Our only hope is apocalypse. . . . Apocalypse is not gloom. It is salvation. No Christian could ever be an optimist or a pessimist: that's a purely secular state of mind."[41] And so our prayer remains, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). "Come, not via cyberspace, but come, come in all Your resurrected beauty."

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CONNECTING PREACHING WITH WORSHIP
I. A SURPRISING JOURNEY

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The topic of "connecting preaching and worship" has dominated my last five years of thinking and writing, and taken me on a personal journey of discovery.[1] In these two articles I shall summarize some significant issues that I have learned along the way (with an inevitable element of autobiography).

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PREACHING AND WORSHIP

Behind this article's title lies an important assumption that these two entities can (or should) have some kind of relationship, and how we describe such a relationship reveals markedly different understandings and practice. While it risks over-simplification three possibilities can be sketched to represent contrasting options.

First, a strong preaching tradition may view elements of worship as preliminaries so that predominant preaching subsumes worship. As William Willimon comments, "many of us Protestants have conceived worship as preaching and listening to preaching."[2] Charles Rice mischievously describes such preaching "as a kind of homiletical ocean liner preceded by a few liturgical tugboats.[3]

Second, many have traditionally understood worship to comprise two parts - Word and Sacrament. Instead of dominating, preaching belongs with sacrament as worship. The reading of Scripture and sermon combine with Lord's Supper and baptism to constitute whole worship. Both in Scripture and church history, Word and Sacrament are valued as two complementary ways by which God speaks to his people and they respond to him. The language of "sacrament" has been treated with understandable suspicion by many evangelicals because the word smacks of mechanical ritual or dogmatic content. However, when ordinances (often the preferred term) are understood as "the means by which God brings home to us the reality of his redeeming love" [4] it is at least possible to accept that these rituals commanded by Jesus have "sacramental" significance, as God promises to meet with us in significant ways through both actions.

The Reformation re-emphasized that Scripture and preachers' words are *verba audibilia* – God's words to the ear; the sacraments of baptism and

Lord's Supper are God's *verba visibilia* – visible words that appeal to the eye. Indeed, Mitman claims that "the realization that Christ comes to us in both Sacrament *and* Word was the overwhelming discovery of the Reformation in the sixteenth century and of the second Vatican Council in the twentieth."[5] Baptism and the Lord's Supper have always belonged with preaching as ways of proclaiming God's truth and love.

However, different claims can still be made about whether word or sacrament is the senior partner. Consider John Killinger's assertion:

> There is no substitute for preaching in worship. It provides the proclamatory thrust without which the church is never formed and worship is never made possible. It complements the creedal, poetic nature of the liturgy and keeps before men the absolute contemporaneity of the Gospel..... It, of all the elements in the liturgy is primary, for it and it alone is able to guarantee the success of Christian worship and the Christian sacraments.[6]

Third, preaching and worship can appear to be separated, sometimes with considerable distance between them. Even when operating closely together there may be a thick wall of separation. Indeed, in that part of the evangelical church that I know best, this separation of preaching from worship is all too prevalent, with some regarding them almost as different activities organized for different purposes by people bearing different responsibilities. .

Sadly, I have come to recognize that (unwittingly) I have colluded with this separation by sharing (or at least not combating) some diminished views of worship which encourage this separation of preaching from worship. Three such common mis-definitions of worship see it as 'music only', 'merely organizational' and 'restricted to Sunday services.'

Perhaps the commonest devaluation of worship labels it *all* about hymns and songs. For some churches "praise and worship" sums up not only 99% of the worship team's responsibility, but also worship itself. Since, music is deemed all-important, those with musical ability become "worship leaders" reinforcing the impression that music comprises worship. What they lead is regarded as genuine worship and any other activity is marginal. Gary Parrett offers an interesting illustration, contrasting two experiences in the same New York Church he visited.[7] First visited in 1985, the service began with overhead projector, guitars and a rousing twenty minutes of music followed by the pastor saying: "Now we will begin our worship." Clearly, he saw music as preparation before the real worship event – his sermon. However, returning in 1998, Parrett saw the music group had expanded in size and led singing for thirty-five to forty minutes. At its conclusion the worship leader said: "Boy, that was a wonderful time of worship!" as though

worship was now concluded as they moved into listening to the sermon. In thirteen years the situation had reversed - from viewing preaching as worship, to assuming that music is worship. Of course, both stances need correction.

Second, some define worship as largely organizational, mainly concerned with the practicalities of choosing content for church services, motivated primarily by the need for a smoothly operated program, whether more rigidly liturgical in a historical denominational tradition, or more informally arranged. Of course, choices and ideas are necessary, but concentrating on practicalities can reduce worship to a pragmatic sorting out of necessary bits and pieces. Nothing downgrades worship more rapidly than seeing it as a dutiful weekly round of making choices, and coming up with fresh ideas.

Third, some see worship only as 'services' that occur in church on Sundays (though I realize some churches also have Saturday and midweek worship services!) This is understandable, for gathered worship best expresses togetherness that gives praise to God and communes around the Lord's Table (Acts 2:42-47). Yet, when worship is confined to the hour(s) spent in worship services it completely misses the larger picture of worship through every day of the week. Believers do not just *go* together to be church in a building, but they *are* the church all the time, through every day of the week. Whenever, worship focuses on churchly activity, restricted to specific times and places, it is in danger of neglecting the responsibilities of offering "bodies as a living sacrifice" – a spiritual act of worship that does not conform to the pattern of this world (Rom 12:1, 2). "Sunday only worship" not only shrinks worship down into specific events, but damages the vision of worship forming a community of people who live in a different way for God (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

Several have suggested that worship services should be named differently. For example, R. Kent Hughes comments: "To call our public meetings 'worship' can unwittingly install a re-sacralization of time and space. It is better to employ terms like 'corporate worship'…'corporate worship' or 'gathered worship' works best for me."[8] Indeed, I prefer the term 'gathered worship' for services in church, complemented by 'scattered worship' which describes the continuing life of the church in the world through the week.

I confess that until recently I so focused on preaching that I gave only marginal space to worship. I wrestled with big themes such as the implications of Trinitarian theology for preaching, and the importance of preaching for leadership. Yet, I only mentioned worship in passing, allowing it to remain on the sidelines. My Christian ministry world-view was focused on and bounded by preaching, as the all-important task God has called me to. However, something has happened over the last five years.

MY RECENT JOURNEY

My journey of preaching, teaching and writing has been profoundly disturbed. I describe it as being ambushed by a gang of four. This may sound over-dramatic. Others, from different traditions, may well have come to terms with all these issues a long time ago (and be surprised by my experience). But as I was progressing through routines that had become fairly comfortable, four different forces surprised me, surrounded me and ever since have continuously subverted my work. Instead of remaining separate issues politely waiting for attention one-by-one, they formed a posse, noisily circling me, and demanding to be heard together. Their joint presence increasingly drowned out other interests and projects, filling my mind and stretching my spirit by demanding I make connections and face their challenges.

Each member of the gang has its own significant reputation, considerable literature, ranks of experts and sphere of operation. At seminary and church level each holds it own with consciousness of its status and importance. Like many other preachers I have long been aware of connections and convergences between these issues. But, not only did I already have my own main focus, I also knew the risk of being utterly overwhelmed by the sheer density of other material. Yet, their four-fold pressure has proved inescapable. As I describe each gang member you may begin to anticipate some of the changes they made. They brought me to a place of fresh wonder! In this article I shall give each a brief description and in my second article I shall provide an overview of how they impacted me together.

1. BIG-PICTURE WORSHIP

Those who knew Robert Webber (1934-2007) will readily understand his impact on me during his last seven memorable years working as a close colleague at Northern Seminary. His autobiography touched me in raw places when he critiqued his own shallow evangelical worship experiences.[9] His diagnosis that much contemporary worship is in trouble struck home. "Traditional worship seems over intellectualized, dry and something apart from where we live. And contemporary worship is too focused on 'my' experience."[10] His own shallow evangelical worship experiences resonated with me as he identified four disturbing issues: too much of our worship is dominated by the pastor; the congregation is little more than an audience; "free worship" is not necessarily free; four, the mystery is gone.[11]

I heard his plea to see worship as the primary work of the church. I was exhilarated to read his principles of worship that emphasized how worship celebrates Christ, with wonder and festivity, because God has spoken and acted. Forcefully he challenged the contemporary evangelical

church through his fathering of the *Ancient-Evangelical Future Call*, which included these words:

> We call for public worship that sings, preaches and enacts God's story….Thus, we call Evangelicals to turn away from forms of worship that focus on God as a mere object of the intellect, or that asserts the self as the source of worship. Such worship has resulted in lecture-oriented, music-driven, performance-centered and program-controlled models that do not adequately proclaim God's cosmic redemption. Therefore, we call Evangelicals to recover the historic substance of worship of Word and Table, and to attend to the Christian year, which marks time according to God's saving acts.[12]

Have I contributed to "lecture-oriented, music-driven, performance-centered and program-controlled models of worship"? Do I need to think harder about historic patterns of worship and the Christian Year? Oh yes! Bob opened my eyes to see these issues and wrestle with them.

Further, Bob challenged me directly about teaching preaching in seminary. Profoundly distrusting any who would elevate preaching to be *the* vital, solitary, engine of church life and mission, he rightly condemned one result of this attitude:

> Many seminaries do not even require worship courses or training. The training that pastors do get is in the art of preaching…. Unfortunately, because of this training and perhaps even because of their gifts, most pastors feel that preaching is the essence of worship. A few outstanding and gifted preachers build the church around their preaching and feel they are quite successful at it, but this is neither biblical nor is it, in the end, a means to good worship.[13]

As a teacher of preachers I feared that I might specialize in producing preachers who assumed that "preaching is the essence of worship." Could students emerge with an "A" in preaching, without any wider understanding of worship? Since preachers are *de facto* leaders in most local churches, might seminary training continue to elevate preaching and diminish worship?

I realized how little thought I had given to worship. So, many other voices have now challenged me. I was rocked by Harold Best's *Unceasing Worship – Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts*[14] and Mark Labberton's *The Dangerous Act of Worship*.[15] Russell Mitman's *Worship in the Shape of Scripture*[16] alerted me to a liturgical preacher's vision for Scripture's dominant role. James B. Torrance provided powerful Trinitarian theology for worship, [17] Marva Dawn[18] and Dan Kimball offered insightful challenges from changing culture.[19] Other striking themes include: worship and spirituality (Don

Saliers),[20] community formation (Tod Bolsinger),[21] understanding worship as narrative (Cornelius Plantinga and Sue Rozeboom).[22] Don Carson's edited book *Worship by the Book*[23] and Malefyt and Vanderwell's *Designing Worship Together*[24] provided rich details about worship planning.

All these formed a growing chorus that demanded my attention with contagious enthusiasm, claiming that all life is worship and that I needed to see my preaching as worship. Big picture rather than small picture worship.

2. FOUNDATIONAL TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

I had earlier committed to understanding more of the impact of Trinitarian theology on preaching,[25] but now Trinitarian theology demanded a reworking of preaching within the wide framework of worship.

Many of us are indebted to James B. Torrance's *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*[26] that gives such provocative analysis of much contemporary evangelical practice by sharply contrasting what he terms unitarian and trinitarian practices of worship. He contends that doctrinally orthodox leaders may actually *practice* forms of worship that *are* Unitarian, because they are closed to Christ's continuing work and the Holy Spirit. In reality, too much worship is made by human hands for all too human purposes. With broad brush strokes he describes the "Existential, Experience Model" in which God's grace is understood primarily as a transaction between "God and me" as God is encountered in a personal crisis of decision because of Jesus Christ's work on the cross.

Yet, by stressing what Jesus did on the cross, Torrance warns that the focus can so emphasize his *work* that it minimizes his *person*. Jesus may be regarded as the "way in" to a relationship with God rather than the person through whom we *continually* draw near to God our Father in the communion of the Spirit. In this model, the interacting persons of the Trinity all recede in importance, because Jesus' role as mediator (Heb 2:10) is diminished. All the human-Godward movement is ours! "It emphasizes *our* faith, *our* decision, and *our* response in an event theology which short-circuits the vicarious humanity of Christ and belittles union with Christ."[27] This results in "practical Unitarianism" that:

> has no doctrine of the mediator or sole priesthood of Christ, is human-centered, has no proper doctrine of the Holy Spirit….we sit in the pew watching the minister 'doing his thing' exhorting us 'to do our thing' until we go home thinking we have done our duty for another week."[28]

What an indictment – "we sit in the pew watching the minister 'doing his thing' exhorting us 'to do our thing.'" Torrance challenges us as

worshippers to enter into the two-way movement opened up by God's triune relationship, as he invites us through Christ to belong, meeting with us and enabling us to offer our worship in his call and response by grace. Worship is doing "God's thing" - a giving and receiving in which Father, Son and Holy Spirit are deeply involved in the dynamics.

As I engaged with worship literature I repeatedly heard this application of Trinitarian doctrine. But as I looked at preaching literature the Trinitarian doctrine was often muted or absent. Michael Pasquarello claims: "For most of Christian history the practice of preaching was believed to have taken place in, with, and through the initiative and presence of the Triune God."[29] Yet he finds such Trinitarian preaching conspicuously absent today. Indeed this lack of Trinitarian theology encourages the separation of preaching and worship. He sums up:

> There is a widespread view that preaching is no longer intrinsic to the worship of God since, for many, worship has been reduced to the matter of individual "religious" preference or taste – a marketed 'style' that functions instrumentally to promote the growth of the church or individuals rather than to create and transform a people for the praise and glory of God.[30]

So, on one hand preachers exhort hearers to do their thing, even specializing in moralizing sermons that concentrate on individual needs - giving good advice instead of Good News. Kevin Navarro warns: "Evangelical preaching is so obsessed with the need to apply everything that we are shifting into just another moral religion."[31] Sermons end with lists of "oughts" rather than with God's grace sending worshipers out by Christ in the power of the Spirit. Paralleling this, worship leaders can also be caught up in "doing their thing," planning services that generate "feel-good" experience, deploying marketed "styles" (with an eye on competition from other churches). As someone has termed it 'worshipping therapeutic deism'. Such worship leading inevitably focuses more on benefits for believers, than on disclosure and worship of the Triune God.

Together with the big-picture worship, the foundational claims of Trinitarian theology demanded that I rethink my understanding and practice of preaching.

3. DIRECTIVE SCRIPTURE

This gang member surprised me by its claims. As a biblical preacher I saw the Bible as the source of authoritative content for every act of preaching, with the sermon pivotal for gathered worship. The preacher's choice of Scripture text or theme for the next worship service is often the

main, sometimes the only, point of contact with worship leaders. So-called contemporary services often commence with "praise worship," and at some point the chosen Scripture passage may be carefully read, (even with an accompanying Old or New Testament texts). More usually the Scripture text is left until immediately preceding the sermon. At its best, worship planning chooses music around the sermon with the text's theme in mind. Further, some churches may use drama, video and testimony to support the preaching. However, this is the best-case scenario. Sadly, other worship services sometimes appear to be a collection of assorted elements lacking any overall purpose. Provocatively, Sally Morgenthaler describes such as nonworship services, *worship counterfeits,* because "interaction with God is either nonexistent or so low it cannot be measured."[32]

Even with the best of gathered worship planning, however, I realized that Scripture was viewed primarily as the preacher's territory with almost exclusive focus on the sermon. In league with big-picture worship and Trinitarian theology, I found Scripture asserting itself in two directions.

First, it vividly held me to the vision of big-picture worship. As a preacher for over forty years I had looked at Scripture texts primarily for teaching and proclaiming good news and building up God's people (Eph 4:11-16). I knew it had far wider purposes than sermon-making, but even my personal devotional reading tended towards this preaching end. With a start, I realized how frequently I had missed the glory of worship that thrills from beginning to ending of Scripture, marking the best of human responses to God. Now, my practice of reading through the Bible every two years (sometimes with slower patches) has raised the stakes for big-picture worship. I have seen afresh how right from the start Abram builds altars and worships (Gen. 12:7). Before he says any words, he worships. Worship's two main action verbs pulsate from Genesis to Revelation. There is *prostration* of worship 'throwing down' worshippers in awe, humility and wonder - exhibiting sheer overwhelmingness before the real God. But also the *service* of worship, which is 'thrown out' in love for God and love for neighbor. God is the only one worthy to be worshiped, and he has made us to worship. As I long as I breathe I worship something or other and Scripture shows me who and how to worship. Worship is big in Scripture!

Second, I realized how Scripture seeks to direct far more than the sermon when worshippers gather together. Yes, Scripture provides the content and purpose of sermons. One breakthrough issue in preaching over the last three decades has been the emphasis that Scripture not only *says* things but *does* things - that it not only has *focus* but also *function*.[33] So, preachers are not only responsible for attending to a text's meaning, but also for identifying its function. Scripture is not only informational but transformational. However, many preachers can miss out on the bigger issue of how the Scripture text intentionally influences the *whole* structure

of worship. Focusing on the sermon only, we can fit Scripture into a worship structure rather than ensuring the entire service event is shaped by scripture. Too often Scripture is treated as a bit player rather than the mover and shaker of gathered worship. Scripture demands a much bigger role.

Russell Mitman's book, *Worship in the shape of Scripture*[34] was a loud voice in the ambush on my journey. He helpfully contrasts "open field" churches, where there are fewer fixed liturgy givens, with "tennis court" churches operating within strictly ruled boundaries.[35] Yet, he argues that *both* kinds of church need to be challenged about how Scripture shapes worship and this necessarily involves preachers understanding worship. Both preachers and others who lead worship have profound responsibility to submit to God's word together in their respective preparation tasks, with an expectation of Scripture's transformational power impacting the whole of worship. Scripture is not for sermons only.

4. COMMUNITY FORMATION

Another inescapable issue, closely bound up with growing concerns raised by the missional church, was the importance of community formation. Just what does it mean for the preacher when faced by worship's collective transformational qualities, "for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4: 12, 13)? 1 Peter 2: 4-12: has particularly challenged me:

> Like living stones let yourselves be build into a spiritual house (v5)…you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people in order that you may proclaim the might acts of him who called you (verse 9). Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles….that they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge (verse 12).

Collective, corporate responsibility runs counter the rampant individualism and selfism of contemporary culture that encourages worshipers do their *own* thing. "Successful" churches are likely to be shaped by much self-interest – "This is my church and I like it, so I attend and contribute to it." Such churches become collections of individuals viewing church attending largely in terms of personal benefits and (hopefully) some areas of service. But this endorses practical Unitarianism and fails to develop a community growing in unity and maturity together, of living stones built together with holiness and godly conduct before a watching world.

Craig Van Gelder helpfully compares the "corporate church" with the "missional church."[36] He claims that the majority of Christian congregations

share one characteristic in common: "at the core of their genetic code is an organizational self-understanding, where the church's primary identity is related to it being responsible to accomplish something."[37] He describes how the corporate church, embedded in the European version of Constantinian Christendom, (and therefore representing many churches over the last two centuries), understands itself to exist "as an organization to accomplish something, normally on behalf of God in the world."[38] It is a *doing* church. On the face of it, a doing church sounds attractive and lively, but by putting the focus on human doing, the church is more liable to assume that its own energy and vision is what matters most.

As *individuals* are challenged to commitment and task there is little room for God building his new *community* for the sake of his mission. Unity, maturity, holiness seem to be largely missing.

Of course, this is a challenge to preachers. As Dallas Willard comments:

> We (evangelicals) have counted on preaching and teaching to form faith in the hearer; and on faith to form the inner life and ordered behavior of the Christian. But, for whatever reason, this strategy has not turned out well. The result is that we have multitudes of professing Christians that may be ready to die, but obviously are not ready to live, and can hardly get along with themselves, much less others.[39]

This gang member hedged me around and kept prodding that gathered worship – the light, city on the hill (Matt. 5:14) - and the church alive in the world – the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) both require community formation. The missional church that is *being* God's people in the world. Much worship literature grapples with this issue as in these three examples. Claiming that "it takes a church to raise a Christian," Tod Bolsinger asserts: "Christian transformation comes through the pattern, the personal relationship and the power of God to the believer found in Jesus Christ through the Spirit experienced within the community."[40] How a community worships, over time, impacts belief and behavior in profound ways. Don Saliers argues for reconnecting spirituality, with the practices of Christian worship because:

> Worship both forms and expresses the faith-experience of the community… At its best Christian worship presents a vision of life created, sustained, redeemed and held in the mystery of God. What we do together in acknowledging God 'schools' us in ways of seeing

the world and of being in it.[41]

How worshippers come to understand and practice Christian belief partly depends on how the community is forming them. As Marva Dawn sums up:

> Who you are as an individual believer depends greatly upon the character of the community of believers in which you are nurtured. How faithfully does that community incarnate God's Presence and pass on the narratives that reveal God when they assemble together?...In a society that values show and appearance more than character and internal integrity, congregations often fail to consider worship's role in nurturing participants' character.[42]

Rather than individuals assuming that they already know truth as they seek for more personal experience, within community they are impacted in powerful ways with new language, such as using "we," and expressing sin's reality with need for reconciliation. God's people learn together fresh responsibilities to manifest God's holiness before a watching world. Instead of self-centeredness, they grow in God's paradoxical new way of thinking and living through self-denial, becoming a community of missionaries in a foreign culture.

MY RESPONSE

As will become clear in the next article, these four issues have hit me hard and together. As I wrestled with the implications of big-picture worship, Trinitarian theology, directive Scripture and community formation I was forcefully reminded of the preacher's responsibility. Because of their highly visible public leadership role, preachers inevitably influence local churches' understanding and practice of worship. By attention or inattention, by domination and manipulation or avoidance of responsibility, preachers impact worship for better or worse. They reveal (wittingly or unwittingly) their own convictions about church priorities by allocation of time and commitment. When a senior pastor thinks little about worship, it is unlikely that many in the congregation will think much either. Low expectations of worship from the front reinforce low expectations everywhere else. By their action (or inaction) preachers bear great responsibility for how communities worship.

So, these four influences combined to show me what pastors need to know about worship. In different ways, each provoked a broader understanding of worship, and revealed how much I had allowed a small picture of worship to frame and constrict my life as pastor. Worship had too

little wonder and pitiable depth. With horror I saw so clearly the kind of preacher I was in danger of becoming – one who placed worship in a tiny triangle, separated from preaching on the margins.

In reaction, I was not going to reduce my commitment to preaching, and place it in a small box instead. I still believe passionately that preaching is pivotal to hearing and responding to the gospel, to congregational transformation, and to living out God's mission. Lasting spiritual renewal always comes from hearing and doing God's word afresh. Jesus demonstrates preaching's priority (Mark 1:14), and salvation comes from hearing God's word (Romans 10: 14-15). So, preaching remains central to my calling. This bigger picture of worship did not require a small vision of preaching. Rather, it awoke me to a much larger vision that has enriched my understanding of preaching beyond measure.

To this I want to turn in my next article.

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CONNECTING PREACHING WITH WORSHIP
II. TOWARDS A NEW WORSHIP MODEL FOR PREACHERS

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My first article explained how my preaching world-view has been broken up by a gang of four: worship, Trinitarian theology, Scripture, and community formation. Together these coerced me into a new way of thinking, of worshipping. My experience reminds me of Peter Weir's iconic movie "The Truman Show," in which Truman (played by Jim Carrey) is unaware that since birth he has been the star of the ultimate reality show. Living under a dome, constructed over several square miles, he has no idea that this "world" – all the scenery surrounding him - is under a producer's commands, as are the cast of thousands. For thirty years, his town, island and sea (of which he is afraid) are all that he has ever known. Yet, the film reveals his growing suspicion that more lies beyond this world. Eventually he sails out and, in a memorable scene, his boat's prow suddenly hits the outer wall of his domed world. Discovering the horizon is painted scenery, and the ocean is only knee deep, he begins to walk along to some steps leading up to a door marked exit. His struggle in front of the exit door marks the movie's climax. Will he dare to step out into the unknown world, far bigger than anything he could imagine, or stay safely within his known "world"?

Preachers, who live with a "preaching world view", or within a "preaching dome", may think they see everything that matters. But I want to sound out the disturbing possibility that all they see actually belongs within something immeasurably larger. That they have only a small picture and, beyond, a much larger vista exists. Whenever preachers push worship to one side they settle for a smaller picture.

My journey has taken me through the door from a small-picture of worship – separated from preaching where I put my main emphasis – to big-picture worship which includes preaching. In summary, I have become a worshipful preacher and a preaching worshipper. What happened? These issues coalesced to focus my thoughts in fresh ways. I have come alive to a big picture of worship.

Earlier I described three different ways of seeing the relationship between preaching and worship. How limited they all are in the light of big picture worship - God-centered, continuous, and all-inclusive. God intends worship to be creation's highest common denominator. True worship *centers*

on God, for it only occurs because of God's "worthship." Remove God's own attributes and actions and worship loses its entire purpose. God is both the Subject of worship, who reveals himself in Jesus Christ, and is worthy of all honor, glory and power but, also, the Object of worship who calls worshippers to make offering to him. Those two aspects – prostration in awe and wonder (Ps 95:6); yet setting us on our feet to service as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1, 2). And this response to God is continuous.

Harold Best's *Unceasing Worship,* startlingly describes how God intended humankind to be "continuously outpouring." Made in the image of God, who eternally outpours within his triune self, human beings have no option but to worship someone or something continuously. We are built for worship. We reflect this aspect of God's character. "Nobody does not worship…Worship is the continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do and all that I can ever become in light of a chosen or choosing god."[1] Christians believe that as a fallen people (Genesis 3) we need redeeming by Christ that, through salvation in him, our continuous outpouring might be "set aright and urged into the fullness of Christ."[2] By love that sent his Son to save the world (John 3:16), God seeks to reconcile us with himself (Rom. 5:6-11) so that we together, "in heaven and on earth, and under the earth", are reunited as a praising, worshipping creation (Phil. 2 9-11).

True worship is therefore *all-inclusive*. Christian believers belong to new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), living with him and for him for eternity. Astonishingly, new creation speaks not only of individual personal completeness in Christ but of recapitulation of all fallen creation into newness. While death and disintegration came from Adam, by Christ comes life and reintegration of all things (Rom. 5:12-21, 1 Cor. 15:22). Belonging with Christ is not for Sundays only, for but Sundays to Saturdays. Not just with sermons, or music in church, but with our friends, enemies, at work, recreation, in zip codes across the world, and in heaven.

Worship as new creation in Christ is *God's greatest idea and our highest activity*. It claims center stage and every other position as well. As his number one priority, God reorders everything else in relationship to worship. Christian worship is as expansive as total Christian living in response to God. Every time we think we have pinned worship down adequately, yet more dimensions open up beyond. As Donald Carson defines: "Worship is the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so."[3] And, pithily, Thomas Troeger claims: "Worship is all of us for all of God." [4] Its scope embraces all creation, all thinking, all relating, and all living.

Worship is *never* just another aspect or practice of Christian life, jostling alongside doctrine and preaching. Worship is not something humans do on the way to something more important. It is the reason why we are alive in the first place. God made us to worship, to live in harmony and in

obedience to him. Worship embraces all that we are and all that we have - given by God, and returning to him in praise and by worshipful living. It is the foundational, purpose-driven, *integrator* holding everything else together, *everything* that believers think and do. As Mark Labberton claims, "The urgent, indeed troubling, message of Scripture is that everything that matters is at stake in worship."

> Acting on God's glorious invitation, worship celebrates being alive with heads, hearts and bodies within his community through Christ's grace (Heb 7:24-25). Christian worship is the outpouring of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, listening, receiving, bread, wine, water, working, serving and witnessing by believers who share bread, wine, songs, silence, joy, noise, quiet, tears, personally, corporately to God's glory. Filled with wonder, overwhelmed by mystery, loved by gospel grace, worshipers join in fellowship with the triune God, both when they gather and then scatter. How often do we preachers, and teachers of preachers, exult in such worship?[5]

A NEW MODEL

This big view of worship combined with renewed appreciation of Trinitarian theology demanded fresh understanding. In particular, I looked for a model that expressed how God is at work in worship. He initiates it by grace that first gives ability and resources by which to respond. Giving life in all its fullness, faith in all its wonder, material goods in all their plenty (at least for many of us in the western church), God grants us everything that matters. He has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). By his Spirit, breathing life, gifting faith, inspiring generosity, worshipers return their praise and service for God's glory by God's empowering.

God in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - invites us to live within the biggest story possible, offering the greatest reason, the vastest perspective and the profoundest resources for living. That made in the image of God, we can be reconciled through Jesus Christ, to belong with him, and live for him, in community of unbreakable love. Worship demands the noblest vocabulary and demands we engage with mind-stretching theology.

In early church debates different models and terms emerged for understanding the Trinity.[6] By stressing the relationship and participation of God's three persons in human history, the Nicene Creed laid foundations for a "Social Trinity" model that was developed later. This understanding of God's continuing involvement with human action has become highly influential today. One important word associated with this doctrine is *perichoresis* that describes how the persons of the Trinity do not belong as

distinct from each other, but that they dwell inside each other (John 10:38; 14:8-11), mutually inhering, drawing life from one another, and therefore are only to be experienced because of their relationship to each other. Because of their mutuality, no divine person acts apart from the others. For example, in Creation, the Father is Creator, but Jesus is involved (John 1:3), as is the Spirit (Ps 104:30).

In the gang of four, big picture worship and Trinitarian theology forced me to keep thinking what it means to *participate* within the life of the Trinity, and engage with how the *relationships*, *movement* and *power* of God in three persons all enable worship of radical wonder. Nothing could contrast more with the 'unitarian' one-way movement. *Participation* is a key word for understanding worship's involvement with the Trinity. Defined as 'the act of taking part', 'of sharing in something with others,' it points to the astounding reality that, though the three persons of the Trinity belong together in divine community *apart* from creation, they have freely chosen to involve themselves in the human story, graciously enabling humans to participate, join, share, in communion with them. Stunningly, all human response to God, including preaching and worship, may actually participate in fellowship, in joining in, *with* God in three persons. As Jonathan Wilson comments: "Worship is not merely something we present to God; it is our participation in the life of God, in the fellowship of the threeness of God."[7] "Our worship is *with* Christ our brother, *in* Christ our priest but always *through* Christ our sacrifice whose death for us is the means of our cleansing, renewing and perfection."[8] (See, for example, Eph. 1:4, 5; 2:18; Heb. 2:10-12; 7:25). Such participation enables worshippers to enter God's triune relationship, movement and power.

God's relationship with humanity is made possible in the person and work of Jesus Christ and by the go-between Holy Spirit. Only as they open up relationship with us does it become feasible "that we might participate by the Spirit in Jesus' communion with the Father in a life of intimate communion" (Hebrew 10:10-14).[9] This is the wonder of belonging within the church. While practical unitarianism restricted God's action to one-way movement, *perichoresis* involves a glorious double movement. Rather than *our* faith or decision-making being central, the spiritual dynamic double movement of God relating to us is all-important. Jesus Christ mediates from "above" as well as from "below" enabling believers to participate in worship - humanward from the Father, in the Spirit but also human-Godward, moving to the Father in the Spirit. Torrance describes how this double movement of grace:

> which is the heart of the 'dialogue' between God and humanity in worship is grounded in the very perichoretic being of God, and is fundamental for our understanding of the triune God's relationship with the world in creation, incarnation and sanctification. What God is toward us in these relationships, he is in his innermost being.[10]

By this gracious action God invites us within his fellowship, to participate with the Father who gives faith and desire and draws us through His Son, by his Spirit.

What a difference this makes to worship's spiritual dynamic! Instead of requiring preachers' and worshipers' own energy to make worship "work," this theology recognizes that God's initiating power alone makes worship possible and he draws us in. Instead of preachers "doing their own thing" exhorting listeners "to do their thing" (to re-quote Torrance), preachers participate within God's double-movement empowerment. Of course, worshippers have responsibility to offer themselves as acceptable sacrifices (Rom 12:1), and can fail in that task, but they are acceptable only because of Christ's work on the cross and his continuing mediation, and the work of the Holy Spirit's who enables confession: "Abba, Father." Such emphasizing of God's empowering challenges "do-it-yourself" practices of worship, and safeguards the mystery of God's involvement in our life together as he prompts worship, yet also receives it and seeks to perfect it.

This double movement of call and response needs a model that somehow expresses worship as participating in the life of the trinity and the relationships, movement and power of God's triune grace.

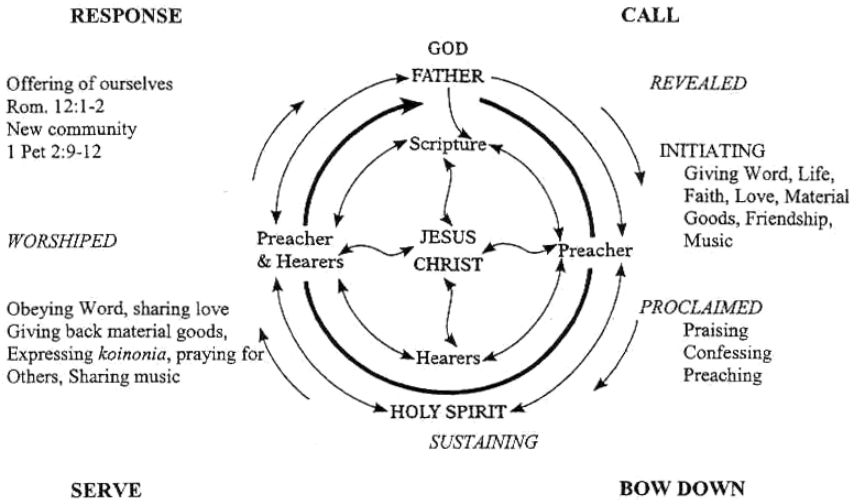

Figure 1. The dynamics of 360degree Worship that includes preaching as worship (based upon 360 degree preaching with permission).

"Call and Response" or "Revelation and Response" sum up worship's double-movement directed both God-humanward and human-Godward. This call and response dynamic emphasizes both aspects of

worship - *bow down* and *serve* - reminding us that God is both Subject and Object of Worship. God, who is worthy of all praise and glory before whom we bow down, calls us into fellowship to serve. Gifting us with word, life, faith, love, material goods, friendship and music we offer our best back to him. Always his gracious gifts of faith, hope and love precede worship – "we do not love because we worship; we worship in that we love."[11]

Inadequate though this diagram is, it highlights two vital features. First, it describes a circular pattern of "God gives- we receive- we respond-God receives." Others writing on worship note this circularity. Defining worship "as a gift between lovers who keep on giving to each other," Welton Gaddy envisages it as circular movement, beginning in the heights and drawing people in by sheer love. "Giving and receiving form a *circular* pattern between God and the people of God, which defies comprehension and lasts for ever" (my italics).[12] God's gifts of faith, material goods, music, and friendship are returned by worshipers through their confession of faith and praise, their tithes and offerings, their music and their friendship within community. Marva Dawn also emphasizes how worship is a corporate gift:

> The gifts of worship flow from God the subject and return to God as the object of our reverence…The sermon is not just the gift of the preacher, nor are choral gifts simply the contribution of the choir, but both involve the offering of themselves by all the members of the congregation.[13]

Second, this big sweep of worship's call and response *reframes* the place of preaching. Preaching remains essential for God's formation of Christ-shaped people and communities because it enables biblical speaking/listening/seeing/doing like nothing else. Yet, it belongs within the breadth of worship's dynamic as "God gives-we receive-we respond-God receives." In the totality of worship, God's word is revealed, proclaimed and obeyed. By praise, prayer, fellowship, communion, sharing love, returning material goods, offering daily lives as spiritual sacrifices, Christ's community gives glory to God. Worship embraces everything that is important about preaching, and places it within the largest vision of God's greatest purposes for humankind.

Many repercussions follow. Rather than treat sermons largely as solo responsibility, this worship model emphasizes how preachers and hearers should be worshipping co-workers through hearing, speaking and living the Word. Sometimes evangelizing, rebuking, often challenging about mission through Christ's upside-down kingdom, preaching always belongs resoundingly within the glorious stream of God's returning gift of grace - first hearing from God and, second, obediently seeking to live aright as new creation. Whenever preachers respond to the doctrine of the Trinity not as

some abstract, unpractical theory, but rather an invitation to "participate" in communion with the triune God, their preaching transforms into worship. They open minds and hearts to belong within God's double-movement of triune grace. Barriers between others come crashing down. Preachers can no longer consider their task apart from worship, or worship leaders see their role apart from preaching. Rather than both "doing their own thing," reinforcing the tragic separation of preaching from worship, they belong *together* within the dynamics of the triune God's gracious enabling. Preachers once short-sighted about worship, now see worship's big picture includes preaching.

Definitions of preaching must therefore expand. Consider, for example, this carefully crafted definition of preaching by Michael Pasquarello:

> Christian preaching is a personally involved participatory and embodied form of graced activity that is the Triune God's gift to the church. This is not subject to human mastery and control, but as an expression of doxological speech is gratefully received and offered back to God through the praise and thanksgiving of the Christian community at worship.[14]

"Personally involved" stresses engagement of heart, soul, strength and mind (Luke 10:27), of preacher and hearers. In Romans 12:1 "present your body" involves giving over the whole of ourselves, while "spiritual" can be translated "reasonable" to emphasize the engagement of mind and heart - "All of us for all of God."[15] "Participatory" resonates with worship's double-movement as God's three persons actively interact with believers, sharing fellowship with the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Intentionally, it relates preaching to the social model of the Trinity, where the doctrine of *perichoresis* explains how believers may interact within the Trinity's powerful dynamic, fellowshipping in the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is God's DNA, building the church and kingdom.

"Embodied form of graced activity" further describes the nature of worship as expressed in the lives of ordinary people, living out their responsibilities as a new community that is entirely of God's making. "That is the Triune God's gift to the church" highlights how grace comes as gift. Utterly undeserving, we belong together as brothers and sisters only by God's will (John 1:12). Rather than see itself as a category of public speaking "subject to human mastery and control," preaching is "an expression of doxological speech" praising God's glory (*doxa*), because its ultimate purpose is to bring glory to the Father. "Gratefully received and offered back to God through the praise and thanksgiving of the Christian community at worship" echoes how God's grace both gives and receives in our worship. It is all of Him, in three persons, from beginning to end.

While it is far from comprehensive such a definition makes dramatic difference to understanding the preaching task. Instead of beginning with preaching as a discrete activity, it throws preaching into the heart of worship, initiated and offered back to God by the whole worshiping community. Preaching is enthused with worship's power and purpose, not only offered *to* God, but *with* God. No longer is preaching solely *about* God's power, but *with* God's power; instead of focusing on Christ's *past* action, now it joins in his *continuing* mediation; instead of calling for human responses *to* Christ, it invites responses *with* Him, by the Holy Spirit. Preaching as worship truly is "the gift of participation through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father."[16]

Ambushed by these two members of the gang of four I now see that preaching is not some different kind of activity from worship that is practiced on its own. It works in the same way, for the same purposes, by the grace of the same empowering triune God. Preaching is "both an act of God in which the hearers are confronted with the Gospel, and also an act of man in which the preacher offers his confession of faith to God."[17] Preaching is an offering made to God by preachers, yet simultaneously it addresses the congregation on behalf of God. Preaching is not only structurally connected to worship, but everything about it *is* worship. Preachers worship when they preach, hearers worship as they listen, and all participants worship as they respond. Worship is the primary dynamic in which preaching engages - the integrator of preaching within God's big-picture.

DIRECTIVE SCRIPTURE

Within this model Scripture has thoroughgoing impact on everything that occurs. Gathered worship operates on three levels.[18] The bottom level describes standard congregational orders of worship - how a congregation usually worships together throughout the year in basic stable patterns: "This is what our average service looks like." The middle level involves variations from this basic pattern often connected with different seasons of church life: "This is what we normally do leading up to Christmas." The top level describes weekly expressions of gathered worship which necessarily involve changes in choices of Scriptures, music, and prayers: "This is what we are doing *this* Sunday." For both the bottom and top levels Scripture has a key role.

The bottom level of gathered worship comprises the usual pattern year in, year out. Several liturgical scholars agree not only that there is one basic pattern but that it originates in Scripture, with its record of how God interacts with human beings. The most commonly cited human-divine dynamic is God's encounter with Isaiah (Isa. 6) with its to-and-fro rhythm of God's glory, human confession, God's commission and human response and,

finally, God's sending out. Russell Mitman finds a similar dynamic in various other texts too, as when God encounters Moses, Mary, and by the feeding of the five thousand. He argues a basic worship pattern in Scripture accounts for the "remarkably similar shape of the denominational liturgies and their historic antecedents" [19] with a five-fold rhythm: (1) Gathering, (2) Penitence, (3) Word, (4) Offertory/Eucharist, and (5) Sending or Dismissal."[20]

Such claims for directive Scripture challenge all basic patterns of worship, whether within rigidly formal or wildly informal traditions. Of course, many have elaborated on how Scripture shapes basic worship structure. Michael Horton lists key liturgical actions according to the pattern of Old Testament covenant renewal.[21] William Willimon outlines *eight* actions from *First Apology of Justin Martyr* (around AD 90) that have since provided the "normal, catholic (i.e. universal) Sunday pattern for the majority of the world's Christians."

My ambush has challenged me to think carefully through basic worship patterns. Fresh reading has opened my eyes. For example, in Don Carson's edited book, *Worship by the Book*, three pastors –Anglican, Free Church, and Presbyterian explain in detail their congregational worship structures. Anglican Mark Ashton extols Cranmer's legacy with the Book of Common Prayer, recognizing creativity and innovations are possible within its "sound framework of biblical doctrine."[22] With a Free Church perspective, R. Kent Hughes names six distinctive issues and outlines basic structure. Presbyterian Timothy J. Keller laments polarization of so called contemporary worship and historic worship as simplistic. He argues that there are at least nine worship traditions in Protestantism alone and explains his preference for Calvin's corporate worship tradition, which he considers relates well to post-modern culture. It remains vital to see Scripture's impact on basic worship patterns.

Further, the top level of gathered worship also takes on fresh urgency. What shape will the next gathered worship take? Worship planner David Peacock raises a key question "What do we want to give God the opportunity to accomplish in this service?"

> Praise, understanding, inspiration, spiritual and practical help for the next week, unchurched encouraged to return, confession, communion, heart response to God's love, greater awareness of needs of others, commitment, recommitment, intimacy, the immediacy of God's presence, filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, healing: physical and spiritual, correction and rebuke, teaching and learning.[23]

How can we best *know* what outcomes we should work for, in order for God to accomplish his purpose? Bluntly, how can we ensure worship

outcomes are not personal choices? This question confronts preachers and worship leaders with their chief responsibility of planning worship *for God's sake* – to achieve his high purpose. And it raises the critical issue of Scripture's role in directing top-level acts of worship.

I mentioned previously that preachers have realized increasingly that Scripture not only *says* things but *does* things. Its focus describes what a text is saying and answers the question: What is the meaning of this text? The function describes what a text is doing and answers the question: What is the purpose of this text? In *360 Degree Preaching*, I urged preachers to investigate the focus and function at two stages of sermon preparation - in the *original* setting of the text as well as in *today's* setting. The first requires serious textual work with concern for authorial intention; the second builds on exegetical work with careful interpretation for the present day. Closely connecting these past and present understandings of the text enables the most faithful hermeneutic. Thomas Long summarizes: "what the biblical text intends to say and do…becomes what the preacher hopes to say and do." [24]

As preaching's traditional task, the text's focus is more easily understood for it concerns a text's meaning. However, alongside its meaning, the text's function has huge implications not only for the outcomes of sermons, but for the whole direction of gathered worship. For what Scripture is "doing" relates directly to that range of possibilities in Peacock's list above. Understanding function indicates whether *this* text of Scripture leads to praise, understanding, inspiration, spiritual and practical help for the next week, encouraging the unchurched encouraged, confession, communion, heart response to God's love, and so on. All these outcomes (and many more) are possible as preachers recognize the potential of God's word to make things happen. Not only should the sermon say and do what the text says and does, but *worship* should say and do what Scripture says and does. "Scripture has the innate capacity to shape, not only the sermon that is a part of the worship event, but also the whole of the liturgical action itself."[25]

This is an immensely practical task in which preachers need to collaborate with all who lead gathered worship in listening to the text(s), so that together they ensure worship's whole thrust responds to Scripture's direction. And though this exercise will be new to most preachers and worship leaders (and require extra time and work), understanding its process profoundly deepens worship preparation and worship. At the top level of gathered worship, God gives clear directions about which particular worship outcomes he desires *in Scripture itself*. Directive Scripture should therefore be the single greatest influence on designing big-picture worship. At this point I must resist the temptation to describe some of my own (very positive) experiences of blogging about preaching in order to encourage collaboration!

COMMUNITY FORMATION

Earlier I lamented how preaching and worship can so focus on the individual it fails to build people into unity and maturity as living stones. Offering spiritual sacrifices (Rom 12:1, 2) not only requires gathering to worship but also building community as God's new people to serve the world. Determinedly, Romans 12:1 brings the word sacrifice right into worship. Instead of unblemished animals as dead sacrifices, blemished worshipers, redeemed by Christ are to be live sacrifices. Sacrifice speaks of whole life commitment of whole people. Romans 12 is addressed to "you" plural, yet the use of singular "a living sacrifice" reinforces how much worship binds worshipers together in community, as brothers and sisters, in new ways of thinking that impact everything they do. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). There are no vacation days from this transformation. Spiritual worship impacts ethics on a seven-day scale - work, family life, leisure, spending habits, involvement with neighbors all come into focus. This is worship at its maximum embracing the whole offering of our lives back to the creator God who made us and is remaking us in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Corporate worship changes the way we live and work. Michael Green and Paul Stevens name five marks of acceptable worship in Hebrews 12:28; 13:15-16:5: giving awe and adoration; being radiant with praise; offering fruit of lives and lips that constantly shine for God; doing good in practical ways; and, touching our purse. They summarize: "Worship without work is hollow. Work without worship is barren."[26] Worshipers are called to respond in every part of life as God's new community living for his glory. God calls people to come together in gathered worship, but he also sends them to *be* his people in the world. Christian worship involves both centripetal movement drawing believers together as well as centrifugal movement in service and mission. In precious corporate quality time, on one day of the week, gathered worship crystallizes what it means to worship God every day. Worship on the one-service scale focuses and nurtures worship on the seven-day scale, cumulatively building into months and years of big picture worship. Of course, worship must involve personal responses but, at its best, it always involves God building his people *together* to live differently for him.

However, "living differently" seems in short supply. In a stinging critique of much of today's worship, Mark Labberton warns how often we play safe in worship because of desire to keep control, maintain relevance, please worshipers, and provide comfort and familiarity. He claims that such safe worship, under human control and ambition, dangerously domesticates God, diminishing the likelihood of encountering the real God who wants to change worshipers and change the world. "Worship turns out to be the

dangerous act of waking up to God and to the purposes of God in the world, and then living lives that actually show it."[27] He reminds us that true worship comprises two inseparable loves – love for God and love for neighbors in need. Alongside its rituals for gathering, Old Testament worship sounded out the need for living justly (Amos 2:6-16, Isa. 1:12-17, Micah 6:8). Jesus commanded loving God and loving neighbor (Mark 12:29; Luke 10:25-37) and demonstrated these twin loves powerfully in word and action. So, the call and response of worship focuses both on God, whose grace we have tasted, and on neighbors who do not yet know him. "Biblical worship that finds God will also find our neighbor."[28] Worship therefore has responsibility to love neighbors and break out far beyond safe closed circles of liturgy offered within four walls. Not only does worship impact individuals' behavior and commitment, but also how those individuals intentionally belong to a community behaving in godly ways for the sake of others. Worship *words* need to be accompanied by worship *practices*.

Over the last twenty years, so-called "virtue theologians"[29] have re-emphasized how body, mind and soul need to be shaped and formed towards the truthful purposes of God:

> Christians require character shaped by communities of faith and habits of truth in order to experience truth….. true worship leads worshipers into the orientation of God's glory, out of which true experience is birthed, which then produces lives as well as experiences and emotions that are faithful to who we are called to be in Jesus Christ." [30]

What worshipers *do* together, by study, sharing, encouraging, and action shapes *who* they become together. As people of the Word responding to revelation of the triune God, they become the people of God *as* they worship. "The church's witness bears testimony not to its own life, but to God's grace in its life."[31] God's grace is therefore attested not only by liturgy but also by practical life and ethical responsibilities of Christian communities. Living for God's ultimate good, such community living demonstrates God's good purposes. Glory and honor are God's due, but also love, justice, mercy and kindness - marks of a missional church.

In a continual formation process, never fully arriving at maturity this side of glory, worship both praises God's transcendent mystery revealed in Christ, and also grows his people together as his community. As Marva Dawn succinctly sums up, the church's task is "to praise God and to nurture character."[32]

CONCLUSION

Where has this journey brought me? Most obviously, I now see myself as a *worshipper first and foremost* – that my highest calling is to worship. I am a worshipper before I am preacher. Redeemed by God's grace, called into fellowship with him, my primary relationship with God is as worshiper. Filled with wonder, overwhelmed by mystery, loved by gospel grace, I join in fellowship with Christian worshipers with the triune God, offering the best of myself to God, who gives life, gifts, faith, and purpose and has the right to claim every minute of my life, every relationship I share, and every square inch of my influence. What is true of Christian worship in general applies especially to preachers, once nobodies yet now ennobled "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20). I now grasp that worship embraces everything that is of primary importance *to God*.

Second, I have come to see that *preaching itself is worship.* I am not only worshipping when singing, praying, hearing Scripture, offering, and sharing the Lord's Supper, but as I preach. Preaching belongs within Trinitarian worship – initiated, activated, and motivated by the triune God - as I call others to hear and respond afresh to God's word by renewed living out his story. Preachers worship when they preach. Delivering sermons belongs within worship's call and response, proclaiming God's truth to his people and focusing their responses of worshipful living. In one of my last conversations with Bob Webber I shared this insight and excitedly he agreed, urging me into new language. He said, "Don't talk about preaching *and* worship, or preaching *and leading* worship, but preaching *as* worship."[33] Worshipful preaching responds to what God has initiated by his word in spirit and truth, with wonder, mystery, joy, service, action. Instead of preachers separating themselves from worship, they need to see that worship becomes the primary description of preaching itself.

Third, I now see that *worship itself proclaims* and that God's call to his whole people should lead to all responding for the sake of God's glory. "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever." Joining in with all creation Rev 4:11, 5:9-11, 12, 13, worshipers declare his majesty, praising his name in word and deed. Ever since God revealed who he is and what he has done for us in Jesus Christ, celebration with resounding joy, praise, adoration arcs back to the God, who alone initiates such worship and who alone is worthy to receive it (Rev 4:11). And worship with preaching reaches far beyond organizing weekly services into full-throated living of a new community for God's glory (1 Pet. 2: 9, 10).

Four, I now actively seek *community transformation*. My preaching should help individual believers integrate into church life and learn what it means to belong and mature together in Christ's new community. Worship should make a difference – forming community living for God, modeling

gospel integrity, offering alternatives yet remain in dialogue with its surrounding community.

Five, and as a result of all the above, I therefore no longer consider my task *apart from worship*, and neither can any others involved in leading worship separate themselves from preaching. All must learn to work together within the dynamics of the triune God's gracious enabling. Properly understood, worship is so much bigger than any roles undertaken by preachers and worship leaders. Rather, big-picture worship integrates everything that is significant for all of us to live to God's glory, gathering and scattering, and demands thoughtful open collaboration in leadership.

Preachers who belittle worship *miss the whole point*. Preachers are worshipers whose sermons are worship and whose task is worshipping. All other descriptions of preaching fall short of God's glory.

On this last five years I have been on an unexpected journey, redirected by the forcefulness of the ambush and the determination of these four forces to influence my preaching passion. I am still on the journey but am already at a place where I can admit that I am truly thankful to have been set upon by this gang of four!

NOTES

1. Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 17-18.
2. Ibid., 10
3. Donald Carson, *Worship by the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 26.
4. Thomas Troeger, *Preaching and Worship* (St Louis: Chalice, 2003), 21.
5. Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship – Living God's Call to Justice* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 13.
6. The creed's language has remained seminal for all subsequent reflection. It formulated that God is one in his essential being (*ousia*), but subsists eternally in three persons (*hypostases*) - Father, Son and Spirit. Two prime models emerged. The "Immanent Trinity" (sometimes called the "ontological", "psychological" or "individual" model) describes who God is in his oneness, as triune being. Focusing on the Godhead's essential nature, his inner dynamics shared by three persons apart from creation underscore God's freedom and graciousness of salvation. This model stresses the *transcendent* nature of God, who is independent of humankind yet created humankind in his "own image."

   On the other hand, a model of the "Economic Trinity" expresses how God in three persons has revealed himself in the story of creation - in the act of creation itself, and through the events of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and Pentecost.

7. Jonathan R. Wilson *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry and Mission in Practice* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 55.
8. Christopher Cocksworth quoted in Robin Parry, *Worshipping Trinity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 95.
9. Ibid., 31.
10. Ibid., 32.
11. Best, 33.
12. C. Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (Nashville; Broadman, 1992), xi.
13. Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 82.
14. Michael Pasquarello III, *Christian Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 10.
15. Thomas Troeger, *Preaching and Worship* (St Louis: Chalice, 2003), 20-22.
16. James B.Torrance, *Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove; IVP, 1996), 20.
17. E.C. Rust, *The Word and Words: Towards a Theology of Preaching* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982), 107.
18. Mitman, 150-151.
19. Ibid., 46.
20. Mitman, 46.
21. Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 147-160.
22. Mark Ashton in Donald Carson, *Worship by the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 80.
23. David Peacock, "Preparing for Sunday Worship," *Ministry Today* 4 (June 1995): 27.
24. Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 70.
25. Mitman., ix.
26. Michael Green and R. Paul Stevens, *New Testament Spirituality* (Guildford: Eagle, 1994), 7.
27. Labberton,13.
28. Ibid.
29. See for example, Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).
30. David E. Fitch, *The Great Giveaway* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 104.
31. Ibid., 11.
32. Dawn, 8.
33. This became the title of my forthcoming book: *Preaching as Worship*.

PERPETUALLY CONNECTED?: THE EFFECTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF AMBIENT TECHNOLOGY ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIPERS

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ABSTRACT. Ambient technologies are social media that prompt users to be in constant contact with one another through media such as blogging, facebooking, and tweeting. These practices are touted for their potential to enhance community and collapse barriers of time and space. As Leith Anderson exclaimed last year, they can foster church life and gospel dissemination. This paper focuses on the risks users incur. It examines the adverse effects of ambient technology in order to deconstruct its systemic valuation and to offer a homiletical response.

INTRODUCTION

"Bill, you've connected over a billion people," Jerry Seinfeld says to Bill Gates in a Microsoft commercial in 2008. "I can't help wondering what's next. A frog with an email? A goldfish with a website? Amoeba with a blog?" After Gates intimates that Seinfeld's predictions are not far afield, the T.V. screen goes blank minus a two-word slogan: "Perpetually Connected."[1] Gates was right about at least one thing; people *are* becoming perpetually connected. In July 2010, Facebook welcomed its 500 millionth user despite having only 100 million users in 2008.[2] It averages five million new users per week.[3] The average user spends 169 minutes per month on Facebook as compared to 13 minutes per month on Google News Reader's website or 10 minutes per month on *The New York Times* website.[4] In addition to the rise of social networking sites, the number of mobile phone users is expected to reach five billion worldwide by the end of 2010, a growth of 400 million in one year.[5] A recent study suggests that 72 percent of mobile phone owners also send text messages, up 7 percent from last year.[6] The meteoric rise of ambient technologies in recent years has been remarkable.

What are ambient technologies? They are social media that allow users to be in constant contact through blogging, social networking, emailing, "tweeting," and mobile phone technology. For good reasons, churches have

seen potential in these media to foster community and enhance evangelistic outreach. However, this article focuses on the risks users incur. It examines the adverse effects of immersion in these media on Christian worshipers seeking with the intent of providing homiletical strategies for critically engaging with these practices.

THE RISKS TO USERS OF AMBIENT TECHNOLOGIES

The Listener as Fragmented Person

One of the strengths of immersion in ambient technology is that it can be a healthy avenue of self-expression and identity formation.[7] Teenage users, especially, covet opportunities to communicate with peers honestly and openly in forums outside parental control. On a mobile phone, they can call or text whenever *they* deem it appropriate. On Facebook, they can change web profiles, load photos, or update statuses, all of which allow them to "tinker" with their identities and be architects of self-presentation.[8]

Despite these apparent benefits, some researchers suggest that media immersion may result in identity fragmentation rather than formation, regardless of one's age.[9] Psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen calls this splitting of identity "multiphrenia," or a state of dividing oneself into a "multiplicity of self-investments."[10] For example, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg stated in a 2009 article in *Time* that his company hopes eventually to give its users "the ability to have a different Facebook personality for each Facebook friendship, a sort of online version of the line from Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself': 'I contain multitudes.'"[11]

Although the user is free to try on multiple selves online, this freedom can cloud rather than clarify identity. After all, the user is free to be anyone that he or she wants to be online. Splitting the self into constituent parts can deconstruct identity to such an extent that the user no longer conceives of the self as whole. As psychologist John C. Bechtold writes, "The self is deconstructed into a variety of contexts that are constantly changing."[12] Instead of seeing a coherent reflection as in a mirror, one sees only fragments.

Psychologist Kent L. Norman also warns of identity fragmentation.[13] When ambient technology substitutes for face-to-face interactions, Norman argues, a person's uniqueness can get lost behind a medium that promotes distance, detachment, and disembodiment. When a person stands behind the machine, as it were, only an obstructed view remains. Norman writes:

The self is embodied in a very analog body and its complexity exceeds by many orders of magnitude any conceivable digital model of it… The self is not only more than the sum of the parts; it is more than itself. It includes its relationships with others and with God himself.[14]

Although technology can be a good tool for trying on different

virtual selves, it does not define or delimit one's identity. Media-saturated worshipers arrive at worship services with a thoroughly deconstructed concept of themselves, who they are and are called to be. They are "multiphrenetic."

The Listener as Oversaturated Performer

Another strength of ambient technology is that it successfully collapses barriers of time and space. Children can talk to their grandparents on Bluetooth while riding in a mini-van. Business travelers can video chat for free from almost anywhere in the world on Skype. Anyone with Twitter can "tweet" friends with instant updates about themselves or receive instant updates about others. *Prima facie,* these benefits are extraordinary.

Yet, there are also costs to "hyperconnection," that is, a perceived notion of ubiquitous knowledge and presence.[15] In a recent *NY Times* article, Matt Richtel suggests that many Americans are suffering from "information overload."[16] Recent research supports Richtel's claim that overload leads to distraction, inattention, and loss of mental capacity.[17] For example, a University of California study discovered that those who constantly checked email in the workplace reported significantly higher levels of stress than those who did not.[18] The "hyperconnected" often complain of high levels of mental exhaustion as a result of constantly being "on" as a performer and participant.[19] The article focuses on Kord Campbell, a man whose home office has three computer screens.[20] Campbell reports significant levels of forgetfulness that harm his business; he laments his inattention to his family. Although Campell's case is extreme, his lifestyle points to a broader trend, namely, the costs associated with failing to unplug.[21] In a recent article on mobile phones, sociologist Sherry Turkle describes a person who is unable to unplug as a "tethered self." Rather than technology being tethered to the person, the person becomes tethered to the technology.[22]

Hyperconnection can lead to exhaustion for other reasons as well. For instance, one can no longer unplug while on vacation. There is no space for resting because there is no place for unplugging. Work can follow those who are "hyper-present" wherever they go.[23] Another issue is the absence of filters that separate the newsworthy from the mundane. Although social media is often used effectively as a tool for political or non-profit mobilization, it is also used to tell hundreds of "friends" that a person ate a Subway sandwich for lunch or that flip flops are on sale at Old Navy.[24] As Bechtold comments, "Information can seem evanescent and detached from any history or narrative."[25] Predicting the connection between technology and mundane newscasting in his book *Walden*, Thoreau suggested back in 1845, while referring to the trans-atlantic cable, "We are in a great haste to tunnel under the Atlantic to bring the old world some weeks nearer the new.

But perchance the first news that may leak into the broad, flapping American ear is that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough."[26] When everything is news, nothing is.

To media-saturated worshipers, exhausted by information overload, stillness and silence are anathema. The Lord's command in Ps. 46:10, "*Be still* and know that I am God," is neither heeded nor practiced, a theme we will return to later in this essay.

The Listener as (Dis)Connected from Community

Another perceived strength of ambient technology is that it can enhance community. In *The Church of Facebook*, worship leader Jesse Rice observes that social networking sites feel like "home" in a society where people feel displaced and homeless.[27] Like physical homes in past generations, Facebook can be a place where the "homeless" keep cherished possessions (e.g., pictures, video, correspondence), find a sense of family, and feel secure. Not only does one feel at "home," but one also feels closer to others despite time and space barriers. One can connect with a friend, re-connect with an old flame, or feel close to a family member by scanning their "page," albeit virtually.

Although ambient technology enhances community in some ways, it also fosters disconnection.[28] In a *Time Magazine* article, Belinda Luscombe claims that in an age of "perpetual digital connectedness," human beings are more disconnected than ever.[29] She cites a Duke University study that notes a three-fold increase (up to 25 percent) from 1985 to 2004 in those who claim that there is *no one* with whom they can discuss important matters. Arguing for causality, not simply correlation, she notes the precipitous drop in empathy among the millennial generation, linking it with Internet technology, particularly social media:

> It's possible that instead of fostering real friendships off-line,email and social networking may take the place of them– and the distance inherent in screen-only interactions may breed feelings of isolation or a tendency to care less about other people. After all, if you don't feel like dealing with a friend's problem online, all you have to do is log off.[30]

Although suggesting that social media is the lone culprit behind disconnectedness would be reductionistic, Luscombe's insights are still important. Online community may *seem* more intimate than face-to-face friendships, but it is not.[31] Putting on a "virtual self" may satisfy a thirst for community in some ways, but it is just as likely to leave this desire unsatiated.[32] Disconnectedness is often broadened rather than bridged.

One may have five hundred "friends" on Facebook, an iPhone, and "tweet" constantly, but still be the loneliest person in the room at a worship service. Being perpetually connected is not the same as being in Christian fellowship. Virtual community cannot replace true *koinonia*.

The Listener as Idolater

In 1964, media expert Marshall McLuhan made two keen observations about the link between technology and idolatry by drawing on wisdom from the ancient world. His first source was the Narcissus myth in which the protagonist mistakes his own reflection in the water for another person. This reflection is so entrancing that he becomes "numb" to the biddings of the nymph Echo. The point of the myth is not that Narcissus fell in love with himself, but that he became enamored with a reflection, or an "extension" of himself. McLuhan argues that the "gadget lover," consumed by technology, can fall into a similar trap. Technology is an extension of human capacities. As an extension, it leaves the user "numb" to its presence and effects.[33] Although the "gadget" is only a "reflection," one can just as easily become enamored with it.

The source for McLuhan's second insight is surprising: Psalm 115. Speaking of the danger of worshipping idols, the psalmist states: "But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands…Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them." (NIV) "By continuously embracing technologies," he writes, "we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, *serve these objects*, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions."[34] Although McCluhan's provocative thesis that using technology inevitably leads to idolatry is probably too hyperbolic, he is not the only person who shares in this is concern. In *Moths to the Flame*, Gregory J.E. Rawlins writes, "Once we start using a tool extensively, it also starts using us….Ultimately, it may change how we view reality itself."[35] Norman suggests the illusion of "quasi niscience, quasi nipotence, and quasi presence," (all of which mimic the attributes of God), can distort one's sense of reality.[36] "While computers cannot make us gods," Norman warns, "they seem to move us in that direction."[37] Whether it is structuring one's life around the tool as Rawlins asserts or succumbing to the false illusion of ubiquitous knowledge as Norman argues, the user becomes subservient to the mechanism in the case of the former and stands in the place of God in the case of the latter. As the psalmist puts it when referring to idols, "Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them."

These concerns are not raised by Luddites seeking to impede technological progress, but media specialists thinking critically about ambient technology's effects upon society. They are trying to define "progress" in

ways beyond simple efficiency and control. They want humanity to progress in wisdom as well as speed of information transfer. They want machines to remain machines, for people to use them wisely and judiciously.

Ambient technology is not sinful nor will it ever be. However, like money or possessions, it becomes idolatrous when those who should be following the Lord Jesus, worship "what their hands have made." When worshipers become enamored with ambient technology, falling in love with their reflection as Narcissus once did, sadly, their misplaced affections become idolatrous. In his book on idolatry, G.K. Beale writes, "What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration."[38] Ambient technology can be quite good, but when revered and left unchecked, it can lead to ruination. As Beale puts it, "We become what we worship."

HOMILETICAL AND LITURGICAL RESPONSES TO AMBIENT TECHNOLOGY: PREACHING AS REMINDING, WORSHIP AS REMEMBERING

Having described the potential risks that media-saturated listeners face such as fragmentation, information overload, disconnection from true community, and potential idolatry, we turn now to the response worship leaders, including preachers, can make. But two caveats are in order: first, not all effects of ambient technology are negative. This paper focuses on the negative because we see many churches and individuals adopting technologies uncritically, basing decisions on fashion trends without thoughtful theological reflection. And secondly, there are no quick fixes. Seventy-five minutes in corporate worship each week cannot undo all negative effects of technological addiction, but those precious minutes can do *some* things.

We suggest two responses to pervasive ambient technology: preachers and worship leaders should (1) help our people remember, and (2) leverage incarnational communication. These responses can help us resist technology's displacing of the mind which is "calm, focused, [and] undistracted" with the "new kind of mind that wants and needs to take in and dole out information in short, disjointed, often overlapping bursts—the faster the better."[39]

One of the purposes of preaching, neglected in most homiletics textbooks, is simply to remind believers of what they already know. From the covenant renewal ceremonies under Moses, Joshua, Josiah, and Ezra, to our Lord's instituting of the new covenant with the words "Remember me," to Jude's burden that, although his readers already knew all that he would tell them, he thought it necessary to *remind* them to persevere in the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3, 5), preachers and liturgists have always helped people remember. Worshipers immersed in

ambient technologies that fragment their sense of self and reality need to be "re-membered"; that is, they need to be put back together.

When preachers "merely" remind believers of their identity in Christ, the covenant God has initiated, and the stipulations he requires, we may feel that our message is simplistic and redundant, but this is usually not how listeners react to such messages. Rather, we are like the hobbits who "liked to have books filled with things that they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions,"[40] The power of rehearsing well known stories, truths, and values has been explored by Perlman and Obrects-Tytecha under the heading of "epideictic oratory." They state that epideictic "strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the values it lauds."[41] For the listeners, these values may be "undisputed" but they are also "not formulated."[42] That is, listeners agree, but they may not be able to articulate why they agree or they may not understand the implications of the value to their lives. Perhaps the homiletical strategy of reminding accounts for much of the effectiveness of Timothy Keller's preaching whereby he shows his listeners, saved and unsaved alike, how the gospel meets the deepest needs of the human heart. His listeners, fragmented Humpty Dumpty's falling off of Wall Street and Madison Avenue, must be put together again.

Ambient technologies create minds which want to be "distracted from distraction by distraction."[43] These minds are dominated by *curiositas*:

> Which the medieval moral theologians considered distinctly a vice. It was often described as the besetting temptation of the pilgrim, losing his focus on the goal of the journey by gawking at all the novelties along the way, lapsing into the titillated but uninvolved gaze of the tourist. *Curiositas* is a desire for the sort of aimless knowledge that comes with no moral strings attached, no responsibility for caring for the person seen.[44]

How can preachers and worship leaders remind their people so that they will be re-membered? Space permits only an outline of suggestions:

Extended and Effective Public Reading of Scripture

Believers need to hear regularly about the covenant God has initiated and the response he requires. Evangelicals depend primarily on the sermon to do this, and obviously it deserves to be a major player in that enterprise, but we also need to hear directly from God himself through the Word, with only minimal commentary, just voice to ear. Through patient, regular, thorough, skillful public reading, fragmented readers can be reminded of who they are: a chosen people, a royal priesthood. Just as storytelling at the dinner table helps form the identity of a family, so does public reading of Scripture

form the identity of the worshipping community. But note: the reading must be done *skillfully*. Lackadaisical, unprepared, monotoned Scripture reading accomplishes little. It must embody the gravity and delight of being part of God's family.

Narrative Arc

The form of a sermon, sermon series, worship service, or even the form of the liturgical year, can help connect fragmented worshipers to the metanarrative of the Christian faith. The narrative arc is, of course, the creation, fall, redemption, and final deliverance of God's creatures and creation. It recounts God's unfolding redemptive plan and situates the listener within that plan.

This narrative arc should include more than the hegemonic mood of most evangelical worship services—celebration and thanksgiving. It must also include lament, introspection, and confession. As Shane Hipps states:

> Electronic media culture has a natural bias toward efficiency, entertainment, and consumption. . . . Taking its cues from these biases, worship in the modern church is often equated almost exclusively with joy and celebration. Worship often serves as a kind of pep rally designed to inspire thanksgiving for what God has done and excitement about who God is. While this is certainly a legitimate aspect of worship, it is incomplete.[45]

Emphasizing only celebration "cuts to the heart of hospitality and pastoral sensitivity."[46] That is, many people who gather for worship need to travel the road of the psalms of lament: from pain, doubt, and wrestling with God, to re-affirmation of faith, to joy. To feed worshipers only one meal flavored with the same spices as most media—fast and enjoyable—is to teach them to deny their emotions, feel shame for their doubts, and alienate them from the community. It perpetuates numbness rather than abrogating it.

Incidentally, the narrative arc of creation through consummation is being used more and more for evangelism, not just for worship. Oral cultures seem to respond especially well to this integrated and concrete approach to theology, and perhaps literate but fragmented Internet surfers will also respond. The use of the narrative arc may help account for the effectiveness of Rob Bell's teaching. His approach to hermeneutics and homiletics is consciously narratival.

Ritual

As preachers and liturgists take it upon themselves to remind

worshipers of the covenant, they should use non verbal communication (ritual). Concrete forms of communication such as hands laid, bread eaten, knees bent, and water splashed are crucial in re-membering distracted souls. While our people may subscribe to *digital maximalism* (William Power's term for the values of being hyper-connected and distracted)[47] and thus chafe at the use of "media" like silence, the slow passing of seasons, and physicality, worship leaders will nonetheless take their cue from Scripture where such activities are assumed, modeled, and even commanded. As Quentin J. Schultze states, to persons saturated in technologies that privilege efficiency and control (such as email, texting, and social media), "silence strikes us as an error, a missed cue. We look immediately for an alternative diversion. Stillness seems useless,"[48] but it is not useless. The worship service may be one of the few occasions where splintered souls can be calmed and re-membered. Pastors should patiently tutor "the digital consciousness [which] can't tolerate three minutes of pure focus."[49] William Powers continues:

> The hours we spend flitting constantly among tasks train us to treat our time and our attention as infinitely divisible commodities. . . . Eventually the mind falls into a mode of thinking, a kind of nervous rhythm that's inherently about finding new stimuli, new jobs to perform. This carries over into the rest of our lives; even when we're away from screens, it's hard for our minds to stop clicking around and come to rest.[50]

Effective preachers and worship leaders who minister to folks whose minds constantly click around can help them rest by reminding them of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Incarnation

While ambient technology offers users a sense of nearly ubiquitous presence, we would do well to consider the maxim of Seneca: "To be everywhere is to be nowhere."[51] As stated above, ambient technologies have a bias toward efficiency and control, not patience and humility. Users of these technologies tend to equate transmission with communication.[52] So called "communication" is reduced to the sending of brief, frenetic messages broadcasting of opinions and trivial activities ("I had a cheeseburger for lunch, and boy was it good!"). "Conversation" partners become an "invisible entourage" that follow the sender everywhere he/she goes.[53] As Rice states concerning Facebook: "Hyperconnection . . . changes the nature of our relationships by turning our friends into audiences and us into performers."[54] Buffardi and Campbell also warn of narcissism:

These online communities may be an especially fertile ground for

narcissists . . . for two reasons. First, narcissists function well in the context of shallow . . . relationships. Social networking Web sites are built on the base of superficial "friendships" with many individuals and "sound-byte" driven communication between friends (i.e., *wallposts*). Certainly, individuals use social networking sites to maintain deeper relationships as well, but often the real draw is the ability to maintain large numbers of relationships (e.g., many users have hundreds or even thousands of "friends"). Second, social networking Web pages are highly controlled environments (Vazire & Gosling, 2004). Owners have complete power over self-presentation on Web pages, unlike most other social contexts. In particular, one can use personal Web pages to select attractive photographs of oneself or write self-descriptions that are self-promoting.[55]

Two liturgical responses can help foster communion in worship services and counter ambient technology's natural biases toward narcissistic autonomy.

Listening/Dialogue

Worship services should be marked by a community of disciples sitting at Jesus' feet. Jesus is present, of course, through his Word, in the Lord's Supper, and in the body of Christ, the priesthood of all believers. We "access" the Lord by listening, but listening demands that we cease from constant speaking and mental scurrying. Sadly, the Internet fosters both. As a counter-cultural community, the Church should model humble listening.

Advice on heightening listening/dialogue in preaching and worship can be found in many books and articles and does not need to be repeated here. The advice includes preparing sermons in community; creating venues for two-way communication before, during, and after the sermon; adapting Asian modes of teaching for Western contexts; and borrowing African American rhetorical devices for non-African American contexts. However it is done, the goal is to help "constant performers" step out of self-generated spotlights in order to listen humbly to the voice of God in the voice of the community.

Testimony

To combat the negative effects of mediated communication, where we script, edit, stage manage, and air brush facsimiles of ourselves we suggest testimony. This form of communication can be operationalized in many ways. It can accompany the sermon, as in Rick Warren's practice; the preacher can incarnate the truth with appropriate self-disclosure;[56] or entire services can be given to testimony.) However it is done, we feel that incarnation is indispensable, not ancillary, to Christian communication, and

that testimony allows the truth to be incarnated. Because of this conviction the authors of this article are concerned about the growing practice of multi-site churches with video sermons. Ambient technology can approximate presence, as with the technology of epistles, but it is only presence-in-absence.

CONCLUSION

"This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it."[57] We have suggested that worship leaders, including preachers, resist the fragmenting and narcissistic effects of ambient technology by reminding worshipers of the truth and by incarnating that truth. Intending this article to spark conversation rather than provide the final word on the quickly evolving world of communication technology, we invite dialogue.

NOTES

1. As cited in William Powers, *Hamlet's BlackBerry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 67.
2. Juliane Pepitone reports that approximately 70 percent of Facebook's users are outside the United States. See Julianne Pepitone, "Facebook Hits 500 Million Users," *CNN Money*, July 21, 2010, http://money.cnn.com/ 2010/07/21/technology/facebook_500_million/index.htm?postversion=2010072114&hpt=T2. In a recent review of David Kilpatrick's *The Facebook Effect*, NY Times journalist Michiko Kakutani states, "Facebook is not only the world's largest social network, but Mr. Kirkpatrick suggests that it may also 'be the fastest-growing company of any type in history.' He reports that over 20 percent of the 1.7 billion people on the global Internet now use Facebook regularly, including 35.3 percent of the American population. The number of users is growing at the remarkable rate of 5 percent a month, he says, and the average user, astonishingly enough, spends almost an hour there each day." See Michiko Kakutani, "'The Facebook Effect' by David Kirkpatrick," *The New York Times*, June 7, 2010, http://www.nytimes. com/2010/06/08/books/08book.html?ref=mark_e_zuckerberg.
3. Jessi Hempel, "How Facebook is Taking Over Our Lives," *Fortune*, February 19, 2009, www.money.cnn.com.
4. Ibid.
5. Sarah Parkes, "ITU Sees 5 Billion Mobile Suscriptions Globally in 2010" (February 15, 2010), http://www.itu.int/newsroom/press_releases/2010/06.html.
6. "When Texting Becomes an Addiction," *CBS News: CBS Early Show*, September 1, 2010, http://www. cbsnews.com/stories/2010/09/01/early-

show/living/parenting/main6825771.shtml?tag=cbsnewsMainColumnArea. For more on the dangers of texting, i.e., addiction and physical dangers, see this article and Matt Richtel, "In Study, Texting Lifts Crash Risk by Large Margin," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/28/technology/28texting.html.

7. In the chapter titled, "Adolescence and Identity: Finding Yourself in the Machine," MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle describes the positive effect that computer programming or virtual community can have on children in classroom environments. Engagement with "the machine" can positively shape the way children conceive of themselves and think about the world. See Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 131-152.
8. Sociologist Bob Wuthnow suggests that being a "tinkerer" or "bricoleur," is a defining characteristic of young adults in their twenties and thirties, especially as it pertains to religion. The tinkerer sifts through ideas and practices from a variety of places and constructs a unique bricolage in order to engage in identity construction. See Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13-16, 134-136.
9. The common misconception that Facebook and other social networking sites are only used by adolescents and those in early adulthood was debunked in a 2009 article in *Time* by Jessi Hempel. Hempel states that the 18 to 24 year-old market, i.e. college and post-college crowd, that Facebook originally targeted in its earliest stages, now makes up less than a quarter of its users. From 2008 to 2009, new Facebook accounts were up 175% among women 55 or older. See Jessi Hempel, "How Facbook is Taking Over Our Lives."
10. Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991), 73-74.
11. Jessi Hempel, "How Facebok is Taking Over Our Lives."
12. John Bechtold, "Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern," in *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis*, eds. Paul C. Vitz and Susan M. Felch (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 194.
13. Kent L. Norman, "The Self at the Human/Computer Interface: A Postmodern Artifact in a Different World," in *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis*, eds. Vitz and Felch.
14. Ibid., 180.
15. The word "hyperconnected" is used as verbiage in various articles pertaining to Facebook and its founder Mark Zuckerberg. See Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected Are Redefining Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009). For another instance of using the word "hyperconnected," see Nicholas A. Christakis and James

H. Fowler, *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2009), 253-286. To describe the same phenomenon, John Bechtold uses the word "hyper-presence", or, "an exaggerated sense that we have been in at least two places in once." See Bechtold, "Technology and the Self," 189. In a recent book chapter, Kenneth J. Gergen describes the social media "hyperconnection" phenomenon as "absent presence." Summarizing the negative effects, Gergen writes, "The erosion of face-to-face community, a coherent and centered sense of self, moral bearings, depth of relationship, and the uprooting of meaning from material context: such are the repercussions of absent presence." See Kenneth J. Gergen, "The Challenge of Absent Presence," in *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*, eds. James E. Katz and Mark A Aakhus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 232, 236.

16. Matt Richtel, "Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price," *New York Times* (New York, NY, June 6, 2010), http://www.nytimes.com. The term "information overload" was originally coined by Alvin Toffler back in the 1970's as a futurist warning about what could happen to human beings if they adopted connective technologies. The term has gained broader currency in the last two decades in discussions about psychological disorders, attention deficit traits, and productivity problems associated with processing vast amounts of digital information. See Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984). See also the reference to Toffler's work in Powers, *Hamlet's BlackBerry*, 50.
17. Nicholas G. Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 115-43.
18. Richtel, "Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price." Powers observes that several studies have found that those who suffer most from information overload in the workplace, ironically, are employed in technology fields. Powers writes, "In studies of workplace overload, the most shocking statistics and anecdotes– employees so distracted, they can barely think– come from the technology sector." See Powers, *Hamlet's BlackBerry*, 68.
19. For more on the challenges of being constantly "on" as a performer as it pertains to mobile phone technology, see Sherry Turkle, "Always-on/Always-on-You: The Tethered Self," in *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, ed. James E. Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 121-137. Reflecting on the challenges faced by the upcoming generation as it pertains to social networking sites, computer scientist Jaron Lanier writes, "They must manage their online reputations constantly, avoiding the ever-roaming evil eye of the hive mind, which can turn on an individual at any moment. A 'Facebook generation' young person who suddenly becomes humiliated online has no way out, for there is only one hive."

See Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 70.

20. Richtel describes the situation of the three screens as follows: "The left screen follows 1,100 of his friends on Twitter, the middle screen is used for computer programming along with video and IM chats pertaining to his business, and the third screen is for email, a calendar, a Web browser, and music." Richtel, "Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price."
21. Richtel points out in a 2009 article that, according to a study in which the cabs of long-haul trucks were equipped with video cameras over an 18 month period, truck drivers who texted while driving had a collision risk that was 23 times greater than when not texting. See Richtel, "In Study, Texting Lifts Crash Risk by Large Margin." When Jared was driving on a major highway with his wife and two young children recently, they spotted a woman driving behind them erratically. She was steering the car with her knees while texting on her mobile phone.
22. Turkle, "Always-on/Always-on-You: The Tethered Self."
23. Bechtold uses the language of "hyperpresence" in Bechtold, "Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern," 189.
24. Christopher Chabris writes, "The near-continuous stream of new information pumped out by the Web also plays to our natural tendency to 'vastly overvalue what happens to us *right now*.'" Cited in Carr, *The Shallows*, 134.
25. Bechtold, "Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern," 197.
26. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, as cited in Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 65.
27. For more on the development of homelessness in the American consciousness, see Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York, NY: Random House, 1973). For Rice's connections between Facebook and our sense of "home," see Rice, *The Church of Facebook*, 76ff.
28. Psychologist John Bechtold argues that overloaded email or voicemail boxes alienate users from engaging in meaningful relationships. Anyone who has returned from vacation and dreaded checking email or voicemail can understand this anxiety. Are we more or less likely to avoid a person to whom we owe an email or phone call on a work-related matter, especially if we've been away? "In an ironic reversal," Bechtold argues, "you become the source of information that some technology is trying to access." See Bechtold, "Technology and the Self: Approaching the Transmodern," 197.
29. Belinda Luscombe, "Why Email May Be Hurting Off-Line Relationships," *Time*, June 22, 2010, http://www.time.com.
30. Ibid.

31. Christine Rosen makes a helpful distinction between virtual and real-world friendship when she writes, "Friendship in these virtual spaces is thoroughly different from real-world friendship. In its traditional sense, friendship is a relationship which broadly speaking, involves the sharing of mutual interests, reciprocity, trust, and the revelation of intimate details over time and within specific social (and cultural) contexts. Because friendship depends on mutual revelations that are concealed from the rest of the world, it can only flourish within the boundaries of privacy; the idea of public friendship is an oxymoron." See Christine Rosen, "Virtual Friendship and the New Narcissism," *The New Atlantis*, Summer 2007, 15-31; Rice, *The Church of Facebook*, 113.
32. Sociologist Ben Agger defines the "virtual self" as "the person connected to the world and to others through electronic means such as the Internet, television, and cell phones. Virtuality is the state of being online and using computers: it is a state of being." See Ben Agger, *The Virtual Self: A Contemporary Sociology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 155.
33. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 41-42. Powers adds further credibility to McLuhan's claim that technology leads to numbness when he writes, "The hours we spend flitting constantly among tasks train us to treat our time and our attention as infinitely divisible commodities. . . . Eventually the mind falls into a mode of thinking, a kind of nervous rhythm that's inherently about finding new/ stimuli, new jobs to perform. This carries over into the rest of our lives; even when we're away from screens, it's hard for our minds to stop clicking around and come to rest." Powers, *Hamlet's BlackBerry*, 46-47.
34. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 46. Emphasis added.
35. Gregory J.E. Rawlins, *Moths to the Flame: The Seductions of Computer Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 24.
36. Norman, "The Self at the Human/Computer Interface: A Postmodern Artifact in a Different World," 173.
37. Ibid., 179.
38. G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.
39. Nicholas Carr, The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains (New York: Norton, 2010), 10.
40. J. R. R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring (New York: Ballantine, 1954), 9.
41. Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. Wilkinson and Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 50.
42. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 53.

43. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quarters*, Book 1, "Burnt Norton," III. l 101. http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/norton.html
44. John Skillen, "Facebook in a Monastery," *Stillpoint* (Fall, 2010): 16.
45. Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 160.
46. Hipps, The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture, 161.
47. Powers, Hamlet's Blackberry, 4.
48. Quentin J. Schultze, *High Tech Worship: Using Presentational Technologies Wisely* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 84.
49. Powers, Hamlet's Blackberry, 46.
50. Powers, Hamlet's Blackberry, 46-47.
51. In Carr, *The Shallows*, 141.
52. Schultze, *High Tech Worship*, 21.
53. Rice, Church of Facebook, 111.
54. Rice, Church of Facebook, 112.
55. Laura E. Buffardi and W. Keith Campbell, "Narcissism and Social Networking Web Sites," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34/10 (2008): 1305.
56. See Jeffrey Arthurs and Andrew Gurevich, "Theological and Rhetorical Perspectives on Self-Disclosure in Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (April-June 2000): 215-226.
57. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry*, vii.

A BLIND SPOT IN HOMILETICS: PREACHING THAT EXEGETES ETHNICITY

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ABSTRACT. The composition of many churches today is changing from monoracial/monoethnic congregations to increasingly multiracial/multiethnic ones. In light of this shifting church culture, this article directs our attention to a common blind spot in congregational exegesis (i.e., ethnicity) that, if integrated, may begin to increase preachers' reach to engage non-majority listeners who often remain invisible in the homiletical enterprise.

INTRODUCTION

In Eric Law's book, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change*, he discusses an emerging challenge of ministry in an increasingly diverse society. He states: "The diversity challenge that we are experiencing is more complex, visible, and widespread than ever before. It is more complex because people are insisting on defining themselves with more specifics and often in multiple categories."[1] To show this growing diversity, he sums up data from the U.S. Census 2000 in the following way: "for every 100 people you meet, only 75 people could be non-Hispanic whites, 12 might identify themselves as non-Hispanic black, 12 or 13 might consider themselves Hispanics, 4 could be non-Hispanic Asians, 2 or 3 could be of mixed racial identity and 1 could be Native American or a Hawaiian Native."[2] What this census data reveals is that over the last few decades the United States has changed rapidly with respect to the racial and ethnic composition of its citizens.

Concomitantly, the demographics within many congregations in America are shifting both racially and ethnically. It is not uncommon for congregations to comprise a blending of Anglo Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Our congregations are delineated by various ethnic groups under the umbrella of overarching racial classifications. Moreover, the race and ethnicity of pastoral leaders do not always reflect the dominant culture of a given congregation. That is, we are witnessing Asian American pastors lead predominantly Anglo American congregations. African American and Hispanic American pastors are directing the visions and spiritual pathways of multiethnic churches. And Caucasian pastors are shepherding primarily Hispanic congregations and so on.

With this ever changing ecclesial landscape, have we, as teachers of homiletics and preachers, considered how our sermons are being received by listeners who fall outside of our particular racial or ethnic group? While the gospel we preach concerning our Lord Jesus Christ remains unwavering, I contend in this article that preachers today must learn to conscientiously exegete their listeners with regard to ethnicity so that they can preach more relevantly to congregants who are different from them and to those who are not members of the dominant congregational culture.

HOMILETICS AND LOCAL THEOLOGY

Attempts to bridge this exegetical gap in homiletics have been made. For instance, in *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, Leonora Tubbs Tisdale borrows the term "local theology" from Catholic theologian Robert Schreiter to introduce a homiletic method where pastors cultivate "explicit skills and training in 'exegeting congregations' and their subcultures—just as they need skills and training in exegeting the Scriptures."[3] Tisdale also employs James Hopewell's concept that congregations can be viewed as "subcultures" which encourages preachers to explore and assess overlooked elements of the church's makeup including: geographical location, social class, age, and sex, among others.[4] Tisdale offers this approach acknowledging that preaching professors have not offered pastors practical models "for identifying and analyzing congregational subcultural differences."[5] Her solution for this "homiletic void"[6] is contextual preaching:

> Our quest, then, is for preaching that is more intentionally contextual in nature—that is, preaching which not only gives serious attention to the interpretation of biblical texts, but which gives equally serious attention to the interpretation of congregations and their sociocultural contexts.[7]

Appropriating the concepts of American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Tisdale explains that preachers can become "local ethnographer(s)."[8] In this process, the preacher utilizes ethnography functioning as a "participant observer" in the culture and establishing rapport by being immersed in daily activities.[9] Tisdale relates that this is the only way for preachers to achieve "thick description" of a group, which is "moving beyond description of the symbol itself (which is 'thin' description) to an interpretation of its meaning and message in relation to certain socially established codes and structures."[10]

Tisdale, then, provides seven practical methods for pastors to achieve "thick description" in their sermon preparation: (1) listen to congregants' stories and interview them; (2) explore church archival materials; (3) learn about the demographics of the church; (4) survey the church's architecture

and visual arts; (5) note important church rituals; (6) explore the church's key events and activities; and (7) understand the unique types of people in the congregation.[11]

Tisdale's contribution to the initial work on contextual preaching is notable. She uniquely draws upon the theories of Clifford Geertz and Robert Schreiter to create her own distinct paradigm of preaching as "local theology."[12] Yet, despite Tisdale's persuasive suggestions for exegeting the culture or subcultures of the congregation, her homiletic method lacks critical analysis for how preachers can utilize contextual preaching in more racially and ethnically diverse ecclesial situations.

First, her treatment of interpreting congregational worldviews, values, and ethos is based primarily on Western concepts and modes of thought. She does not acknowledge the complexity of ethnic minority listeners who may adhere to different ideological presuppositions or modes of reasoning.[13]

Second, Tisdale's methods for congregational exegesis do not leave room for the plausibility that church members experience unspoken tensions when attempting to bring together parishioners from various racial and ethnic groups. At present, Tisdale's prescriptive methods offer preachers little or no pragmatic alternatives for dealing with tension or uneasiness within more diverse congregations. Thus, what our changing church demographics require is deeper levels of exegeting the congregation, principally as they relate to racial and ethnic variances.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

The beauty and tension in the field of homiletics is the multifaceted nature of our discipline. As John Stott so memorably put it, preachers stand "between two worlds" - the world of the Bible and the world of the listener.[14] A common tendency for preachers is to study one world more than we explore the other. What preachers and homileticians need ever more robustly in the 21st century is the ability to understand both of these worlds well. With respect to the latter world, audience analysis or congregational exegesis has been an orator's apparatus ever since biblical times. In today's culture, preachers should revisit audience analysis as a germane sermonic tool and dedicate themselves to this important task.

For example, the Apostle Paul carefully crafted his sermons in view of the crowd and who was listening to him. In Acts 17, while Paul was waiting for his ministry partners Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens, he saw a city enamored with idol worship. He took the opportunity to engage in conversations with Jews, God-fearing Greeks, and even Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. As the story unfolds, Paul eventually stood up at the Areopagus and addressed the Athenians bringing them to the common

ground of religion. He related to them on this religious level and later segued into a discussion of a cultural artifact - an altar inscribed with the words, "To an Unknown God." Paul's exegesis of his listeners shows how he considered his audience, engaged in lengthy discourse with them, and thereby introduced the true and living God to his hearers. In doing his due diligence, Paul became familiar with those to whom he would be speaking. And in the end, several members of the audience gave him a second hearing.

Today, our contemporary audiences are seldom different. They want to be spoken to rather than spoken around or spoken about. As part of our sermon preparation, we get to know our listeners because "people use different senses, abilities, and perspectives when they listen to sermons."[15] Preaching is a contextual act that requires careful analysis of one's lived situation.[16] As Scott Gibson confirms, "The task of preaching is to understand—the biblical text and one's listeners. Comprehending one's listeners involves probing the wider culture in which one's listeners live. The common complaint of listeners is 'the preacher doesn't understand me.' In the minds of some listeners preachers appear to be more committed to understanding the text – which is a good thing—than the people to whom they preach."[17]

As homileticians increasingly lament, much of our sermon preparation deals with the text (as it should) but insufficiently in understanding the people seated in the pews. Consequently, certain elements remain invisible in our audience analysis. In my past research, I have found that many preachers seek to understand even basic facets to their listeners' lives such as: 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?[18] The remaining portions of this article will help us begin to explore the world of ethnicity specifically and how one's ethnicity might influence how he or she receives and interprets the spoken word.

HOMILETICS AND THE LISTENER'S ETHNICITY

A fundamental question I am considering is this: "How does one's ethnicity and cultural experience influence how he/she listens to and interprets the sermon?" With the phenomenon of continuous immigration in America, many sociologists anticipated that the United States would become a country where everyone would blend together and form one cohesive American culture. What this perspective advocated was a discarding of one's ethnic and cultural heritage in favor of assimilation where ethnic minorities would need to embrace the cultural philosophies, behaviors, and practices of the dominant culture.

As we are now aware, the assimilation process of immigrants has not been so seamless nor has assimilation been desirable for some ethnic

groups and cultures. In the church, we have faced a similar situation where members of minority cultures are expected to assimilate and cohere with the vision, values, and ministry practices of the dominant culture—whatever and whoever that may be. Further, preachers often communicate the central idea of the biblical text without considering or nuancing the message in a way that minority listeners will hear and interpret contextually what is being communicated.

To provide an example, the congregation where I serve as pastor is predominantly Korean American with respect to ethnicity. We have a handful of members who are Chinese Americans, a few Anglo Americans, a Vietnamese American, and an Indonesian American. Since the dominant culture in the church is Korean American, much of my ethnic and cultural exegesis during the first two years of my preaching ministry was focused on that Korean American demographic. In addition, as a Korean American myself, it was only innate to think about how the main idea of the biblical text spoke to my Korean American experience. In the process, I failed to envisage how my tethering of biblical concepts to everyday life as a Korean American would not strike a chord with non-majority culture listeners. In my silence to communicate to their varied cultures and experiences, I missed the opportunity to engage and embrace these hearers in the sermon. However, during the last three years, I have intentionally attempted to study and familiarize myself with non-majority culture listeners.

One's ethnicity, ethnic identity, and culture are critical lenses through which a listener filters scriptural teaching and its application. While biblical principles apply to all, we can tailor our sermons to hone in on specific historical, contemporary, and cultural experiences of listeners who come from diverse backgrounds and apply God's word to their lived situations. For instance, we can preach a sermon that celebrates God's remarkable and providential deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt during the Exodus but completely forget to mention the heinous institution and injustices of slavery. In that moment, we have failed to address the grave concern that is on the minds of minority listeners who have experienced slavery in their racial, ethnic, and cultural history. Likewise, when our sermon illustrations and stories always recognize and commend members of the dominant culture, we simultaneously through our silence communicate to non-majority listeners that they are somehow inferior or that their ethnicity or culture is not worth mentioning. While some would argue that I am being overly sensitive, we must as preachers seek to put ourselves in the shoes of our listeners and hear the sermon through their ears. This is particularly true where congregations are diversifying even without our cognizance.

MULTIRACIAL/MULTIETHNIC MINISTRY[19]

A corollary of the diversification of American churches is that congregational demographics are changing, but we have not prepared ourselves for this challenge. Increasingly, churches are becoming multiracial/multiethnic through immigration, the ethnic blending of neighborhoods, and interracial marriage. Sociologist George Yancey defines multiracial churches as ones in which "no one racial group makes up more than 80 percent of the attendees of at least one of the major worship services."[20] In recent years, the subject of multiethnic ministry has received growing interest especially among sociologists of religion. For instance, Curtiss Paul De Young et al. argue that "Christian congregations, when possible, should be multiracial."[21] Citing biblical precedent for multiethnic churches, these scholars posit that multiracial ministries will abet race relations in the United States.[22] In contrast, Donald McGavran opposes the notion of multiracial congregations with his "homogenous unit principle" which argues that monoracial congregations facilitate church growth more effectively than diverse faith contexts. McGavran establishes this theory based on the following declaration: "People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers. This is an undeniable fact. Human beings do build barriers around their own societies."[23]

Whether we believe multiracial/multiethnic congregations is a biblical mandate or not, we cannot deny that churches today are witnessing an influx of visitors and new parishioners who are not members of the dominant racial/ethnic group in a local church. As pastors, preachers, and homileticians, have we prepared ourselves homiletically for this ecclesial transformation?

We may treat this phenomenon in one of three ways. First, we may preach in a way that denies racial/ethnic differences and never openly mentioned them. Second, we may rely on caricatures and stereotypes of a specific racial/ethnic group and seek to address their needs through this static lens. Third, we may open up the communication lines and strive for authentic engagement to understand the racial, ethnic, and cultural differences of the members of various subcultures.

The Omission of Ethnicity

One of the leading ramifications of the multiethnic church movement has been the de-emphasis of ethnic and cultural analysis in the preaching ministry of congregations.[24] As increasing numbers of non-majority parishioners fill the pews, many preachers have either consciously or subconsciously removed matters of ethnicity and culture from their sermonic analysis. For instance, Kil Jae Park observes this digression from

ethnic and cultural consciousness in numerous Korean American churches: "[T]he dualistic appropriation of faith and culture by many second generation Korean Americans have led them to view God as disconnected from their Korean American experience and to mistrust, or even negate, their cultural experience as an obstacle and hindrance in their spiritual life."[25]

The reason behind this omission is that many pastors 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."[26] As a corollary of these measures, pastors will preach to the "generic American" or de-contextualize their preaching with the expectation that the sermon will inevitably speak to everyone.

Sociologist of religion Antony Alumkal appropriates Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya's categories of "particularism" and "universalism" to describe the negotiation of identity that Christians undertake within ethnic-specific contexts.[27] Alumkal maintains that many monoethnic religious communities ask: "To what extent should they identify with their specific ethnic group, and to what extent should they identify with a Christian community that transcends ethnic boundaries?"[28] During this period of initial questioning, Alumkal reports that Korean American ministries frequently encounter tension as they seek to reconcile differences between their universalistic and particularistic perspectives.[29]

As we completely omit ethnicity from our audience analysis, my contention is that preaching becomes decreasingly contextual and less effective. As such, many Korean American preachers, for example, have forgotten that their listeners'

> experience of God is always rooted in the reality of one's Korean American-ness and that he/she will experience God first and foremost as a Korean American. This is to say that one's experience and understanding of God will never be able to escape the reality and the socio-cultural context of his/her Korean American-ness, regardless of whether one is conscious of it or not. Simply put, one's faith and understanding of God is culture-dependent.[30]

Stated simply, all listeners regardless of their racial or ethnic identity hear the preached word through the filter of their lived ethnic and cultural experience. Failing to address differences in race and ethnic experience denies a core component that makes up who these listeners are.

Caricatures and Stereotypes

Attempting further to be culturally sensitive to non-majority listeners, some preachers have sought to preach messages that address common parallels spanning racial groups. That is, pastors speak to similarities that are mutual among all Anglo Americans, Asian heritages, African cultures, Hispanic groups, and Native American backgrounds, respectively. The peril, however, for preachers who generalize racial groups in this fashion is that they neglect the fact that ethnic subcultures have various cultural incongruities. For example, Curtiss De Young and his colleagues explain, "Although East Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and China do share some cultural similarities based on Confucian ideals, each country has its own distinct culture, including language."[31] Moreover, psychologist Laura Uba rightly observes that

> Asian American individuals will vary in their syntheses of personal experiences, Asian culture, and American culture as a function of their intelligence, education, gender, exposure to Asian culture (which would depend on place of birth - whether abroad or in the United States - and on age at the time of immigration, if foreign born), and so on.[32]

By consolidating diverse ethnic parishioners into a single racial category, "we [majority members] put them [non-majority members] at risk for losing their identities and their faith, and possibly allow the world to lose their unique perspective on God."[33] Instead of omitting ethnicity completely or relying on generalizations (which are often exaggerated), a preacher's exegetical responsibilities should include exploring and engaging God-given ethnicities and subcultures in the congregation.

ETHNIC EXPLORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In their book, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies*, James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers reflect on ethnicity and its bearing on homiletics as they break down ethnicity into three key components: community commitment, shared history, and distinctive ways of a group.[34] Community commitment is group members' "intentional decisions and labor to continue belonging" to that particular ethnic group.[35] Shared history is the study of how an ethnic group member becomes "submissive to a larger identity, activating that identity in daily life, and then shouldering the burden of passing it on."[36] Distinctive ways of a group are the specific "behaviors, customs, and values characteristic to that group."[37] They argue that each of these components requires a degree of understanding which provides

general background knowledge on the particular ethnicity being studied.

Yet, these scholars maintain that the most direct approach to discovering the characteristics of an ethnic group is through the intentional study of that group's background and place.[38] A second strategy is to become engaged in the life of that community[39] and to participate in special occasions like festivals, anniversaries, or funerals which "reveal an ethnic group at its key transitions, either remembering something from the past (such as a commemoration) or enacting some passage in the present (such as a death)."[40] Two other helpful suggestions that Nieman and Rogers provide are to use ethnic "sayings" during the sermon[41] and to draw upon artistic treasures from the ethnic groups themselves.[42]

On the whole, Nieman and Rogers' study offers a tremendous starting point for preaching and ethnic exegesis. We should begin with their suggestions and employ their strategies. What I will propose next are additional methods that every homiletician and preacher can employ to engage in ethnic and cultural analysis so that more effective communication will occur.

ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The second half of this article will offer preachers more systematic and practical approaches to understand the layers of ethnicity and how ethnic experience bears weight on how listeners hear sermons. As individuals have varying commitments to their specific ethnicities, one of the initial steps in considering ethnicity is to understand stages of ethnic identity development and to ascertain what stage group members find themselves in their personal journeys.

Several conceptual theories of ethnic identity development have been proposed in recent years for ethnic minorities offering a plethora of resources for preachers to embark on this path of ethnic identity exploration.[43] In effect, many of these theories employ psychologist James Marcia's four-stage sequence of ego identity formation regarding identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement.[44] At this time, one theory will be highlighted which has universal potential to contribute positively to understanding ethnicity.

For example, Donald R. Atkinson, George Morten, and Derald W. Sue's five-stage Minority Identity Development (MID) model consists of the following stages: Conformity, Dissonance, Resistance and Immersion, Introspection, and Synergetic Articulation and Awareness. In Stage 1: Conformity, ethnic minorities experience self-depreciating feelings toward their ethnic group. In essence, they want to reject who they are and find complete acceptance as members of the dominant group. In Stage 2: Dissonance, an internal struggle occurs where one negotiates feelings of

self-depreciation and appreciation of one's ethnic background. In Stage 3: Resistance and Immersion, the individual begins to appreciate his/her own ethnicity and begins to lose desire for acceptance in the dominant group. In Stage 4: Introspection, the person begins to reflect on grounds for his/her self-appreciating feelings. A list of pros and cons is written down to process feelings. And lastly, in Stage 5: Synergetic Articulation and Awareness, the individual fully appreciates his/her ethnic identity and is less concerned about how the dominant group feels toward him/her. Through this process of ethnic identity formation, oppressed minorities begin to embrace their own minority culture and come to terms with the dominant majority culture and the often oppressive dynamics that exist between them.[45]

The MID model has been previously identified by a number of ethnic minority scholars including Peter Cha who contend that this approach is useful for interpreting Korean Americans' life experiences.[46] Cha's research findings offer empirical support for the MID model:

> It seemed that most of the consultants' early childhood experiences fit the description of the conformity stage, their adolescent experiences the dissonance stage and the resistance and immersion stage, and their young adult experiences the introspection stage and the final stage of the integrative and awareness stage.[47]

Therefore, to comprehend the formation of ethnic identity, the MID model serves as a grid to sort through listeners' tensions of living in both ethnic and American sociocultural spheres and come to terms with this duality. Similar tensions exist in the context of the local church. While members of the dominant culture may not feel this tension as acutely, members of minority subcultures feel its pronounced absence when preachers omit to acknowledge differences in ethnic and cultural experiences in their sermons.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO EXEGETE ETHNICITY

Pastors and preachers have limited time during their busy weekly schedules. How can a preacher exegete the audience regarding ethnicity with the numerous demands of pastoral life? What I would like to suggest are some practical steps to exegete ethnicity, given today's time constraints, which will begin to improve one's sermonic reach.

Personal Study

To begin the process of exegeting ethnicity, we might begin by reading existing literature on the topic. As mentioned earlier, Atkinson et al.'s MID model comes from a larger book project, *Counseling American Minorities:*

A Cross-Cultural Perspective. In this book, the authors take the reader through a comprehensive journey to explore the worlds of different racial/ethnic minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, for the purpose of being able to counsel individuals from these varied racial backgrounds. Although the book is targeting issues in counseling, the reader enters the world of how individuals from these varied cultures think and process experiences. Other helpful works related to race, ethnicity, culture, ministry, and homiletics include: *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* by James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers as previously mentioned, *Multicultural Ministry* by David A. Anderson, *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations*, edited by Kenneth G. Davis and Jorge L. Presmanes, *One Gospel, Many Ears* by Joseph R. Jeter, Jr., and Ronald J. Allen, *I Believe I'll Testify: Reflections on African American Preaching* by Cleophus J. LaRue, and *Preaching the Presence of God: A Homiletic from an Asian American Perspective* by Eunjoo Mary Kim. As preachers, we are committed to regular study and this commitment should extend to learning about different races, ethnicities, and cultures as well.

Focus Groups

A second intentional way to learn about different ethnicities and cultures in the congregation is through conducting focus groups. Companies use focus groups regularly as a strategy to discern how best to market their brand and product. Taking a cross-section of non-majority individuals from the congregation, the preacher can ascertain how effectively or ineffectively the Sunday sermon is meeting the needs of minority listeners. In most contexts, the preacher will use focus groups to begin exploratory research. Norman Blaikie explains, "Exploratory research is necessary when very little is known about the topic being investigated, or about the context in which the research is being conducted."[48]

The preacher could invite to his/her church office members of the congregation who represent different ethnic groups. Similar to the concept of roundtable preaching advocated by John McClure and others,[49] the preacher invites dialogue by asking these congregants the following types of questions:

1. How would you describe yourself in terms of your ethnic identity?
2. In what ways does your ethnicity and culture influence how you listen to and interpret the sermon?
3. Has my preaching ever intersected with your particular ethnic and cultural experience?
4. Have there been any occasions where I have offended, omitted, or misrepresented your ethnicity and culture?

5. How do you think my sermons could improve in tailoring to the experience of non-majority culture members?
6. What do you wish I knew about your ethnicity and culture going forward?

Rather than being fearful of how such questions and focus group conversations may be perceived by members, my encouragement would be that most non-majority culture parishioners would welcome and appreciate such direct pastoral and homiletical care. Focus groups could become a regular and ongoing part of a preacher's audience analysis. Through intentional dialogue, the preacher will gain sermonic insight that may be used intermittently (and wisely) to demonstrate his/her endearment and concern for all members of the flock.

Friendships and Conversations

Another helpful practice to learn about a specific ethnic group is through establishing friendships and engaging in informal conversations. As one befriends a person of a different race or ethnicity, one learns over the course of time that many cultural differences exist. What this knowledge offers a homiletician or preacher is that we cannot customarily preach a "one-size-fits-all" type of sermon.

In the life and ministry of Jesus, the Gospel writers record numerous examples where Jesus befriended others. He took an active interest in those who were different from himself, those who were considered outcasts in society. Although he could not identify with them on every level (e.g., sinful inclinations), his many conversations gave him insight into how to meet their individual and collective needs.

Preachers are not to establish friendships for the sole purpose of making people feel like the pastor's project to learn about a particular race or ethnic group. However, through genuine shepherd-like care, we can extend our influence both pastorally and sermonically by becoming knowledgeable and sensitive to the God-given differences of others.

Celebrate Ethnicity

In the past, we have heard sermons where preachers conclude for their listeners that the creation of different cultures was a curse of God. Citing Genesis 11 as a primary example, many preachers insist that the Tower of Babel moment was God's pronounced judgment on his people for their sin of self-glorification, where the aftermath resulted in the creation of different languages and ultimately different cultures. If, as Scripture states, that humans are created in the imago dei, how is possible that various races, ethnicities, and cultures embody God's curse on particular humans? Which

race, ethnicity, culture constitutes God's choice people and who then is referred to as cursed?

Rather, the judgment of God was manifested, not in the creation of different tongues and cultures, but in the dispersing of his people who felt the need to bring glory to themselves. As Carl F. Keil explains, "When it is stated, first of all, that God resolved to destroy the unity of lips and words by a confusion of the lips, and then that He scattered the men abroad, this act of divine judgment cannot be understood in any other way, then that God deprived them of the ability to comprehend one another, and thus effected their dispersion."[50]

As preachers, we can celebrate the beauty of God's creation in all races, ethnicities, and cultures. Celebration comes in many different forms. One way to celebrate ethnicity is simply to acknowledge that different ethnicities exist in the congregation. Typically, preachers will mention the historic sins, failures, or demise of a particular ethnic group when they could incorporate into their sermons stories where members of specific ethnic groups are protagonists akin to where Jesus celebrates the deeds of the Good Samaritan.

As Nieman and Rogers suggest, celebration of ethnicity may also take the shape of using ethnic words from specific languages that more effectively explain what we are trying to convey. Sometimes we will find that words in other languages like Spanish, Chinese, or German are better suited for the context or situation about which we are speaking. Such words illuminate and illustrate the meaning more poignantly than English words.

Celebration of ethnicity could also involve demonstrating to our listeners that we have thought about how the sermon's application might have an impact on one's ethnic group. For example, in Luke 14:26, Jesus tells his disciples: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple (NIV)." The application of Jesus' point looks different depending on whether one comes from an individualistic culture versus a more collectivist culture. In collectivist cultures such as Asian American or Hispanic American groups, where the family unit is more important than the individual, we may find that there will be more resistance among listeners from collectivist ethnic groups. By acknowledging this cultural difference in our sermon, we show listeners from collectivist backgrounds how to apply this biblical concept in a more contextualized fashion.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have attempted to explain how preachers' sermon preparation should take into consideration people of all ethnicities and cultures represented in their churches. While the homiletical norm has been

to generalize sermons with the hope that they will address all listeners, my contention is that our sermonic appeal and influence will expand through intentional study, exploration, and exegesis of varying ethnicities and subcultures.

We have merely scratched the surface in seeking to understand different ethnicities and cultures represented in our congregations. Exegeting ethnicities and cultures will not be a simple or swift endeavor. It will require much time, analytical engagement, and cultural sensitivity. It will force us to get out of our homiletical comfort zones. Yet, through exegeting and engaging different ethnicities, we are telling and showing our varied listeners that they really do matter to us. In doing so, we will be able to communicate the gospel in such a way that we can live out Paul's admonishment in 1 Corinthians 9:22 to "become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (NIV)." May we start the process of removing this blind spot from our sermon preparation and thereby see more clearly the significance of understanding our listeners' ethnicities, ethnic identities, and subcultures.

NOTES

1. Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002), 10.
2. Law, 9.
3. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 18.
4. Tisdale, 15. Hopewell's understanding of the congregation was influenced by what Clifford Geertz, borrowing from Max Weber, referred to as a "web of significance" which "distinguishes a congregation from others around it or like it." See James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures*, edited by Barbara G. Wheeler (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 5.
5. Tisdale, 18-19.
6. Tisdale, 19.
7. Tisdale, 32-33.
8. G. W. S. Knowles, "Theory and Practice of Preaching: Review Article," rev. of *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, by Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *The Expository Times* 109 (1998): 149. See also Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973).
9. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 58.
10. Tisdale, 58. The concepts of "thick description" and "thin description" were initially developed by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle and later borrowed by Clifford Geertz. See Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Papers: Collected Essays 1929-1968*, vol. 2. (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 465-496; and

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973), 5.

11. Tisdale, 64-76. See also Mary C. Orr, rev. of *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, by Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Interpretation* 53 (1999): 329.
12. Robert P. Waznak, rev. of *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, by Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Worship* 71 (1997): 570-571.
13. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 80-90. See also Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently…and Why* (New York: Free, 2003).
14. John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the 20th Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).
15. Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 37.
16. Arthurs, 35.
17. Scott M. Gibson, "Comprehending the Preaching Task," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 10 (2010): 2.
18. Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching to Second Generation Korean Americans: Towards a Possible Selves Contextual Homiletic* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 165.
19. Albeit different terms, I will use multiracial and multiethnic interchangeably here for our purposes. Multiracial is a broader category referring to Caucasian American, African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Native American. Multiethnic refers to specific ethnic groups that are included within the broader racial classification.
20. George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 15.
21. Curtiss Paul De Young, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford: Oxford, 2003), 2.
22. De Young, et al., 9-20; 168-174.
23. Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 261. Interestingly, George Yancey's empirical study on multiracial churches debunks McGavran's theory in that church membership at multiracial churches increased at higher rates than mono-racial faith communities. That is, 66.1 percent of multiracial churches multiplied their membership versus 57.1 percent of mono-racial congregations. See George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 35.
24. Mark Mullins contends that as ethnic-specific churches encounter ethnic and racial diversification, they inevitably become "de-ethnicized" to accommodate other English-speaking members who may not be co-ethnics. See Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14 (1987): 328.

25. 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, 188.
26. George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 23-24.
27. Antony W. Alumkal, "Being Korean, Being Christian: Particularism and Universalism in a Second-Generation Congregation," *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, edited by Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 182. Lincoln and Mamiya employ these terms regarding the African American church's "dialectical tension between the universalism of the Christian message and the particularism of their past racial history as institutions emerging out of the racism of white Christianity and the larger society." See Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 12.
28. Alumkal, 181.
29. Alumkal, 181-191.
30. 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, 204.
31. Curtiss Paul De Young, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford: Oxford, 2003), 121.
32. Laura Uba, *Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health* (New York: Guildford, 1994), 14.
33. De Young, et al., 114.
34. James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress*, 2001), 25-26.
35. Nieman and Rogers, 25.
36. Nieman and Rogers, 26.
37. Nieman and Rogers, 27.
38. Nieman and Rogers, 27.
39. Nieman and Rogers, 28.
40. Nieman and Rogers, 29.
41. Nieman and Rogers, 45.
42. Nieman and Rogers, 50.
43. Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research," *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (1990): 502. See also Donald R. Atkinson and Ruth H. Gim, "Asian-American cultural identity and attitudes toward mental health services," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*

36 (1989): 209-212; William E. Cross, "The Cross and Thomas models of psychological Nigrescence," *Journal of Black Psychology* 5 (1978): 13-19; William E. Cross, "The psychology of Nigrescence: Revising the Cross model," *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, edited by Joseph G. Ponterotto, J. Manuel Casas, Lisa A. Suzuki, and Charlene M. Alexander (London: Sage, 1995), 93-122; Diane de Anda, "Bicultural socialization: Factors affecting the minority experience," *Social Work* 29 (1984): 101-107; W. S. Hall, William E. Cross, and R. Freedle, "Stages in the development of Black awareness: An Exploratory investigation," *Black Psychology*, edited by Roger I. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 156-165; Janet E. Helms, "Cultural identity in the treatment process," *Handbook of cross-cultural counseling and therapy*, edited by Paul Pedersen (Westport: Greenwood, 1985); Jean Kim, "The process of Asian-American identity development: A study of Japanese American women's perceptions on their struggle to achieve positive identities," diss., University of Massachusetts, 1981; Jean S. Phinney, "When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean?" *American Psychologist* 51 (1996): 918-927; Elsie J. Smith, "Ethnic identity development: Toward the development of a theory within the context of majority/minority status," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 70 (1991): 181-188; and Richard R. Troiden, "The formation of homosexual identities," *Journal of Homosexuality* 17 (1989): 43-73.

44. Phinney, 502. See also James Marcia, "Development and validation of ego-identity status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966): 551-558; and James Marcia, "Identity in Adolescence," *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, edited by Joseph Adelson (New York: Wiley, 1980), 159-187.
45. Donald R. Atkinson, George Morten, and Derald W. Sue, *Counseling American Minorities* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1998), 34-35.
46. Peter T. Cha, "The Role of a Korean American Church in the Construction of Ethnic Identities among Second-Generation Korean Americans," diss., Northwestern University, 2002, 72. See also 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*, edited by Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 141-156; T. H. Koh, "Ethnic Identity: The Impact of Two Cultures on the Psychological Development of Korean-American Adolescents," *The Emerging Generation of Korean-Americans*, edited by Ho-Youn Kwon and Shin Kim (Seoul, Kor.: Kyung Hee University Press, 1993); and Grace Sangok Kim, "Asian North American Youth: A Ministry of Self-Identity," *People on the Way: Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture, and Community*, edited by David Ng (Valley Forge: Judson, 1996).

47. Cha, "The Role of a Korean American Church," 73.
48. Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (Cornwall, UK: Polity, 2000), 73.
49. See, for example, John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) and Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).
50. Carl F. Keil, *The Pentateuch: Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 110.

THE PERILS OF PERSUASIVE PREACHING I CORINTHIANS 1:18–2:5

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I recently heard someone tell about a conversation he had with a friend in ministry. "How's it going at your new church?"

"It can be hard. Sometimes I get up in the morning feeling like I'm with the Ephesians, but go to bed at night feeling like I'm among the Corinthians."

Many of us can relate to that feeling. We know how difficult ministry can be, especially when people aren't getting along with each other, as was the case in Corinth. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is a deeply honest pastoral letter in which unburdens his heart about the nature of his preaching in a place where comparisons are being made between preachers.

At times I've heard this passage quoted as a slam against the study of rhetoric or the use of rhetorical devices in preaching. But since I've earned a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, I've come to believe that a preacher CANNOT NOT use rhetoric. It is involved in everything we do. We have good examples of this among us. I recall how Dr. Bryan Chapell, the plenary speaker for our annual meeting in 2005, employed Kenneth Burke's rhetorical pentad to show how to more effectively preach the gospel as narrative exposition. I am not ready to accept an anti-rhetorical explanation of this Corinthian text without a closer contextual examination of Paul's intent in this passage.

First of all, we know that Paul was an eloquent and gifted leader, an educated man who rose to prominence among the Jewish people as a young man. He was familiar with Greek rhetoric. His letters to the churches employed modes of argumentation from the world of educated Greeks. His writing reveals eloquent passion, logical argumentation, and urgent pleading. Paul's writing ranks among some of the most persuasive rhetoric in the ancient world. You need look no further than the epistle of Philemon. My preaching students readily find in that letter all three of Aristotle's persuasive means—ethos, pathos, and logos.

Further, Paul wrote: "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). And Luke described Paul's work in Corinth by saying that "every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4). I'm quite convinced that Paul deliberately used rhetoric in every way possible to advance the gospel.

What then was Paul's intent in emphasizing the ministry of the Holy Spirit while downplaying the power of persuasion of his verbal persuasion?

To find the answer, we do well to turn to Acts 18:1-28. Here Luke tells the story of Paul's work in the city of Corinth.

Verses 1-4 tell us that Paul begin his ministry as a self-supporting tentmaker, working in partnership with Aquila and Priscilla. "Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks." But when Silas and Timothy joined their missionary team, "Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching."

In time, Crispus came to faith in Christ, along with his entire household. And then "many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized" (v. 8)

Even in the face of keen opposition, Paul stayed longer than usual in this town. He was spurred on by a message in a vision from God, who said "Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city" (v. 10). Even so, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and dragged him into court (v. 12). Having been beaten, stoned, and left for dead in other venues, we can understand the fear that Paul must have felt in this city.

Some time after Paul left Corinth, Apollos came to the city. He was a learned man who knew the scriptures well (v. 24) . "He vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (v. 28). By comparing v. 4 with v. 28, I can hear Luke hinting that Apollos may have been a little stronger than Paul in public debate with the Jews.

This brief study of Acts 18:1-28 can help us understand Paul's opening words in the Corinthian letter. The church was divided in their loyalty to three different leaders—Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. All three were powerful public speakers. Note Paul's response to this problem—to emphasize the power of the cross of Christ in comparison with the person who preached the gospel (v. 17).

Paul sets out to contrast the wisdom and strength of God in comparison with that of man. Note these poignant phrases in Paul's argument:

> Where is the wise man? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?
>
> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."
>
> Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

> It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." (Here he draws on Jeremiah 9:24).

Paul's whole point in verses 18 to 31 is to emphasize the sovereignty, the wisdom, the power of God in comparison to anything that human beings can bring. The culmination of God's wisdom is revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ. The message of the cross shows that true salvation comes from God; it is not the result of anyone's persuasive preaching. To emphasize the power of any particular individual's preaching (or to compare preachers with one another) runs the danger of emptying the cross of its redemptive power.

Paul comes back to this theme several times in this letter. Note, for example, 1 Corinthians 3:3-9, where he again speaks of his ministry alongside that of Apollos.

> For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?
> What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

Clearly Paul is trying to turn their minds away from a comparison between leaders toward the ministry of God in their midst. To accomplish this he employs a rhetorical device, seeking to reframe their dividing thinking by appealing for transcendence, something greater than either side can claim for themselves.

With this background in mind, let us move to a more specific look at 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. Paul begins with the words, "when I came to you" (v. 1) This should take us back to the account in Acts 18, which describes his ministry in Corinth. Paul says that he "came with weakness and fear and with was much trembling" (v. 3). Was Paul speaking here of stage fright, of butterflies in his stomach? I think not. A man who had once gone house to house arresting Christians and throwing them into jail is not socially reticent or shy.

Yet we know that Paul lived with a natural aversion to the intense persecution which left him with deep physical scars. Why else would God have spoken to him in a vision, urging him to not be afraid? (Acts 18:9).

It's also clear that Paul was trembling before God's sovereignty. In another letter to the Corinthians he says that he was given a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from boasting about the revelations from God (2 Corinthians 11:7). Although we do not know the precise nature of this thorn, we do know that he asked God three times to remove it. This was more than a simple kneeling beside his bed with the words: "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray thee Lord my thorn to keep." I can imagine Paul engaged in earnest pleading, begging God to remove an apparent hindrance to his effectiveness in preaching the gospel. But God responded by saying "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness (v. 9). That's the message of the cross! It's almost enough to make me a Calvinist.

When I was in my mid-twenties, I attended an Evangelism Explosion workshop at the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. At one of the break times, Dr. D. James Kennedy came to speak to me. He must have noticed the word "Mennonite" on my name tag or registration sheet, since he confronted me with the words: "You're a Mennonite, aren't you? You Mennonites believe that man has something to do with salvation. I'm a five-point Calvinist. I believe that salvation is totally of God."

I was somewhat taken aback. Having studied Calvinism and Arminianism in Bible College, I knew the TULIP formula. I must have mumbled out some reply. To his credit, I can only remember his words, not mine.

This dear brother has gone to be with the Lord. But if I were to reply to him now, I would probably tell him that the TULIP formula may be John Calvin "on steroids." I'm not sure that Calvin himself would a hyper-Calvinist approach to the sovereignty of God. Even the TULIP formula makes space for my conviction that God desires our response to his sovereign call, invites us to delight in his salvation, and commands us to share the good news of God's salvation with others. That's what Paul was called to do as a preacher, and so are we.

Therefore, we must not divide the Christian church by arguments in response to Calvin, Arminius, John Piper, Rob Bell, Greg Boyd, lest we empty the cross of its power. Preaching is about God, not about us. I have the sense that over time, Paul became more convinced of the danger of leaders placing too much emphasis on credentials, taking too much credit for results, and depending too much on their persuasive ability.

I have been deeply impressed by the way that Paul changed the way he described himself to the churches over time, as expressed in four of his letters in chronological order. All emphasize the grace of God and contain a description of himself. Note the phrases:

> Galatians 2:6, 8 [one of the early epistles, perhaps as early as 50 AD] "highly esteemed people added nothing to my message", "apostle to the Gentiles."

1 Corinthians 15:9-11 [later, perhaps 57 AD] "the least of the apostles" "worked harder than all of them"

Ephesians 3:8 -- [later, perhaps 60 AD] "less than the least of all God's people"

I Timothy 1:15 -- [still later, perhaps 65 AD] "worst of sinners"

This way of speaking and describing oneself as a Christian leader runs quite counter to the way I tend to think of training students in seminary. I'd expect the order to be just the opposite, beginning with "worst of sinners" and ending up "equal with the apostles."

How then shall we as preachers in the Evangelical Homiletics Society, take Paul's message to heart? How shall we preach? How shall we use rhetoric?

First of all, we need to get it straight—both theologically and attitudinally—we are servants, not masters of the Word. God is the one who chooses, calls, and convinces people to respond to the his salvation.

Secondly, we must point people to Jesus Christ and him crucified. That's how people get saved.

Thirdly, we must Gospel communication everything you've got. Paul says he worked harder than others (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 11:23). God calls us to engage our best preaching craft with humility, knowing that God's power is made perfect in human weakness. Just understand that even your best efforts are weak in God's sight.

Fourthly, shun comparison with other preachers that result in divisions and potentially empty the cross of its power. Preaching the gospel is not primarily about preachers. It's about God.

Finally, learn to rely on the power of the Spirit to carry you along in the ministry of preaching. Paul knew the immense difference between preaching in one's own strength and the power of the Spirit. Perhaps I can best illustrate it this way.

Let's suppose you have a friend named Bill who buys a new moped and brings it to your house to show it off. You notice he's puffing.

"Look at my new moped," he brags. "Isn't it nice? What do you think of this color?"

"Yeah, Bill, I like this shiny red and white paint." I should take a picture of you on it.

"Good, listen to this." He beeps the horn.

"I like the basket you've mounted to carry your groceries and other things."

"Thanks, I did it myself."

"It looks like it has room for two. Can you take me for a ride?"

"Sorry, I'm a bit tired. Maybe later."

"I noticed you're sweating. What makes you so tired?

"It takes a lot of effort to ride this thing. Especially up the hill to your house."

"It does?" Is the motor not working properly?

"Motor? I didn't know it had a motor.?

"You didn't know it had a motor? How have you been getting around with it?"

"I pedal it or scoot along with my feet. But I can never go very fast and I get really tired."

"Oh Bill, have I got good news for you. This thing's got an engine that will help you go up to 40 miles per hour. Let me show you."

So you hop onto the moped, turn on the key, and pedal it a few cranks until the motor fires up. Your friend gets on too, and off you go, enjoying the pleasure of a vehicle that takes you up the hills as well as down, without even making you sweat.

I don't mean to imply that you won't sweat when you're preparing sermons. Rather, I'm saying that without the power of the Holy Spirit, preaching can really wear you out. May God grant us the power of the Spirit as we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

BOOK REVIEWS

Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach. By Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010, 978-0-664-23332-7, 138 pp., $20.00.

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

This book lives up to its title: it deals with prophetic preaching from a pastoral perspective. Although not devoid of scholarship or theory, the book's best quality is its practical wisdom. Pastor and professor Tisdale knows her stuff as she gives sage advice on preaching tough topics and envisioning the sermon as part of the life of the local body, not as a stand-alone oratorical event. Furthermore, the author emphasizes the importance of disciplines like prayer, silence, and connecting with people who are suffering—the wellsprings from which prophets draw. She also emphasizes ethos: preachers cannot simply talk about justice; they must live it.

"Prophetic preaching" does not necessarily mean "preaching from the prophets." Rather, it is preaching characterized by seven "hallmarks" (10). Some of these homiletical hallmarks are: preaching that is countercultural, focused more on corporate than personal evil, that offers both critique and hope, and in which the preacher's own heart must resonate with God's heart. Illustrated frequently with sermons from the pulpit of The Riverside Church in New York City, *Prophetic Preaching* conceives of such preaching along standard liberal lines—both theological and political.

Unfortunately, this well written book with its wise words is marred by its view of Scripture. While Tisdale emphasizes that prophetic preaching is "rooted in the biblical witness," this assertion is clouded by many of the sermon précis intended to serve as models. Some of those sermons work with an image or phrase from a text, allowing that phrase to ignite the preacher's imagination, but the sermons often overlook the biblical author's intention. Sometimes they touch only briefly on any text, as with Ernst Campbell's "Open Letter to Billy Graham" (75–76); and sometimes, the sermon seems to deconstruct the Bible, as when James Forbes answers the question, "Can gay men and lesbian women be called to preach the word of God?" Forbes states, "Oh, I know what the Bible says and I know what my own uneasiness says …. But I've been wrong before …. Sometimes we forget Jesus' promise—that the Spirit will lead us into all truth. Well, that must have meant the disciples didn't know it all then, and maybe we don't know it all now" (45–46).

Read *Prophetic Preaching* for a gentle but firm nudge to fulfill your calling, and read it for clear and perceptive pastoral advice, but don't turn to it as a model of hermeneutics or exegesis.

Prophetically Incorrect: A Christian Introduction to Media Criticism. By Robert H. Woods Jr. and Paul D. Patton. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010, 978-1-58743-276-7, 224 pp., $19.99.

Reviewer: *Brandon Cash, Oceanside Christian Fellowship, El Segundo, CA*

This book is, as the title indicates, an introduction. While the preacher may glean some insights and illustrations, the book is best suited for an undergrad classroom or a small group. I often found myself wanting to discuss with someone what I had just read. Some books are dialogue partners, others kindle thinking. Woods and Patton have produced the latter. The book is organized well; clearly stated previews and summaries characterize each chapter, and there is a logical flow throughout. Ultimately, the book challenges readers to critically engage their media-saturated culture rather than mindlessly endorsing or dismissing it.

Engaging critically begins by clarifying the difference between acting priestly and acting prophetically. The authors argue that both Christian media and mass media generally function in a priestly role, that is to say, they connect people with stories that reflect what they already believe. The prophetic voice, on the other hand, "confronts the dominant consciousness" (16). While the clarification is helpful, the broad and generalized portrayals of these roles are characteristic of a general pattern in the book, that is to say, more breadth than depth. Additionally, the book would have been enhanced had the authors been more specific and consistent about the intended audience. For example, at one point the authors write, "To the extent that we understand the inherent potential and limits of any particular technology, we open up its prophetic possibilities—whether as critics, consumers, or creators" (119). In admirably trying to address them all, the book meanders.

The most helpful aspect of the book is the "prophetic profile" which doubles as a skeleton for the work. According to the authors, a "prophetic critic" is one who becomes inconsolably burdened by humanity's greed and arrogance (chapter 3), considers humanity's plight (chapter 4), rejects a spirit of acceptance (chapter 5), and then shocks the complacent out of their numbness (chapter 6). In each of these chapters the authors offer practical examples that would make for good discussion starters and sermon fodder. The penultimate chapter is a prophetic critique of technology which, disappointingly, stays pretty close to the surface. This reviewer would have

appreciated a more thorough and penetrating critique.

The book is a good challenge to all Christians that we are not only a part of the "*priest*hood of all believers, but the *prophet*hood of all believers as well" (121). It is a good introduction for those who have not given much thought to how we, as Christians, can be in, but not of, this world.

Faithful Preaching. By Tony Merida. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009, 979-0-8054-4820-7, 240 pp., $18.99.

Reviewer: *Nicholas Gatzke, Osterville Baptist Church, Osterville, MA*

Faithful Preaching rightfully belongs in a long line of solid, evangelical offerings in the field of homiletics. Coming from a Southern Baptist background, Tony Merida continues the tradition of advancing expository preaching in a way that our culture very much needs to experience. Merida's work is directed toward "the younger generation of preachers who face the pressures of performance-driven, man-centered, and shallow Christianity (xv)." In response to such pressures on preachers, he offers a well balanced, theological and technically sound work that is easy to read and understand.

Through the first half of this volume Merida promotes the theological reasons for verse-by-verse expository preaching that is Trinitarian in nature. Where other preaching texts focus on the practical benefits for expository preaching, Merida provides a simple reminder that expository preaching is rooted in an understanding of Scripture as inspired, authoritative, revealed by God, and sufficient for one's Christian life (45). Further, he succinctly parses the role of each person of the Trinity in the preparation and delivery of the sermon. This theological focus should be compelling for young preachers and constitutes a strength of this work.

The homiletic method that Merida promotes is somewhat of a hybrid between the central idea model of Haddon Robinson and the Christ-centered model of Bryan Chapell. Like Robinson, Merida believes that one should focus on the main point of a text and then craft that textual idea into the main point of the sermon. The message should then be structured around this main point. Unlike Robinson, he does not greatly expand on the method for identifying the main point of the text, but rather offers some general hermeneutical principles to aid the reader. Like Chapell, Merida believes that the main point of the sermon should always bear in mind what the text has to say in light of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. Consequently, this main point should always offer a present or future tense "redemptive solution" to our common human condition (81–82). This solution, or main point of the sermon, should be grace-filled and application focused.

Throughout this section of the book, a number of New Testament examples are given. It would have been helpful if more Old Testament examples were employed, as this seems to be the most difficult area for preachers trying to discover the link to the cross and come up with a main point that constitutes a redemptive solution to the human condition. Most specifically, large pericopes of Old Testament narrative seem to be a common stumbling block to successfully utilizing a Christ-centered model. This stumbling block is inadequately addressed.

Faithful Preaching is a contemporary contribution to the advancement of expository preaching, and explores issues that are important for young preachers to consider. Merida develops these ideas in language that is appropriate for preachers of the present time. The sections on the calling and faithful life of the preacher are important for all who undertake the task of preaching. He also offers a helpful summary of ten different ways to form a sermon outline, and reviews some common and practical approaches to sermon delivery. This work relies heavily on evangelical scholarship with little interaction with the broader field of homiletics. Despite this, readers of this journal will find *Faithful Preaching* to be a solid, introductory work that attempts to combine the central idea and Christ-centered models.

Commentary on the New Testament. By Robert H. Gundry. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010, 978-0801046476, 1100 pp., $49.99.

Reviewer: *W. Hall Harris III, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

Robert H. Gundry, Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Greek at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, has produced an outstanding one-volume commentary on the New Testament which represents the culmination of his years of study and teaching. This volume will be particularly useful to expository preachers, given its easy-to-read style that focuses on the meaning of the biblical text. Gundry includes with the comments his own translation of the New Testament text in an "Amplified Bible" style, with bracketed phrases that expand the translation or give alternative renderings. This is especially useful to the preacher whose congregation uses a variety of modern English translations rather than one particular translation, because Gundry's alternative options help to bridge the gap from a literal rendering of the Greek text to a number of contemporary translations.

As for the commentary itself, Gundry presents his own understanding of the text, but does not interact with the views of other scholars. He does not normally give alternative interpretations either, although occasionally

this is worked in by giving different ways of translating a verse, as at John 1:9, where three possible translations are given. The subsequent discussion then focuses on three points that support the last of the translations offered. While this approach may not be so helpful for serious exegetical work in the text, it does help the pastor who may have a congregation using different English translations. Help is also provided for understanding traditional terminology: at John 3:16, Gundry explains, "Traditional translations have 'might not *perish*.' But in English, perishing tends to connote passing out of existence, whereas the verb means rather to be lost (as in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, which didn't pass out of existence [Luke 15:1–10])." Gundry also does a good job in general of dealing with significant Old Testament allusions and quotations.

In short, this volume will form a useful addition to the library of the busy pastor who needs quick and easily understandable help on the meaning of the New Testament from a scholar who has devoted his life to the study of that text. While one may not always agree with Gundry's interpretations of specific passages, his experience and depth of insight are still helpful and his opinions worth consulting.

Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary. Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 4, Season after Pentecost. Edited by David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010, 0664231039, 347 pp., $40.00.

Reviewer: *Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

This volume, the latest in a projected total of twelve, is part of an ambitious undertaking to cover all the texts in the Revised Common Lectionary, a set of Bible readings for use in worship in many North American denominations—Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, American Baptists, Reformed Church in American, etc. The prescribed readings include, in addition to a Psalm, a text from the Old Testament, and two from the New Testament—a Gospel pericope and one from the Epistles or from Revelation. There is a three-year cycle of readings, primarily to do with the Gospel text involved: Year A—Matthew; Year B—Mark; and Year C—Luke (John is read on special days—Easter, Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc.).

What really sets this series apart is that each text has four (yes, *four*) commentaries—"theological," "pastoral," "exegetical," and "homiletical." Each of the four is written by a different individual; for instance, the authors of each of the four dimensions on Luke 14:1, 7–14 are not the same as the four commenting on the subsequent Sunday's Gospel reading, Luke 14:25–

33. Thus there is a considerable disconnect. That, however, is the nature of the game, when one follows lectionary texts—each pericope tends to be considered almost exclusively on its own merits, without much linkage between it and what precedes it or follows it. So for any given Sunday, one is looking at the offerings of sixteen authors—four for each of the readings from the OT, Psalms, Gospel, and Epistles! The suggestion for preachers, of course, is not that all four texts and all sixteen authors must be consulted before a sermon on any one text is written, but that one text and at least one of its four commentators be attended to. Such a process is not very satisfying to those preachers who prefer *lectio continua,* the preaching of biblical pericopes in sequence. (One also notices that not every pericope in a given biblical book or every verse in a given pericope is utilized. For instance, the sequence of Gospel readings are as follows: Luke 14:1, 7–14; 14:25–33; 15:1–10; 16:1–13; 16:19–31; 17:5–10; and so on: lots of gaps.

The layout of the material is also quite unusual. The four perspectives on any one text are laid out in four parallel columns on facing pages, rather than sequentially, one after another, "to suggest the interdependence of the four approaches without granting priority to any one of them" (viii). This, I confess, makes for less than easy reading. I would rather the editors had given priority to ease of reading, than to egalitarian design.

I also found it difficult to distinguish between "theological," "pastoral," "exegetical," and "homiletical." Granted, of the four in any given sent, the "exegetical" was the most exegetical and text-grounded, but the other three appeared to be mutating often into each other; the "pastoral" and "homiletical," especially, seemed quite indistinguishable.

Take the first Gospel reading (Luke 14:1, 7–14: Jesus' logia on humbling oneself as a guest at public dinners) as an example. The "theological" perspective took off on the concept of "blessing"—"Receiving a blessing that invites us to grow into a deeper relationship with God is not something we can work our way into through acts designed to display our worth" (22). The "pastoral" perspective meandered through Barth's interpretation of hospitality and fellowship, for reasons that were not very clear. On the other hand, the "exegetical" perspective was quite helpful, laying out the text's instruction against hubris: "it serves to dissuade Christians from all presumptions of privilege, noting the vanity of self-aggrandizement in the kingdom" (25). The "homiletical" perspective, though grasping the "ethical admonition to underestimate oneself," made what was explicitly labeled "theological" points—Jesus' own humbling (Phil 2), the banquet as a symbol of the kingdom of heaven, etc. The dangers of multiple authorship are thus clearly evident—disconnect and duplication. The advantage is that different vantage points provide different vistas.

All in all, for those obliged to preach the lectionary, this might be the best tool available. For others inclined to preach pericope by pericope,

purchasing a substantial commentary (or two) by a single author on a single book would be my recommendation.

The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church. Volume 7: Our Own Time. By Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 0802817718, 714 pp., $45.00.

Reviewer: *Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

This is the final volume in the magnum opus by Hughes Oliphant Old, John H. Leith Professor of Reformed Theology and Dean of the Institute for Reformed Worship at Erskine Theological Seminary. Old has, for the last twenty-five years, meticulously plotted the trajectory of preaching from the biblical period, all the way to the current day, in seven magisterial volumes. The breadth of knowledge and grasp of salient issues demonstrated in these tomes define Old as the elder-statesman of the fine art and craft of homiletics. (EHS members will be excited to know that Old is the scheduled plenary speaker at our Society's 2011 Annual Conference!)

This last volume of the series is structured to cover "The End of the Mainline," Billy Graham and a "new breed" of Presbyterians, and black, Catholic, charismatic, and megachurch preaching, as well as preaching in Latin America, Romania, Britain, and East Asia. Old's *modus operandi* is to pick prominent preaching exemplars in each category and analyze particular sermons. That necessarily makes for more descriptive writing. While this is adequate for the one historically inclined, a bit more interpretive and analytical reflection would have aided the preacher of today looking for ideas to employ or dangers to eschew. Nonetheless, this volume, like its predecessors, is chockfull of information; of course, Old's writing is not only informative, it is also entertaining and makes for a good read.

In the chapter titled "The End of the Mainline," Old incisively remarks that "[i]t seemed that the only function of the church in those days was to preach up support for the Democratic Party platform" (14). (One wonders what preachers today are doing!) Also it was during this period that Craddock's "inductive preaching" became wildly popular. Why? And what might those reasons (sociological? cultural? ecclesiological? political?) mean for the post-modern preacher today? No synthetic conclusion is offered and the reader is left wondering: "So what?"

Billy Graham gets his own chapter (and also graces the cover). He, according to Old, exemplifies "populist" and "democratic" oratory, though "[s]ometimes his interpretations of Scripture are naïve" (77). Populist orators "play the crowd as though it were a gigantic organ" (78), and "[l]ike country

music, it is a popular art form" (81). Nice!

In the chapter titled, "A 'New Breed' of Presbyterians," Old describes this "back-to-the-Bible" *ad fontes* movement, that includes practitioners like Earl Palmer, Sinclair Ferguson, Tim Keller, Scotty Smith, *et al.* Somewhere in that chapter, Old's pedagogical tendencies surface: "[A] sermon is not the same thing as a discourse on a moral or philosophical theme …. Still less is the Christian sermon a forensic oration designed to convince a court of law of the justice of the Christian way of life. … The expository sermon is something quite different. Its aim is to expound the text of Holy Scripture" (101). Amen! I might add that its goal is to transform lives for the glory of God.

More like George Burns or Bob Hope, Earl Palmer is evoked as having a gift for stand-up comedy (107). I wondered, reading this, if Palmer and Co. were the originators of pulpit humor. Old, with his perceptive gaze on the hour glass of preaching history, does not enlighten us. Did Augustine joke around? Or Chrysostom? Interesting question to ponder.

Old introduces the chapter on black preaching with this: "The white pulpit has become so literate that it produces literature rather than oratory. Its sermons appeal to the eye, that is, the eye of one reading the sermon, rather than to the ear of the one hearing it. … While the white preacher and the white congregation have lost the feel of oratory, the black preacher has not" (356). On Martin Luther King, Jr.: "A preacher is not a preacher simply for having great ideas. One is a great preacher when one can bring the Word to words, to effective, powerful words." (371). King was one of those, but several modern models (e.g., Anthony Evans or E. K. Bailey) don't show up here.

The evolution of charismatic preaching is well documented. "Entertainment was developing into an art, and Sister Aimee was ready to learn any technique that the entertainment industry could teach her. One of the most significant techniques she developed was the illustrated sermon," enlivened by all kinds of props—fire alarms, motorcycles, police sirens, etc. (402). Was this the beginning of preaching as ecclesiastical entertainment? Old does not care to speculate on this, nor on the consequences such theatrics had for the field of homiletics as a whole.

The megachurch movement heralded "a recovery of classical Christian preaching"—"hold on to your surfboards, Lloyd Ogilvie and Chuck Swindoll are taking the same approach to preaching in Southern California that John Calvin used in sixteenth century Geneva" (494). Interestingly, like Calvin and others, this crop of homileticians also produced a plethora of commentaries that are essentially edited sermons (505–6). According to Old, megachurch preachers have decided "that it [the Bible] is still the Word of God and that, however one may explain it, that Word still has the authority to bring life to God's people. … The homileticians of the older generation can't believe their ears. The bigger the church, the longer the sermon. … But

then it's always been that way; if you have something to say, people will listen" (494–5). Terrific! Old cites Ps 1:2 as the "secret of Swindoll's ministry" (545). May it be ours, as well, as we delight in God's Word.

Most surprisingly, the "Conclusion" to this volume, and therefore to the entire series, consumes less than a page! Aside from a few brief autobiographical notes and a statement of hope that that Word will be spread and preached on every shore, there is no reflective summary or even a speculation as to where homiletics is headed in the future. Perhaps that is too much to ask of a project that took 25 years, for Old admits that it was time to lay down his pen (667). I wish he had held on to it a chapter longer. Of course, we could ask Prof. Old about that at our Annual Conference next October.

Magnifying God in Christ. By Thomas R. Schreiner. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010, 978-0-8010-3826-6, 272 pp., $24.99.

Reviewer: *Ken Langley, Christ Community Church, Zion, IL*

This abbreviation of Schreiner's *New Testament Theology* summarizes the New Testament's unifying themes and reminds preachers of a series of important facts.

Firstly, we preach theologically, not just biblically. We exposit texts in light of the larger witness of the New Testament. No one pericope speaks the whole truth on divine sovereignty and human responsibility, law and gospel, faith and works, or the already and the not yet, to mention but a few prominent tensions in New Testament teaching. Schreiner's thematic theology (an appealing hybrid of "biblical" and "systematic" theology) helps us respect the distinctive contributions of each inspired author while honoring their fundamental unity on major themes.

Secondly, ideas have consequences. Each chapter of *Magnifying God in Christ* concludes with "Pastoral Reflection," practical and homiletical implications of the theme treated. Most of these are too short. A couple—notably the paragraphs on "The Already/Not Yet" tension in New Testament theology—are richly suggestive. Chapter 6 ends with a reminder that failure to keep redemption constantly in view results n moralistic preaching. Preachers will want to follow the author's lead and identify additional ways theology works itself out in proclamation and Christian living.

Thirdly, we may want to give disproportionate attention to some subjects. Schreiner gives justification more ink than all the other images of salvation combined—unsurprisingly, given current theological debate. He's particularly interested in Scripture's warning passages, an area where he's made a fresh contribution to a perennial issue. Our contemporary climate

or personal interests may prompt preachers to emphasize a subject for a season, but Schreiner models how to do so without letting the urgent or the interesting crowd out the central theme of God in Christ.

And fourthly, we can't say everything. Schreiner says little on the inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16–17 is not even referenced). Ecclesiology, currently a hot topic, gets only a few pages, and anthropology hardly anything, even though conditional immortality and mind/body dualism are areas where contemporary preachers could surely use some guidance. Some omissions are understandable, given the author's focus; others are surprising. A book touting "the supremacy of God and the centrality of Christ" as the unifying center of New Testament theology (16) might have been expected to discuss the important phrase "the gospel of God," and to comment on 1 Cor 15:24ff. where the Son delivers up the kingdom to the Father at the end of time.

One flaw isn't Schreiner's fault: the publisher should have included a few blank pages in the back so readers (and reviewers) could take notes!

The Trouble with "Truth through Personality": Phillips Brooks, Incarnation, and the Evangelical Boundaries of Preaching. Charles W. Fuller. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010, 978-1-60899-403-8, 137 pp., $19.00.

Reviewer: *Bill McAlpine, Ambrose University College, Calgary, Alberta*

Charles Fuller has undertaken a bold endeavour by challenging the legitimacy of what has become a veritable mantra among many evangelical homileticians, namely, Phillips Brooks' slogan "Truth through Personality." He is careful early in his book to establish the fact that the respect and esteem felt for Brooks in his own day and up the present era are not without warrant. He acknowledges Brooks' amicable and compassionate disposition and his insistence on the importance of character development and of the human soul, themes all too often found missing in twenty-first American culture. At the same time he judiciously casts the light of evangelical theology on what he sees as a fatal flaw in Brooks' plausibility structures.

Fuller shows how Brooks was significantly ahead of his time and that his emphasized themes of incarnational and personal approaches to truth and to preaching resonated deeply with those who would follow him years later, including well known contributors to the field of homiletics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as Fred Craddock. Fuller demonstrates how in Brooks' mind the task of the preacher was basically to awaken and develop what already resided in every person. This is brought about through the preacher demonstrating inward character outwardly. With

relatively little effort, Fuller shows clearly how Brooks' rhetorical approach, reminiscent of classical rhetoric, runs contrary to that of the apostle Paul (106).

In his chapter entitled "Out of Bounds," Fuller assembles compelling arguments that counter Brooks' central assertion that rather than being God's revelation in propositional form, Scripture contains or describes God's revelation. Fuller argues that propositional revelation is essential to preaching rather than being a hindrance to preaching, as Brooks advocated. He demonstrates how Brooks' incarnational approach to preaching does not require a distinction between the preacher and the Word of God. Furthermore his character-driven paradigm of preaching is shown to be incompatible with the gospel. Conversion for Brooks amounts to little more than self-discovery and character formation thus attenuating the need for the substitutionary atonement of the cross. The gospel thus devolves into an anthropocentric, humanistic enterprise.

Fuller shows how Brooks' anthropocentric approach both to the gospel and to preaching renders the sinful nature of humanity and consequently, Christ's substitutionary atonement, conspicuous by their absence. He concludes from this that one can embrace an approach to "truth through personality" only by including the pivotal gospel elements of Christ's atoning death and the need for new birth, not just character development, that "appreciates the necessity of propositional revelation, recognizes the proper ontological distance between the preacher and God's Word and embraces a gospel-driven persuasive model" (109).

Fuller's concern is not to set the concept of "Truth through Personality" as an inherently flawed concept per se that must be avoided at all cost. Rather he urges evangelical homileticians to refrain from endorsing it in the absence of careful reflection and clarification. He argues that before applying this principle it is essential to understand that Brooks was influenced by romantic authors such as Horace Bushnell and Samuel Taylor Coleridge to embrace a heightened anthropology and a more subjective, experiential theology that was bereft of many traditional moorings deemed essential to evangelical formulations. Fuller effectively demonstrates that despite his lucid and consistent use of evangelical terminology, Brooks' understanding of "Truth through Personality" is embedded in a theology that sees conversion consisting "solely in a person coming to realize that he or she is a child of God—a miniature incarnation" (126), and that considers truth to be personal, not propositional in nature.

One cannot fault Fuller for lack of reference to, and inclusion of, primary source material. The number of lengthy quotations included in the text offer a substantial exposure to Brooks' fundamental thinking, but does so in a style reminiscent of a dissertation.

Fuller's work sends out a clarion call for careful, reflective

deployment of "Truth through Personality" and in the process provides a significant contribution to the field of homiletics. Practitioners who engage in pulpit ministries regularly as well as academic homileticians commissioned with the privilege and responsibility of training preachers would both be served well by adding Fuller's book to their personal libraries.

Text-Driven Preaching. Edited by Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010, 978-0-8054-4960-0, 315 pp. $29.99

Reviewer: *Winfred Omar Neely, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois*

It cannot be overstated: God's Word should be at the heart of every sermon. In the book *Text-Driven Preaching*, a team of twelve expositors and homileticians reminds us of the vital centrality of the Scriptures in preaching. The authors are not breaking new hermeneutical and homiletical ground in the book; they, however, do provide us with some needed challenges, reminders, and insights.

In chapter 3, "The Secret of Preaching with Power," Bill Bennett penned some powerful and challenging words: "It has been said 'The kingdom of God does not belong to the well-meaning but the desperate. Candidates for the infilling and anointing must 'mean business' with the Lord. The casual Christian and the average Sunday morning attendee do not qualify" (63). Bennett also reminds us that the "desire to be popular rather than prophetic and biblical" (66) hinders the filling of the Spirit in the life of the preacher. Without doubt, one of the greatest needs of the hour is Spirit-filled preachers of God's Word. Thinking along these lines in the opening chapter, Paige Patterson expressed a mature and seasoned judgment: "I can only conclude that the greatest failure in preaching and in books on preaching is the failure to invoke the anointing of God on the preacher and his message" (12).

In addition to championing text-driven, exegetically accurate, genre-sensitive, and Spirit-empowered preaching, there are flashes of insight in the book. For example, Dooley and Vines discuss the exegetical demand for the preacher to express not only the content of the text, but also the emotions and pathos of the text in delivery. It is not uncommon for a preacher to be so concerned about their own emotional wiring and personality that they refuse to come to terms with the emotional shape of a text and the implications of that shape for sermons. It was heartening to read that "the preacher is not free to impose his own emotional design on the message he proclaims…. Just as we are not free to tamper with the inspired logos of the Bible, neither

are we at liberty to alter its pathos" (247). In my experience, I have had to pull teeth to get some student preachers and some seasoned theologians to recognize this emotional claim of the text upon the expositor.

In the chapter on "Exegesis For the Text-Driven Sermon," David Black includes rhetorical analysis of a text in his process of moving from historical analysis to the homiletical analysis of a text. Black notes: "The fundamental basis for rhetorical analysis is the belief that the text's design is part of its meaning and that to neglect this design is to overlook an important part of the inspired text.… how something is said is often as important as what is said" (150). Black applies his ten-step procedure to Heb 12:1–2. His rhetorical analysis highlights the cloud metaphor, the athletic imagery (race), and the chiastic structure of the passage. His use of rhetorical analysis as a part of the exegetical/homiletical process is a remarkable insight. As Allen notes, "Text-driven preachers also believe that creativity ultimately resides in the biblical text itself. The first place to look for creativity to use in preaching is often the last place many preachers look: the Text" (8). Rhetorical analysis helps us discover the creative way the Holy Spirit has communicated in a text.

Nevertheless, the path from textual content and textual creativity to the expression of that textual content and creativity in the language and delivery of the sermon is not spelled out systematically in the book. Some dots between the various insights need to be connected.

The book is not a primer for preachers. The writers assume some knowledge of hermeneutics and homiletics on the part of the reader. *Text-Driven Preaching*, however, is a good, informative, and refreshing read. For students, pastors, and other who desire to do more study in preaching, the authors also provide ample resources in the footnotes. Reading the book should be a part of every preachers reading program for 2011.

Applying the Sermon. By Daniel Overdorf. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009, 978-0-8254-3447-1, 205 pp., $17.99.

Reviewer: *Calvin Pearson, Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Fort Worth, TX*

Daniel Overdorf has provided the field of homiletics a clear presentation of basic principles of application and a summary of what five prominent preachers have to say about application—William Willimon, Thomas Long, Haddon Robinson, Bob Russell and Victor Pentz.

He follows a sound expositional preaching process by beginning with the text, moving to the congregation's needs and then to the sermon. The greatest strength of the book is his application worksheet which contains

ten questions that guide the preacher into sound application. "What did God originally teach through this text? How do my listeners compare with the original readers? What should my listeners think, feel, or do differently after having heard a sermon from this text?" are some examples. This worksheet format is very helpful, but perhaps it would have a better audience if it, alone, were condensed into an article. Another strength is the compilation of the thoughts of the five homileticians. While their comments are not necessarily groundbreaking, it is a pleasure to read about principles of application, and to see what noted practitioners say about the subject. Overdorf also provides a useful bibliography.

There are some weaknesses that need to be addressed. His presentation of ideas could be more precise. He speaks of preachers not presenting the congregation with a list of things to do, rather they should present possibilities of application. However, "list" and "possibilities" are not opposites: one could have a list of possibilities. At least five times he uses the vague descriptive "some" (of scholars) and "other" (of preachers), without specification, which allows his readers to dismiss his point. While his is not an intensely scholarly approach, Overdorf's work is a good introductory-level treatment of application.

Creating Stories That Connect: A Pastor's Guide to Storytelling. By D. Bruce Seymour. Grand Rapids: Kregel 2007,978-0-8254-3671-0, 138 pp., $12.99.

Reviewer: *Calvin Pearson, Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Fort Worth, TX*

Reading Bruce Seymour's book was a pleasure. His goal is clearly stated: "My desire is to help you become more than a story*teller*; I want to help you become a story*maker*, like Jesus." (11). He presents the theory so we can see why stories work and gives practical guidelines so we can create them. He even motivates one to use stories, not just in preaching, but in other venues of ministry. My question after reading the book was—does it work? Freshly motivated by his writing, I took his guidelines and created a story for my preaching class. I will let you judge Seymour's book by my application of it.

Clark wanted to build houses. He worked as a carpenter, plumbers helper, electrician helper, and even worked on a concrete crew. When he felt like he knew all he needed to know and had the skills, he built his first house.

When the foundation was laid, he made sure all the codes were followed and then went beyond the minimum requirements. He wanted no problems. After all, the main thing was quality. To frame the house he used the cheapest lumber he could find, after all no one will see the wood in the

walls and he wanted to be able to sell this house at the lowest price. After all, the main thing was to keep the price down.

When it came to the kitchen cabinets, Clark took it upon himself and spent a full month using four different kinds of specialty wood and with special hidden hinges. After all, the main thing was to impress other builders. He wanted the bathroom and kitchen fixtures to be unique, so he got some fixtures from a house built in the middle of the last century and mixed them in with the newest designer models. The main thing was to be unique.

Then he put the house on the market. It didn't sell. After months, he asked his realtor why. She explained, "The person looking for an inexpensive house didn't want it, it had too much quality. The person looking for quality didn't want it because of the cheap framing. Builders were impressed with the cabinets, but they build their own houses. The person with an eye for fashion didn't want it because it was neither antique nor trendy. There was nothing that tied the house together.

Finally, a buyer came and gave him full price. Beset with curiosity Clark inquired of his realtor as to why the sale was made. She told him, "This person was pleased to find a house with such variety." When the house had a main idea, it sold.

So, am I a story*maker* as Jesus was? Maybe, maybe not, but I find myself not only wanting to be one, I am also trying it out with a better set of tools than before I read Seymour. Here are some of his guidelines which I applied: clear and simple plot, setting clear, character had a name appropriate for the story, progression of plot, and an interesting and unexpected ending. I thought the book was useful, but I do have two suggestions: (1) twenty examples of storytelling were too many, and (2) he should write more on the subject, expanding this work with more on theory and practice.

Words That Transform: Preaching as a Catalyst for Renewal. By James T. Flynn. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010, 978-0-7618-5237-7, 201 pp., $31.00.

Reviewer: *D. Bruce Seymour, Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, CA*

This is a reflective book written by an experienced preacher who has spent years teaching others to preach. As James Flynn puts it in his introduction, "In many ways, this book is a trust of wisdom passed on to those called into preaching ministry" (ix). Flynn is passionate about the idea that preaching should transform both preacher and listener. He believes that sort of preaching is "75% internal and 25% external" (15), so he focuses the first five chapters on internal issues, primarily the preacher's relationship

with God, and the last three chapters on "external" sermonic details.

In the first part of this book, Flynn introduces and develops the idea that the incarnation is the best metaphor for transformational preaching. As Mary surrendered herself to God and Christ was formed in her, so preachers surrender to God and sermons are formed in them. That surrender, that "intimacy with God," results in a sermon being "conceived" in the preacher's heart, which "grows and matures" and is eventually "delivered." Flynn develops this notion in an oddly sexual way by using the annunciation narrative in Luke and bride passages in the Song of Solomon to describe the sermon development process. In a typical passage he writes: "When preachers answer the call to run with God, we seem to have a special kind of access to the King's chambers. His chambers are the place of intimacy—the place where conception takes place. The King's chambers are where transformative sermons are born" (42).

In the midst of this he returns to Mary's situation and suggests, "In a moment of intimacy, the Son of God was conceived in the womb of a willing young woman" (49). For Flynn, this "incarnational pattern" is meant to be "a wonderful word picture or metaphor for the preacher's intimacy with God and the resulting conception, as the preacher becomes 'pregnant' with His word. The incarnation perfectly pictures how God wants to be known and how He wants to make truth known. He does not want to make truth known exclusively in written form but also through lives so that truth can be seen, heard, handled, and touched" (50).

A theologian would probably have difficulty with the language Flynn uses to express his understanding of the incarnation, but my concern was more basic. I agree that preaching is something of a mystery—how the Holy Spirit uses God's Word in the heart and mouth of a preacher to produce a sermon that will edify God's people. But it did not seem helpful to explain one mystery, preaching, with a greater mystery—that of the incarnation.

The second part of the book is more helpful. Here, Flynn moves into a "How-To" section, how to shape transformational sermons. Again he develops a metaphor of the body to explain the elements of a sermon (118): eyes (focus), skeleton (structure), heart (emotion), joints (transitions), flesh (illustration) and muscle (application). This development is interesting and helpful. His penultimate chapter on creativity encouragingly observes: "The way to develop your creativity is by practicing" (160). For me, the best part of the book was the last chapter where Flynn gave readers a glimpse into his personal story—how God shaped him into a preacher.

If the reader is able to get past the fuzzy use of theological terms and the aggressive mixing of relational metaphors, this book is a helpful reminder that our relationship with God is the most important element of our sermons.

Preaching the Inward Light: Early Quaker Rhetoric. By Michael P. Graves. Waco: Baylor University Press (2009), 978-1-60258-240-8, xi + 462 pp., $49.95.

Reviewer: *Ben Walton, (D.Min. candidate) Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA*

This book by Michael P. Graves is a study in impromptu preaching through the lens of late seventeenth century Quakerism. In addition to advancing historical Quaker studies, Graves' goal is to understand the motivation behind, preparation for, and perpetuation of, this homiletical practice. He accomplishes these aims through an examination of the writings and sermons of key Quakers of the period.

Graves begins his study by demonstrating that cultural conditions in England in the 1600s were conducive to the birth of movements such as Quakerism. Religiously, the role of tradition was heavily debated, fueled in part by the publication of the King James Bible in 1611. When Quakerism emerged in the 1650s, it rejected tradition, placing the "inward light" of Christ, or direct revelation, at its theological center, with Scripture and reason next to it. The belief in the authority and accessibility of this "inward light," especially when confirmed by the community, provided the epistemological foundation and motivation for impromptu preaching.

Graves argues that Quakers of that time minimized the role of education in the preparation of ministers. Defended ably by Robert Barclay, they believed that preachers of sufficient character were deemed prepared to preach when the Spirit prompted them with a message. A preacher's words were construed to be the words of God until such time as the community, and hopefully the preacher simultaneously, realized their inspiration had ended. When delivered, these impromptu sermons commonly took one of seven forms: contemporary parable, allegory, historical narration and relation, personal testimony (biographical or autobiographical), exposition of Scripture, and typology (145–9). The job of perpetuating this practice was given to community elders who, through informal means, nurtured fledgling preachers.

Turning to rhetorical analysis, in the second half of the book Graves analyzes all seventy-nine extant Quaker sermons from 1671–1700. In chapters six through eight, he highlights their common themes, metaphors, and other characteristics. In chapters nine through twelve, he produces the text of, and his commentary on, four sermons, one each by George Fox, Stephen Crisp, Barclay, and William Penn.

Graves is to be commended for his careful scholarship. Historical Quaker studies is a burgeoning field that lacks consensus on many matters. Ideological concerns can easily trump methodological precision. Graves

demonstrates the skill of a seasoned scholar, one who is conscious of his predispositions, open to other perspectives, and meticulous in his analyses.

For those of us inclined toward expository preaching (broadly defined), reading the views and sermons of late seventeenth century Quakers along with Graves's analysis should cause us to think through our own concept of an effective or Spirit-empowered sermon. Given the de-emphasis on preaching in Quakerism after this period, the book enables us to discover parallels between our context and theirs so that we can more perceptively defuse any such trends within our sphere of influence.

Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching. Edited by Grenville J.R. Kent, Paul J. Kissling and Laurence A. Turner. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010, 978-0-8308-3887-5, 256 pp., $23.00.

Reviewer: *Scott A. Wenig, Denver Seminary, Denver, CO*

Not long ago I took an informal survey in one of my seminary classes on the subject of preaching. I wanted to know how many of the students had heard at least one sermon from the Old Testament over the past year. Less than ten out of seventy raised their hands. Given that most of them attended church on a regular basis, this admittedly unscientific research seemed to point towards a latent Marcionism among many evangelical preachers. *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching* is a welcome and engaging effort to help correct this dangerous deficiency.

Following a brief introduction by the three editors, the text is composed of thirteen wide-ranging essays by a global array of Old Testament scholars. They cover an impressive range of exegetical and homiletical issues, from handling elements of narrative literature (plot and character) to the ongoing dilemma of how to preach Christ from the Old Testament. Sandwiched in between are chapters on preaching from the law, interpreting and communicating both lament and praise in the Psalms, as well as four selections devoted to preaching wisdom literature, apocalyptic, the Minor Prophets and difficult texts. In addition, three of the essays focus on specific books: Song of Solomon, Isaiah, and Ezekiel.

While each chapter is unique, the overall intent of this volume is to bring some of the most recent scholarship to bear on preaching Old Testament texts. One of the book's strengths is that all of the contributors are regular preachers as well as scholars. Each demonstrate an expert knowledge of the Scripture as well as a recognition of the tensions inherent in preaching the Old Testament to contemporary audiences. Thus, following an in-depth discussion on the specific topic at hand, each chapter also includes a sermonic

example from the particular genre dealt with in that chapter.

Books that are a collection of various essays often have their respective strengths and weaknesses and this one is no exception. Chris Wright's chapter, "Preaching from the Law," is not only theologically astute but also serves as a "textbook example" on how to communicate both grace and truth from these texts. Daniel Block's essay, "Preaching Ezekiel," is exceptional because it brings this very enigmatic book to life and skillfully demonstrates how it might be communicated in a clear and relevant fashion. My personal favorite is "Preaching the Song of Solomon," by Grenville J.R. Kent. His engaging style demonstrates that he both understands and practices effective communication. Moreover, he illustrates how to preach about the "oh-so-sensitive" subject of sexuality in a broken, sex-obsessed society.

In addition, Gordon Wenham's chapter, "Preaching from Difficult Texts," is intriguing, and Ernest Lucas' essay, "Preaching Apocalyptic," shed new light, at least for me, on teaching these challenging passages and this genre. On the negative side of the ledger, I found R. W. L. Moberly's take on "Preaching Christ from Old Testament" a bit obtuse. But my major complaint was with "Preaching Wisdom" by Tremper Longman III. While the overall thrust of his chapter was helpful, his view of Ecclesiastes was, in my opinion, far too narrow. He argues that the book has value as an "idol buster" but should not be used for a sermon series given its "depressing conclusions about life" (114). As someone who thoroughly enjoyed preaching through the entire book, I couldn't disagree more! In fact, as both a professor and a pastor, I want to encourage *more* sermons from this wonderfully challenging portion of Scripture because it speaks directly to the time in which we live.

With these caveats, I wholeheartedly recommend this fine book. The scholarship is exemplary and the various examples of preaching from different sections of the Old Testament are, for the most part, useful. Most readers will discover ideas that challenge their thinking as well some helpful suggestions for preaching. And if this book's only function is to motivate pastors and preachers to teach more frequently from this oft-neglected 78% of sacred Scripture that the Old Testament constitutes, Christ's people will surely be blessed as the whole counsel of God is communicated in a more complete fashion.

Preaching Christ From Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons. By Sidney Griedanus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 978-0-8028-6535-9, 340 pp., $26.00.

Reviewer: *Timothy J. Ralston, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

Wisdom literature teaches through provocative riddles whose vocabulary and difficult syntax may defy translation. Add a pessimism that seems to clash with Proverb's optimism and one faces the complexities of Ecclesiastes, perhaps the most neglected book in Christian preaching. The Revised Common Lectionary only includes two selections from it for public reading and modern expositors typically avoid it entirely. The average Christian obviously struggles with its place within the canon of Scripture. Those who do venture into its passages are often forced to reduce them to foils against which one can emphasize the more positive message of the New Testament. Sidney Greidanus, professor emeritus of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, offers an alternative strategy. Known for his advocacy of "preaching Christ" from the Old Testament, he applies the method to the book of Ecclesiastes, this most difficult of books.

Greidanus begins each chapter with a general discussion of the passage and context, and a survey of both literary features and text structure. He offers a theocentric analysis, attempting to identify the question of God's presence in the passage, summarizes the text's theme in a single sentence, and proposes the text's purpose. Then he tests Christocentric strategies against the exegetical summary and proposes a single-sentence sermon theme and an associated purpose. Around this he designs the sermon form and offers a sample exposition of the passage.

For a modern evangelical scholar, however, Greidanus has taken an unusual approach to the work's authorship. He assumes the work is pseudepigraphic, its apparent self-attribution to Solomon a literary device employed some 600 years after Solomon (7–11, 59) in order to address authoritatively the post-exilic Jewish aristocracy who struggle with the failure of the theocratic economy associated with the economic upheavals and temptations of the period (9–10). As evidence he offers "its pessimistic tone" which would be inconsistent with "the glory days of Israel's existence" (9) and invokes Old Testament scholars in support (10). This view, however, seems unduly radical. Surely the situations described by the author would be present in any system as the evidence of the inherent imperfections of all human administration and which produce comparable inequities and injustices. Further, despite the acceptability of pseudonymity as a literary technique in the ancient world, it has not yet been demonstrated for any of the biblical writings. Its use here creates an obvious problem of integrity for its author and for any community receiving it as inspired Scripture.

Having assumed this dark context, Greidanus treats the book's expressions and argument as the absence of God. For example, he asserts that the author's expression, "under the sun," denotes the author's perception of the world in which God is neither present nor considered by humanity. This assumption leads obviously to undue pessimism in the interpretation of the passage. Perhaps a better reading would be the author's way of describing

the sphere of human existence and observation (as opposed to that which is beyond human observation and experience). The author of Ecclesiastes is not speaking from a lack of faith, merely that life does not work as simply and as equitably as those who desire to honor God and his priorities might wish. While this may be discouraging, it is not disparaging.

Greidanus breaks up the book into sections following other Old Testament scholarship. (Of course, such divisions are always open to debate.) His treatment of each section, however, fails to recognize larger structures within the book that provide better interpretive context and, therefore, a more significant preaching theme to which the smaller units contribute. For example: rather than break up chapters 4 and 5 into a series of individual aphorisms, the message of these two chapters can be unified under a broader issue of those things that prevent one from enjoying life as God's gift and shifts the interpretive paradigm from one of unspiritual pessimism to spiritual realism.

Perhaps the most helpful contribution of the book is Greidanus' demonstration of longitudinal themes, an excellent demonstration of biblical-theological correlation often lacking in many preaching aids. In some cases, however, the correlation seems to stop short and thereby severely limit the implications suggested by the strategy itself. For example, the correlation between text and audience for the expression "house of the Lord" seems limited to the site of gathering. This would seem to too constraining in view of the New Testament emphasis on both the believing community and the individual Christian as the dwelling place of the Spirit, the "house of the Lord." Consequently, one can see that in their application, Greidanus' strategies for the preaching of these texts may limit their applicational possibilities, rather than expand them.

Readers should also note that in Greidanus' method of structural summary for each passage he has merely reorganized the passage cola, using indentation to indicate rhetorical arrangement (a simplified form of semantic analysis). This may create a methodological confusion for some readers. Similarly the extended homiletical examples offered at the end of each chapter are less a true homiletical construction and more a synthetic exegetical commentary, being dominated by explanations of the text and a brief explanation of its Christological strategy, but without any specific direction or concrete example of action that applies the abstract lesson drawn from the text.

In short, Greidanus' work offers a helpful starting point for the treatment of an otherwise neglected book of the biblical canon and will offer the preacher good suggestions for the necessary development of his own exegetical, theological and homiletical work.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

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

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

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

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

Purpose:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is designed to engage readers with articles dealing with the best research and expertise in preaching. Readers will be introduced to literature in the field of homiletics or related fields with book reviews. Since the target audience of the journal is scholars/practitioners, a sermon will appear in each edition which underscores the commitment of the journal to the practice of preaching.

Vision:

The vision of the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is to provide academics and practitioners with a journal that informs and equips readers to become competent teachers of preaching and excellent preachers.

General Editor:

The General Editor has oversight of the journal. The General Editor selects suitable articles for publication and may solicit article suggestions from the Editorial Board for consideration for publication. The General Editor works cooperatively with the Book Review Editor and the Managing Editor to ensure the timely publication of the journal.

Book Review Editor:

The Book Review Editor is responsible for the Book Review section of the journal. The Book Review Editor contacts publishers for books to review and receives the books from publishers. The Book Review Editor sends books to members of the Society who serve as book reviewers. The reviewers then forward their written reviews to the Book Review Editor in a timely manner. The Book Review Editor works in coordination with the General Editor for the prompt publication of the journal.

Managing Editor:

The Managing Editor has oversight of the business matters of the journal. The Managing Editor solicits advertising, coordinates the subscription list and mailing of the journal, and works with the General Editor and Book Review Editor to ensure a timely publication of the journal.

Editorial Board:

The Editorial Board serves in advising the General Editor in the publication of articles for the journal. The Editorial Board serves as a jury for articles considered for publication. The Editorial Board consists of no more than five members. Board members are approved at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and hold a two-year appointment.

Frequency of Publication:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is published twice a year: March and September.

Jury Policy:

Articles submitted to the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society are blind juried by members of the Editorial Board. In addition, the General Editor may ask a scholar who is a specialist to jury particular articles. The

General Editor may seek articles for publication from qualified scholars. The General Editor makes the final publication decisions. It is always the General Editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

Submission Guidelines

1. Manuscripts should be submitted in electronic form. All four margins should be at least one inch, and each should be consistent throughout. Please indicate the program in which the article is formatted, preferably, Microsoft Word (IBM or MAC).

2. Manuscripts should be double-spaced. This includes the text, indented (block) quotations, notes, and bibliography. This form makes for easier editing.

3. Neither the text, nor selected sentences, nor subheads should be typed all-caps.

4. Notes should be placed at the **end** of the manuscript, **not** at the foot of the page. Notes should be reasonably close to the style advocated in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 3rd edition (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1988) by Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert. That style is basically as follows for research papers:

   a. From a book:

   note: 23. John Dewey, *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (Ann Arbor, 1894), 104.

   b. From a periodical:

   note: 5. Frederick Barthelme, "Architecture," *Kansas Quarterly* 13:3 (September 1981): 77-78.

   c. Avoid the use of op. cit.
   Dewey 111.

5. Those who have material of whatever kind accepted for publication must recognize it is always the editor's prerogative

to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

6. Manuscripts will be between 1,500 and 3,000 words, unless otherwise determined by the editor.

Abbreviations

Please do not use abbreviations in the text. Only use them for parenthetical references. This includes the names of books of the Bible and common abbreviations such as "e.g." (the full reference, "for example" is preferred in the text). Citations of books, articles, websites are expected. Please do not use "p./pp." for "page(s)," or "f./ff." for "following." Precise page numbers or verse numbers are expected, not "f./ff."

Captalization

Capitalize personal, possessive, objective, and reflexive pronouns (but not relative pronouns) when referring to God: "My, Me, Mine, You, He, His, Him, Himself," but "who, whose, whom."

Direct Quotes

Quotations three or more lines long should be in an indented block. Shorter quotes will be part of the paragraph and placed in quotation marks.

Scripture quotations should be taken from the NIV. If the quotation is from a different version, abbreviate the name in capital letters following the reference. Place the abbreviation in parentheses: (Luke 1:1-5, NASB).

Headings

First-level Heading
These indicate large sections. They are to be flush left in upper case, and separate from the paragraph that follows.

Second-level Heading
These headings are within the First-level section and are to be flush left, in italic in upper and lower case, and also separate from the paragraph that follows.

Notes

All notes should be endnotes, the same size as the main text with a hard return between each one.

Submission and Correspondence

Manuscripts should be sent to the attention of the General Editor. Send as an email attachment to the General. Send to: sgibson@gcts.edu

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

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