THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

September 2012, Vol. 12 No. 2

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.

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PROCLAMATION ACROSS THE AGES

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

The task of preaching stretches across the millennia. From the powerful days of the Old Testament Prophets and the early church Apostles to the days of power in the 21st century preachers have proclaimed, encouraged, corrected, and instructed believers as they expounded and continue to expound God's Word. God has used different people in various times to proclaim divine truth.

This issue of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* takes an expansive glance at proclamation throughout the ages—to today. We begin with an article by Lee Beach and Joel Barker who explore the rhetoric of the Prophet Amos and how this preacher's approach may be instructive for preachers today as they "set the trap."

The following article again focuses on rhetoric but from a different angle. Clint Heacock investigates the great preacher Jonathan Edwards and endeavors to understand the rhetorical influences that comprised his preaching. Heacock provides readers with an intriguing journey in the life of this important preacher.

The place of preaching in the revivals of the Great Awakening is surveyed in the third article by Kenley D. Hall. From his study of this significant era Hall searches for and suggests practical insights that preachers may apply to their own homiletical practices today.

The final article is a reprise of a previously published article. John V. Tornfelt's skillful and insightful examination of authority in contemporary preaching is a helpful reminder to preachers in an anti-authority age. Tornfelt calls preachers to remember their roots—the authority of the scripture—amid the clamoring and conflicting theological alternatives of the day.

The sermon for this edition of the *Journal* is by Dr. Dennis Hollinger, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. This edition began by engaging with the Prophet Amos and now concludes with a sermon focusing on the final book of the Bible, Revelation chapter 7. Hollinger wrestles with the images and mysteries of Revelation and encourages readers to recognize the promise of this text and the reality of it, too.

The sermon is then followed by a fine collection of book reviews. The books in the review section are assessed by members of the society and other invited guests. One can see from the variety of books reviewed that there continues to be a richness of publication in the field. Readers will benefit from the reviews as they determine which books they will recommend to their school librarians and also which ones they will purchase for their own

libraries.

Preaching stretches the ages—from the ancient past until today. Preaching will also continue to play a significant role in the life of the church and culture until our Lord returns. As men and women committed to the task of preaching, we trust God will use us to proclaim his Word to men and women and boys and girls and to teach others to preach it well.

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SPRINGING THE TRAP: THE RHETORIC OF AMOS AS A STRATEGY FOR PREACHING JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges for most preachers is confronting the need to preach the "hard" words of scripture. By "hard" words we mean those messages and themes that directly challenge our comfortable, ingrained and possibly sinful ways of thinking about the world and God. We know that scripture can often rub hard against the grain of our habits and assumptions but as preachers when we come to those texts, or feel prompted to address a difficult theme, it can be easier to avoid confronting the things that will call people to question certain established patterns and beliefs.

There are several reasons why, if we are trying to preach with integrity that we will be unable to avoid dealing with this challenge. First, we may come to a text that has judgment as a primary theme. This will be true if we are preaching on any number of texts from the Old Testament prophets, or Romans 1–2, or Jesus' seven woes in Matthew 23. When preaching these passages the idea of God's wrath and judgment are hard to avoid. Second, it is likely that at times we will feel a prompting to challenge our listeners with a wakeup call in their spiritual lives. As pastors and preachers there are times when being faithful to our calling will require that we help our people confront some of the realities of our collective unfaithfulness as God's people. Third, a specific situation may call for a message on justice and judgment. Perhaps a clear failure by the church to deal appropriately with sin or to respond to a great human need will require a message that confronts this failure in the same way that Jesus and the prophets confronted them in their ministries.

When we come to an occasion that warrants such a message is there a homiletical strategy that can be employed to help us preach the message effectively? One answer to that question is found in the biblical book of

Amos, itself one of those places where judgment and justice are key themes. Amos employs a brilliant rhetorical strategy, parts of which can be used by contemporary preachers to effectively preach a message to their congregation that can help them move past the spiritual malaise that warrants the message and into a place of greater obedience.

THE RHETORIC OF AMOS

The book of Amos presents a powerful picture of prophetic rhetoric directed against the covenant people of YHWH. Throughout this book, Amos takes Israel to task for its many social and cultic failures. He does this first through the familiar prophetic form of "oracles against the nations" (1:3-2:16). In these oracles Amos announces judgment against eight separate nations, beginning with nations surrounding Israel before finishing with a message of condemnation against Israel itself. The oracles begin by pronouncing judgment against Damascus, Gaza, and Tyre which were three nations referenced by their dominant city. These are followed by oracles against Edom, Ammon, and Moab which were trans-Jordanian kingdoms with which Israel had a great deal of conflict. Finally, the oracles come close to home, attacking the communities that were supposed to be in covenant relationship with YHWH. Amos first briefly attacks the southern kingdom of Judah before his oracle complex climaxes with an elongated attack on the northern kingdom of Israel.

These oracles are tightly held together through stylistic and structural means.[1] The eight oracles can be divided into two closely related patterns that Karl Möller labels "A" and "B."[2] Both the "A" and "B" patterns begin with a divine speech formula, then contain the same formulaic expression of the nations guilt, list at least one example of the nation's specific offences and contain a formulaic announcement of punishment. Both patterns also contain elements that are unique to themselves and are then applied to the various nations that Amos addresses in his oracle complex. For example the "A" pattern adds an elaborate punishment section and is addressed to Damascus, Gaza, Ammon, and Moab. The "B" pattern contains extended references to the specific guilt of the nations and is directed to Tyre, Edom, Judah and Israel.

The sequence in which Amos attacks the nations also demonstrates the interconnected nature of the oracle complex. Andrew Steinmann argues that the sequence of nations points towards a geo-political connection. He argues that the first six nations alternate between sharing a border with Israel or Judah and the sequence of the nations listed brings the different shared borders closer and closer to the Israel-Judah border. This sense of progression points towards the ultimate end of the oracles, which was to announce the final attack on Israel.[3]

Further, the oracles all contain a certain numerical formula that refers to "three" then "four" transgressions or offences committed by each

accused nation. In his oracles Amos does not actually list four specific crimes against each nation, he usually lists one specific crime and then elaborates in some detail until he comes to the final oracle. This is the oracle against Israel itself, where he then fulfills the sequence in his attack on the nation by offering them a catalogue of sins that represents four categories of offences.[4] Amos's creative use of the numerical sequence now functions as a delaying rhetorical device that heightens the surprise when he turns this three/four pattern against Israel.

The nature of the offences for which YHWH will enact punishment remains consistent throughout the first six oracles. They tend to deal with crimes of war and its aftermath, usually—though not exclusively—referring to crimes committed against the Israelites. However, in his penultimate oracle Amos shifts focus and the nature of the offence at 2:4–6 with his oracle against Judah. Instead of crimes invoking imagery of warfare and destruction, YHWH accuses Judah of failing to keep his Law. While the other nations have committed offences in warfare or destruction, Judah has committed an equally grave offence in not remaining true to its God to whom it is indebted for its very existence.[5] This oracle against Judah fits the rhetorical strategy of laying a trap for its audience. It continues the process of moving the attack subtly towards Israel but it does not reveal that this nation is the final target. This oracle continues to set the trap since it was the seventh oracle against the nations and it is probable that the Israelite audience expected the cycle to stop at this point as the number frequently functions symbolically as representative of completeness or wholeness.[6] Instead the oracle against Judah is the supposedly climactic condemnation of Israel's sister nation which is then trumped by the actual climactic condemnation of Israel itself.[7] This heptad of oracles against other nations serves as a rhetorical trap that culminates in an eighth and unexpected oracle against Israel.

The oracle against Israel is an elongated attack that is the apex of Amos's entire oracle complex. The previous seven serve to build up Israelite excitement regarding YHWH's judgment of other nations before shocking them with accusations that they themselves are under condemnation. The prophet's rhetoric seeks to elicit approval from his audience before turning his message back on his hearers who are the ultimate targets of the announced judgment. When he launches his attack against Israel, he traps his listeners and forces them to recognize that this prophet equated their offences with those of the foreign nations.[8]

The specific charges against Israel follow in the pattern begun by the charges against Judah and they reference ethical and social injustices. They point to an Israelite society that has not followed YHWH's call to protect the poorest and weakest in the community against abuses of the powerful or to care for their basic needs (2:6b-7) and they were engaged in inappropriate worship practices that were possibly idolatrous (2:8). The inclusion of multiple offences stands in contrast to the charges leveled against the other nations and reinforces the strong message concerning Israel's guilt that

the prophet is attempting to communicate. Israel is deserving of the same judgment that YHWH has declared that he will bring upon the other nations.

The ultimate goal of the oracles is to push towards restoration between YHWH and his creation and Israel is to be used as a means of showing his blessing to all nations. However in order for this to take place, Israel must respond to the call that God has placed upon them.[9] Israel is a chosen people and as such, they have responsibilities toward him. When Amos includes them in the condemnation of these foreign nations for crimes that do not seem nearly as severe, he is effectively reminding Israel of their greater obligation towards the God who has chosen them.[10] While it is true that this interactive relationship includes God showing grace to his people beyond what they deserve it also means that he is concerned with judgment and justice when they will not listen to his repeated warnings.

APPLYING AMOS' STRATEGY IN PREACHING TODAY

Borrowing Amos' rhetorical strategy of entrapment in order to confront similar moral and ethical failings in the church today has powerful potential for contemporary homiletics. Grant Osborne reminds us that one of the key hermeneutical principles for prophetic literature is that its validity for the church today is tied to the preacher finding analogous situations in the contemporary church. Further, Osborne reminds us that the need for the prophet's message to continue to speak out against injustice and immorality and warn of impending judgment is as much needed now as it was then.[11] Consequently messages such as Amos's oracles against the nations, specifically the oracle against Israel, reminds the North American church, which resides in an affluent society, that the God who called Israel into rebuke for its failure to care for the weakest in its society is the God that Christians claim to worship. Amos's oracles demonstrate that the ones who think that their behaviors must be appropriate because they are currently experiencing a time of great wealth could be revealed as brutal and greedy oppressors who are ripe to experience a judgment of woe if they do not change their ways. This call resounds throughout the centuries and it reminds us that in our contemporary situation that the call of our God to social justice and holiness is as valid in our situation as it was more than two millennia ago. Borrowing from this rhetorical strategy of entrapment in order to bring forward similar statements regarding moral and ethical failings in the confessional community of our present day can offer contemporary preachers a homiletical approach for addressing similar issues of justice and judgment.[12]

To apply this to our preaching we may take a text like the aforementioned Romans 1:18–2:29 where the apostle Paul diagnoses the human dilemma before ultimately prescribing God's cure in 3:19-20.[13] Such a sermon may begin by choosing a recurring question that is repeated several times throughout the sermon. For instance in our introduction, as we begin

to think about the theme of God's wrath we may offer a general list of moral offenses that most people would agree are contemporary horrors in our world such as genocide, corporate corruption, and child sex-trafficking. We may then ask, "What do you think God thinks about these things?" Presumably most people in the audience are not direct participants in these activities, or at least are unaware of their participation, and would think that God hates these things.

From there we may begin to get more specific by listing some of the sins of injustice that we commonly associate as occurring in foreign lands. We may mention the oppression of women in Afghanistan, the ethnic cleansing in Darfur, and the persecution of Christians in Morocco. After briefly detailing each of these we again ask, "What do you think God thinks of these things?"

From here we could move on to sins that are closer to home but many in our congregation would not directly associate with themselves, at least in the sense that they are responsible for perpetuating them. Here we may even draw directly from the text of Romans 1:18–32 and offer a few of the specific ways that these behaviors are expressed in our culture, such as the torrent of sexually explicit material in mainstream media, immoral sexual practices, the engagement with "new age" religion, and the dogged pursuit of wealth and materialism. Again, after briefly exploring these things we ask, "What do you think God thinks about these things?"

It is here that we are now prepared to "spring the trap," although we may choose to set it a bit tighter by further asking something like, "How should the church respond to all of this?" At this point the congregation may be anticipating a message on how it can be "salt and light" in order to help the world become more obedient to God. Rather than leading the congregation in a consideration of that theme at this point in the message the preacher would begin to consider the sins that the church itself is guilty of. In keeping with Amos's strategy we would catalogue a far greater list. Instead of three we may offer double that amount or more. We may reflect on things like; petty fights, church splits, our own propensity toward materialism, the churches marginalization of women, our lack of attention to social justice, sexual sins, neglect of mission, prayerlessness, worship wars, etc. etc. Out of this we are then able to make the point that we cannot hope to be of help to the world until we recognize that we are ourselves under judgment, and even more so than the others who have already been considered in the sermon because as God's church we are expected to know better and do better.[14]

In employing this approach we will offer a way for people to experience the power of prophetic speech by "springing a trap" on contemporary audiences that can at times be self-assured and self-righteous about their place in the world. By eliciting agreement with our hearers when we chastise the behavior of others we can then bring them to a place that forces acceptance of a judgment that strikes much closer to home.

From here application can be made in terms of the universal need

for God's grace and those specific behaviors that need to be reformed. Then, the message could conclude with the offer of restoration just as Amos does with his audience and Paul does in his letter to the Romans.

For a Christian audience that believes that the writings of the Old Testament are part of its canonical scriptures, this method can remain true to the type of communication God has used in the past and it can continue to be a useful approach for communicating his ethical and social concerns to a new generation.

CONCLUSION

One can assume that preaching a message of justice and judgment was not easy in the days of Amos. Even in ancient days people did not particularly appreciate being told that their lifestyles of comfort and affluence were an affront to God because in enjoying their plenty they were neglecting those who were not as fortunate and who needed their attention. In contemporary North American culture our congregations have to be aware of the same possibility, and thus they need to be challenged with messages that confront any propensity toward such behavior.

The challenge of preaching justice and judgment will always be a part of preaching effectively. Because of this, it is essential for any preacher who intends to preach the whole counsel of God to preach them courageously to their congregation with faith that they will have their corrective effect on those that hear. Embracing this challenge requires having trustworthy methods to rely upon so as to make the presentation of the message as effective as possible. The ancient rhetoric of the prophet Amos offers a generative approach to (post)modern preachers who are willing to tackle the challenge of confronting their audience with the tough truths of God's word.

NOTES
1. See Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Amos:* Anchor Bible Commentary 24A (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 30-32, 206-22. Also, Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the book of Amos* (Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 36.
2. Karl Möller, *A Prophet in Debate: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the book of Amos,* JSOT sup 372 (London: Sheffield, 2003), 172.
3. Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Order of Amos's Oracles against the Nations: 1:3-2:16." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111:4 (1992): 687. For example, Damascus borders with Israel while Gaza borders Judah. Tyre borders Israel and Edom borders Judah. Ammon borders Israel and Moab borders Judah.
4. Anderson and Freedman, 310.
5. Paul R. Noble, "Israel Among the Nations." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 15:2 (1993): 57-58, 76.

6. Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "'For three Sins…even Four': The Numerical say-ings in Amos." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 190.

7. Möller, 195.

8. Another example of this kind of rhetoric is Nathan's parable delivered to king David to get David to condemn himself after his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (2 Sam 12:1-14). See Chisholm Jr., 188.

9. Craig G. Bartholomew and Mike W. Goheen, "Story and Biblical Theol-ogy," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical* Interpretation, ed. Craig Bartholomew, et.al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 160.

10. Bernard Renaud, "Prophetic Criticisms of Israel's Attitudes to the Na-tions: A Few Landmarks," in *Truth and Its Victims*, ed. Willem Beuken, et. al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 37.

11. Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 219-20.

12. See Craig Loscalzo, "Preaching Themes from Amos," *Review and Expositor* 92:2 (1995): 203.

13. Paul actually seems to use a form of "springing the trap" himself in this passage moving from the general human dilemma (1:18-19), to Gentile sins (1:20-32), to confrontation of those sins in both Jews and Gentiles (2:1-16), to confronting the Jews unique situation (2:17-29). In his own way Paul moves from the general to the specific to make his point that all people are equally condemned and in need of the gospel. See Leander Keck, *Romans.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2005. 56-89.

14. For an example see Joel F. Drinkard, "Thus Says the Lord," *Review and Expositor* 92:2 (1995): 219-33.

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RHETORICAL INFLUENCES UPON
THE PREACHING OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

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Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) lived during a unique time in American history. As an English colonial loyal to the British crown, Edwards could not be classified as an "American" in any modern sense of the word. Rather, he operated within an eighteenth-century New England Puritan context that was an extension of a broader British and European intellectual and religious world. As a rigorously intellectual Calvinist scholar, Edwards was influenced by Enlightenment thinkers and his English Puritan forebears alike. Most famously he is associated with the Great Awakening revival of the 1730s-1740s and the landmark sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" delivered in 1741. His reputation is multifaceted: although deservedly recognized as a polemicist, an apologist on behalf of Reformed doctrines, a sacred historian, a pastor, a missionary, a biblical theologian, a philosopher and pioneering psychologist, the popular conception of him as a preacher is essentially correct. This study seeks to address this conception of Edwards the preacher. Viewed in the larger context of Edwards' life, ministry and voluminous writings, "his career in the pulpit and the attendant body of sermons he produced constitute the hub of his diverse interests and activities. All things, like so many spokes of a wheel, met and were structured through their use" in his sermons.

This study of the rhetorical influences that shaped the preaching of Jonathan Edwards reveals a preacher who stood firmly within the lineage of an inherited preaching tradition that had been assiduously developed for nearly a century beforehand. During the course of his thirty-plus years of preaching, Edwards fully exploited the potential of the Puritan preaching form while never substantially departing from its tradition. Yet despite his tendency toward formalism, Edwards was no mere slave to convention. The widely read Edwards displayed the unique "ability to reshape ideas inherited from abroad in light of the needs and interests of the American situation." Throughout his life he demonstrated a "characteristic propensity to rethink every important aspect of his life "from the ground up," regardless of his background and training." While Edwards may never have seriously questioned the assumptions of his heritage, within his writings he nonetheless insisted upon a personal formulation of that heritage.

Throughout his life, an amalgam of both informal and formal experiences contributed to the shaping of his preaching ministry. This study will demonstrate that in addition to his personal faith experiences,

the following rhetorical influences shaped his preaching ministry: first, the preaching of his father and grandfather; second, his Puritan preacher forebears; and finally, the rhetoric of Peter Ramus. The study concludes by critically interacting with three implications for current preaching forms and modes, particularly those within the North American tradition.

EDWARDS' EARLY FORMATIVE YEARS

Jonathan Edwards' struggles with his faith as a young man provided the impetus for a lifelong passion with both preaching and theology. Until his coming of age in his early twenties, Edwards wrestled with the issue of authentic regeneration. In part, this struggle came about due to the controversy of his day regarding the New England Puritan church and the changing standards for baptism and membership. First-generation New England Puritans upheld the standard that prospective church members must be able to relate a genuine and definite conversion experience in order to obtain full church membership. However, second- and third-generation Puritans raised in an atmosphere of Puritan piety did not necessarily share in this same conversion experience. As a result of their failure to account for their conversion experience, these later-generation Puritans were subsequently denied church membership and baptism for their offspring.

The Half-Way Covenant, ratified in 1662, provided a compromise of sorts to this dilemma. Under the Covenant, potential applicants who had experienced an "indefinite conversion" were granted partial membership. Importantly, this new status allowed for their children and grandchildren to be baptized. Edwards found himself caught up in the midst of the debate between the positions of his father and grandfather, both of whom were influential ministers. On the one hand his grandfather Solomon Stoddard tended toward a more theologically liberal position and promoted the relaxed standards of the Half-Way Covenant at his Northampton church. On the other hand, Jonathan's minister father Timothy Edwards disagreed and continued to hold to the more traditional way of assessing the spiritual state of potential members. In contrast to the position of Stoddard, Timothy Edwards believed that prospective communicant members of his church should "be able to give a precise account of their journey from rebellious sinner to regenerate ("born again") convert." Perhaps ironically, as noted below, many years later when Edwards was the sole pastor of his grandfather's church this issue came again to the fore and served as a contributing factor of his dismissal in 1751.

Such a potentially conflicted environment led the young Edwards to agonize over the state of his soul and his status as a genuine believer. Despite his best efforts to develop a personal piety he was apparently unable to demonstrate the heartfelt love of God that served as the hallmark required for genuine converts. Raised in a pious Puritan home, Edwards had not lived a truly reprobate life and therefore found it difficult to point to a definitive moment in time whereby he could demonstrate the transition from rebellious

sinner to that of genuine convert. As a result of this experience, throughout his teenage years Edwards wrestled with a burning question: had the sovereign God indeed transformed his heart so that he could respond to the love and grace of God as revealed in Christ, or was he nothing more than a self-deluded hypocrite?

Edwards discovered the solution to this Calvinist paradox in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, following a serious illness while a student at Yale. His sudden insight was that everything, including inanimate matter, constituted a form of communication from God. Edwards came to believe that a personal and sovereign God expressed himself in many ways, from the beauties of nature down to the ever-changing relationship of every atom to each other. This dramatic insight became the key to every other aspect of his thought, and these experiences would serve to shape his lifelong passion for preaching and theology. Furthermore, these issues of regeneration and the hallmarks of a genuine conversion experience became the overarching question in his life.

Edwards' later pulpit ministry reflected the strength of these experiences. In his sermons he consistently sought to convey the truth of the sovereign God's revelation by appealing to the "affections" of his audience. These appeals involved both the unconverted and converted alike. Edwards hoped that sinners, blinded to true beauty by their own self-love, might by God's grace have their eyes opened truly to see the truth. Edwards held that once the eyes of sinners were opened, their hearts would be changed and their lives would subsequently be dedicated to loving and serving God and others. Thus for Edwards, one of the major purposes of preaching was "as a fit means to affect sinners, with the importance of the things of religion, and their own misery, and necessity of a remedy, and the glory and sufficiency of a remedy provided." As a fit means of delivering the truths contained within the Holy Scriptures, sermons therefore served as a "great and main end" by which to impress "the divine things on the heart and affections of men." Edwards believed that the sermon itself did not automatically cause genuine conversion, but rather that the effective preaching of the Word engendered "a fit or suitable condition in which God may cause conversion."

INFLUENCES OF TIMOTHY EDWARDS AND SOLOMON STODDARD

Edwards' churchgoing experiences served as the first direct influence upon his preaching. Kimnach notes that his father and grandfather served as the determining factors in Edwards' later conception of the sermon. Edwards grew up listening regularly to the sermons of his father, who served as a living exemplar of a preacher for the young Jonathan. The dozen or so extant sermons of Timothy Edwards reveal the same basic tripartite formula that Jonathan would later adopt in his own preaching. Timothy Edwards' sermons contain the basic divisions of Text, Doctrine, and Applications, "each structured internally through a succession of brief, numbered heads."

These sermons demonstrate that Timothy Edwards made use of the more complex seventeenth-century Puritan preaching mode of multiple doctrines and many subheads. However, at times he also utilized the more simplified eighteenth-century tripartite Puritan preaching form of a text, a doctrine with several points, and a single application with multiple admonishments.

Following his graduation from Yale, from 1726 to 1729 Edwards served as the associate pastor at his maternal grandfather's church in Northampton, Connecticut. Here his grandfather further influenced the young journeyman preacher during these formative years. Both Timothy Edwards and Solomon Stoddard were Harvard graduates, where they would have encountered Ramean logic through the preaching philosophy of William Ames. Although both Timothy Edwards and Stoddard made changes to inherited preaching forms, nonetheless both followed Puritan homiletical tradition and based their sermon styles upon the classic tripartite model of explication, confirmation and application.

Like Timothy Edwards, Stoddard made use of the simplified eighteenth-century development of the threefold format at his Northampton church, but reduced the number of subheads under the single doctrinal point. While not deviating from the "classic Puritan sermon form that Timothy Edwards employed, Stoddard discovered hidden rhetorical resources in the 'plain style' by insisting upon the evaluation of rhetoric in psychological terms that were more comprehensive and subtle than either the old logic or the new Reason." As a preparationist who held that God underwent a distinct process for preparing sinners for conversion, Stoddard believed the psychology of "fear was an important emotion for awakening the conscience of the slumbering sinner."

His father and grandfather had a sequential impact upon a young Edwards by impressing upon him most importantly the notion of the sermon as a heart-piercing device, represented by the image of an arrow or a spear piercing the heart of unrepentant sinners. One sees a change in Edwards' preaching modes prior to his tenure at Northampton: typically his sermons focused on the pleasantness of religion and the beauty of God and of faithful believers. However, after 1726 Edwards' sermons began to contain much more of an imprecatory tone, which can be directly attributed to Stoddard's influence. Both by writing and personal example, Stoddard encouraged Edwards "to complement the rhetoric of delight with the rhetoric of terror." However, despite earlier seasons of revival under Stoddard's ministry, by 1727 when Edwards came to Northampton to assist his grandfather in pastoral ministry the congregation appeared to be "very insensible" to religion, and had been in this state for nearly ten years. In comparison to earlier levels of religious fervour, Miller notes that by this time "the emotional intensity of New England Puritanism had considerably slackened." This dry and tedious situation reflected the general condition of the Puritan churches in New England by the end of the seventeenth century.

The well-established Northampton congregation, inured to years

of Stoddard's preaching, expected its familiar pattern to continue when Stoddard died in 1729. Edwards was installed as the pastor at the age of twenty-three and continued to preach in the same mode as his departed grandfather. The Northampton church consisted of the largest and wealthiest congregation in the colony and expected stability in its preaching, and would not necessarily have been open to an obvious innovator. Perhaps predictably, then, at Northampton the newly installed pastor adopted Stoddard's tripartite sermon form but found some freedom to modify it by degrees. This continued use of the formal sermon structure established shared expectations between audience and preacher. As his grandfather had done to the Puritan preaching tradition, Edwards continued its evolution, formally simplifying it by reducing drastically the number of subheads under the single doctrinal point. This permitted a fuller development of each point and facilitated a more focused overall line of argument. However, although Edwards experimented with various modifications between 1730 and 1733 by adding multiple doctrinal points and applications, in his entire preaching career he never varied from this basic tripartite structure.

Edwards' biblical exegesis for sermon preparation tended to follow a three-part formula that lent itself well to the tripartite sermon format. As a convinced Protestant theologian and biblicist Edwards "viewed the Bible as the authoritative source of Christian theology and the inspired Word of God." Edwards "consistently turned to the Bible of both testaments as the authoritative source of his critical and constructive reflections." For Edwards, the Bible plus theological intellect equalled biblical truths. His first step in exegesis involved garnering a variety of observations taken from the text, second stating propositions distilled from the text and third development by exegesis, treating the doctrine in an expository fashion as he carefully built up the sermon. His aim was to extract a theological axiom from the biblical text and in the sermon dispute that axiom in a creedal order. By this method of exegetical analysis, the text was broken down into its constituent elements and then set out in propositional form within the sermon.

Based upon this exegetical pattern Edwards typically divided his sermons into a tripartite structure. The first section clarified the biblical text, the second section elaborated the doctrine implicit in the text, and the final section concluded the sermon with applications of the text and doctrine to the lives of his listeners. This structure formed a significant part of its appeal for audiences in that it facilitated note-taking and enabled attentive audience members to follow along more easily.

PURITAN PREACHING HERITAGE

In terms of the second direct rhetorical influence upon his preaching, as noted above Edwards was a product of colonial America and a natural heir of New England Puritanism. As a young Edwards "undertook preparation for the pulpit, he began by assimilating the rich traditions and conventions

of English pulpit oratory and sermon literature" further shaped by nearly a century of New England Puritan thought. Even as a young man, the widely read Edwards encountered various preaching manuals that influenced his understanding of preaching, many of which are mentioned in his works.

Puritan preaching traces it roots to the work of the Cambridge scholar and preacher William Perkins (1558-1602). Perkins stands as a seminal figure in the development of Puritan preaching as one who laid "the foundations for so much of the Puritan preaching for all time." His treatise on preaching, *The Arte of Prophecying*, shaped Puritan preaching well into the eighteenth century. Building upon a foundation of Ramean logic and rhetoric, Perkins held that the preacher's central task involved the correct interpretation of the revealed Word of God in ways that were both logically sound and practically applicable.

Perkins promoted the Puritan "plain style" of preaching, believing that publicly the preacher should hide ostentatious displays of human wisdom and instead manifest the work of the Spirit. Only privately, in the task of exegesis and sermon preparation, should the preacher make use of the general arts and philosophy. Perkins' development of sermon application revived the tradition of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastorialis*, and aimed to apply the doctrines of Scripture to various sectors of the congregation appropriate to their circumstances, place and time. However, although Perkins advocated "plain" sermons, by no means were they to be simplistic or doctrinally watered-down. Turnbull reports that "of William Perkins this can be said: No other exerted a greater influence upon Edwards as a literary model."

One of Perkins' students at Cambridge, the Puritan scholar William Ames, advanced Perkins' notions of preaching in light of Ramean rhetoric. Most American Puritans encountered Ramean logic through Ames, most notably at Harvard. Ames' 1638 work *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* defended the plain style of preaching, and was a standard text in use at both Harvard and Yale until the middle of the eighteenth century. In addition to the work of Ames, Edwards was familiar with the following preaching manuals that developed further the Puritan notions of preaching: John Wilkins' *Ecclesiastes* (1646), which "advocated a plain, natural, and clear way of preaching;" Richard Bernard's 1627 work *The Faithfull Shepherd*, which offered the most penetrating discussion of the tripartite preaching form; John Edwards' *The Preacher* (1705); William Chappell's 1656 publication *The Preacher and the Art and Method of Preaching*; and finally Cotton Mather's *Manductio ad Ministerium*, which also taught the plain style of preaching. Listed in Edwards' *Catalogue*, Mather's text was much used in Edwards' day by students of divinity.

However, as noted above, Edwards did not merely uncritically adopt the findings of his Puritan preacher forebears. At times upholding Puritan tradition, he also made certain changes to inherited preaching forms. The scholarly Edwards utilized intellectual building materials from a variety of authors and also reacted to particular ideas and theories in developing his

own conception of preaching. For example, in line with Perkins' conception of plain preaching, Edwards sought to avoid ostentatious displays of his learning in his sermons. His aim in doing so was to deflect the focus away from human learning to that of God. However, he made changes to traditional Puritan preaching forms early in his preaching ministry by reducing the number of heads, subheads and amount of Scripture citations. Over the years he would develop the full potential of this form, experimenting with the added psychological dimensions of the awakening sermon by 1741 "when his own congregation no longer responded adequately to his exhortations."

THE RHETORIC OF PETER RAMUS

While a student at Yale, the young Edwards encountered a third direct rhetorical influence upon his preaching: the philosophy and rhetoric of sixteenth-century scholar Peter Ramus. By the seventeenth century, editions of Ramus' works had spread across Europe and had subsequently made their way to across the Atlantic to Harvard. Edwards's tutors at Yale were primarily Harvard graduates who viewed themselves as standing very much in line within Ramean humanism and English Puritan traditions, both of which subsequently formed the core of American Puritan thought.

Classical rhetoricians such as Cicero viewed the five parts of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, style, delivery and memory—as a single productive unity. By progressing through the sequence of activities, the orator can form a comprehensive view of the speech that is both coherent and persuasive as the circumstances allow. By the late medieval period, however, Ramus believed that the teaching of the subjects of the *trivium* had degenerated into vagueness and repetition. Dissatisfied with the situation, Ramus proposed the solution of dividing the traditional five parts of classical rhetoric into the two parts of logic and rhetoric. Ramus assigned invention and disposition to the province of logic, allocated style and delivery to the realm of rhetoric, and simply ignored memory. Although in theory the teachings of the two arts were separated, in practice logic and rhetoric worked together. According to the new Ramist scheme an argument must first be proven true by logical means; only secondarily should the speaker adorn the speech with stylistic elements in the attempt to arouse the affections of the hearers.

Ramus' comprehensive new development of logic and rhetoric gained lasting favor among Calvinist scholars and preachers alike, and his humanism formed the philosophic backbone of much of Calvinist theology by the late sixteenth century. Puritan scholars adopted Ramean rhetoric primarily because it was advantageous to their creed. The dialectic of Ramus "seemed a more efficient method than the logic of the schools for interpreting Scripture, and his rhetoric more suited to preaching the unadulterated Word." On this basis Ramus became the most direct and decisive influence upon the development of Puritan preaching. In the Ramean tradition the content of oration became a matter of reason, logic and method, while rhetoric served

as a subservient and stylistic vehicle by which one delivered the content of the oration. According to this reasoning the affections of the listeners "would be moved most cogently if presented with that which is in itself true and has been proved dialectically to be as the thing is, with no other enhancement than pleasing figures of speech and appropriate gestures."

In proper Ramean fashion, according to Puritan homiletical theory the preacher had two distinct aims: the first and "most important was to impress doctrinal propositions upon the understanding of his congregation," and then only "secondarily was it his task to rouse the emotions and raise the affections." As advanced and defined by Perkins, in the execution of the "plain style" of preaching "the logical act was always prerequisite to the rhetorical, and the art of an oration was to be not so much 'concealed' as not permitted to obscure the theme." Puritan scholars believed that the use of Ramist methodology was ideally suited for sermons that were relatively easy to follow, more easily understood and hopefully acted upon by their listeners. In the minds of Puritan divines, the preacher should only draw upon the tools of rhetoric only if the audience were recalcitrant. They believed that the plain style, which in effect is a non-rhetorical style, would alone be acceptable to the reason of men.

This potential outcome for the sermon fitted within Edwards's aims as a preacher. In his treatment of preaching, the sermon became a tool of rhetorical power by which to promote a more activist religion and further the importance of the conversion experience. The Puritan plain sermon would ideally impress the hearers' minds first with its logic, while also arousing their hearts to action by secondly appealing to rhetoric. But Ramus's formal separation between logic and rhetoric tested Edwards's theological beliefs regarding religious affections and motivations. As observed previously in this study, though highly interested in the study of religious affections and the hallmarks of genuine conversion, Edwards' inherited homiletical style was neither designed primarily to stir the emotions nor to be filled with grand oratory. While a major source of his rhetorical power involved the use of biblical imagery and metaphors, he also believed that these images should always be subservient to the points of logically-proven doctrine.

However, this point must be held in tension with another of Edwards' beliefs, namely that religious affections motivated human behavior. In his work *Freedom of the Will* he argued that for one to be a free moral agent means to be free from rational persuasion. Solely appealing to the rationality of the sinner would surely be ineffective; one's will or heart had to be moved first in order for the intellect to comprehend and respond. Perhaps the way he reconciled these seemingly opposing positions can be found within his theological tradition. As a true Calvinist, Edwards felt that religious affections arose solely at the initiative of a sovereign God. Only through the ministry of the Word, the sacraments and prayer could the preacher expect the Holy Spirit to do his work. Old maintains that infusing "his preaching with emotional appeal would have been much too Arminian,

much too Pelagian, much too manipulative for Edwards."

CONCLUSION

       Much has been written regarding the enduring legacy of Jonathan Edwards. Sweeney observes, for example, that "Edwards has proven to be the most important Christian thinker in America since his death." Others have noted the truly international scope of Edwards' legacy as a theologian, philosopher, scholar and preacher from the time of his death. In light of the treatment in this study of the rhetorical influences of Edwards and his preaching, the following four observations are noted by way of a critical analysis.

       First, one must question the psychology of Edwards' sermons, particularly the genre of "fear sermons" perfected under the influence of his grandfather. One may well pose the question: does the psychology of fear in preaching produce lasting results and genuine conversion experiences? Edwards' experiences following the Great Awakening would seem to suggest that on the whole they do not. One of the major factors leading to Edwards' writing of his *Religious Affections* in 1746 involved his concern that the townspeople of Northampton were slipping back into their former contentious ways. As a result of this situation, Edwards attempted to bring about a more lasting conversion experience by a formal assessment of genuine regeneration. The townspeople were made to sign a covenant in which they promised not to slip back into their former contentiousness. Edwards' reforms led to stricter standards for his parishioners whereby he began to require a more formally stated conversion testimony. This stance, combined with the "Bad Book" scandal, ultimately led to Edwards' dismissal as the pastor of the Northampton church in 1751.

       Although a variety of models exist to explain the effects of fear appeals, studies of the persuasive force of fear appeals note that in general messages with intense contents tend to arouse more fear, or at the least may cause listeners to pay more attention to the message initially. The sender of the fear-arousing message seeks to motivate the audience to remove a perceived threat by changing their behaviours, beliefs, actions or values and embracing the alternative proposed by the sender. Messages with stronger fear contents tend to be more persuasive in changing attitudes, intentions and actions as compared to those with weaker contents. O'Keefe states that as a corollary, "messages that successfully arouse greater fear are also generally more persuasive." However, O'Keefe also points out that simply because a message induces fear and initially appears persuasive this may not account for the listeners' emotion of fear. Greater fear may not cause greater effectiveness in terms of persuasion, but rather may be attributed to the fact that "both fear and effectiveness are caused by the same underlying factors (namely, the cognitive reactions to the message)." Nilessen notes that higher "levels of fear lead to fear control processes and emotion-focused

coping, which may hinder adaptive responding." In general "fear appeals, when carefully used, may affect information processing by increasing the motivation to attend to message content, but will in and by themselves not be sufficient to influence attitudes towards protective behaviour of behaviour itself."

Building upon these comments, a second corollary observation relates to evangelistic sermons or appeals which one might encounter within current traditional church or revival contexts, particularly within current North American evangelical homiletics. Do many evangelistic sermons (and evangelism strategies) still tend to follow the Puritan/Edwardsean pattern in terms of first seeking to convict the sinner of his or her lost condition, and then secondarily offering the promise of the gospel in theological terminology? For example in his book *Introduction to Evangelism*, Reid defines evangelism in rather stark terms as "the communication of the gospel by saved people to lost people." But can "the gospel" be reduced to mere theological concepts alone? Furthermore, does the salvation of individuals result automatically in the eventual moral transformation of the wider society?

In this regard Viola argues that a gospel that focuses solely upon saving the spirit or soul, or the saving of the physical body, is incomplete and therefore becomes human-centered. While space does not permit a fuller development of this here, however it is worth noting that some have called attention to a fuller picture of evangelism and social action combined in which "both the salvation of individuals *and* the transformation of society are Kingdom non-negotiables."

A third observation relates to the variety of operative constraints and traditions within which preachers must function in terms of homiletical forms and practices. This study demonstrates that Edwards was indeed moulded in his preaching by a variety of influences in his early environment and furthermore preached within a distinct cultural and social context as part of a "school" of preaching. His sermons were in the main stream of literary effort of his day and his exegetical ideals were also based upon well-established literary models. Within the Puritan succession, there were clear and definite ideas to guide the would-be preacher. Operating within the Puritan sermon genre of his day meant that Edwards was constrained to preach within the limits of certain conventions by which the sermon genre was defined. Since Edwards preached to a particular people at a particular time and in a particular situation, his sermons reflect the historical context in which they were situated. One benefit to this system meant that Edwards' audience was able to anticipate and thus more readily absorb his messages. As noted in this study, this established a shared set of expectations between both the preacher and the audience and facilitated note-taking.

However, as sermon genres continue to evolve, relying on inherited sermon forms may essentially become maintaining a form of status quo. For example, despite the devastatingly accurate critique of traditional preaching by Fred B. Craddock more than three decades ago, Quicke notes that for

much of preaching in North America "The suspicion is that preaching inevitably maintains the status quo and specializes in survival and playing it safe." Allen argues that much of traditional preaching was informed by Enlightenment presuppositions concerning truth. In the case of traditional preaching informed by modernist ideals, biblical interpretation involves clarification of the gospel claims and subsequent applications explained to the listener. However, within an increasingly postmodern context, Allen notes that postmodern preachers recognize that every act of awareness is interpretive and are thus called upon "to help the congregation interpret interpretation. When members of a congregation are cognizant of the interpretive lenses through which they perceive congregational life, deeper (and more respectful) conversations often result." One major question facing preachers currently might be this: how much can the preacher change in terms of congregational culture and get away with? Is it the job of preachers to adapt their preaching forms to the existing congregational culture, or as leaders to attempt to change that culture to explore new and different preaching forms?

In conclusion, this examination of the variety of rhetorical influences upon the preaching of Jonathan Edwards reveals that above all else he was a product of his time operating within the sometimes narrow confines of New England Puritanism. However, despite his formality in keeping to the inherited preaching forms, he was nonetheless a deeply passionate man who was able to integrate his religious affections with his intellect. Kimnach reminds us further: "To identify influences…is not, however, to identify the man. Edwards seems never to have taken in anything without turning it over in his mind and usually modifying it. Thus Edwards' responses to his background must be considered…and the use to which he put the inherited sermon form." As a final comment/note to consider, this study of the preaching of Jonathan Edwards raises an issue with which many preachers have certainly struggled since his day: within my tradition, or within my congregation, how much change can I introduce into traditional preaching forms and still keep my job?

NOTES
1. Marsden, "Biography," 19.
2. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 27.
3. The full text of this sermon can be found in *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742 (WJE 22)*.
4. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, 2.
5. In a recent work, Carrick states that despite the resurgence of interest in Edwards in the twentieth century, scholars have focused firstly upon his philosophy, secondly upon his theology, and his preaching last. This has resulted in scholars "belittling or minimizing the importance of his preaching" (*The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards*, 19).

6. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 3.
7. Kimnach, "The Sermons: Concepts and Executions," 243.
8. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, 1. Smith observes: "Behind Edwards's sermons there stands a vast body of scholarship, including Scripture commentary and interpretation, history both sacred and secular, church history and the writings of the Church Fathers, works of theology and philosophy and, not least, the religious writings of his contemporaries in New England and abroad, especially in England and Scotland" (142).
9. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 22.
10. As this study will demonstrate, these influences are interrelated to a certain extent. For example, Ramean rhetoric influenced the Puritan preachers Edwards studied; Ramean rhetoric made an impact at both Harvard and Yale; and both Timothy Edwards and Solomon Stoddard were graduates of Harvard and thus upheld classical Puritan preaching traditions.
11. For more information on the Half-Way Covenant see Withington, "Vibrations in Theology," 388ff.
12. Marsden, *A Short Life*, 13 (parenthesis his). Ironically, years later as pastor of his grandfather's Northampton church, Edwards would make the "fateful half step in a sectarian direction," thus countering the views of his minister predecessor and mentor Stoddard. As a result his position, allied with other controversies, would see him voted out by his embittered and disillusioned congregation in 1750 (Marsden, "The Quest for the Historical Edwards," 10).
13. Marsden, *A Short Life*, 17.
14. Ibid., 22-23. For example, even following his apparent spiritual transformation, during his pastorate in New York Edwards kept a diary detailing his efforts at personal piety and the subsequent highs and lows he experienced in this effort.
15. Ibid., 21-22.
16. Ibid., 14. For example, in the Preface of his *Religious Affections* Edwards demonstrates his passion for the subject when he states: "There is no question whatsoever, that is of greater importance to mankind, and that it concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, that this, What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards? Or, which comes to the same thing, What is the nature of true religion? and wherein do lie the distinguishing notes of that virtue and holiness, that is acceptable in the sight of God" (84).
17. However, Edwards held that if a person had much affection that does not necessarily prove that he has true religion; conversely, if one has no affections that proves he has no true religion. Thus for him, "true religion lies much in the affections" (*Religious Affections*, 121). However, there is a caveat: not all preaching results in genuine conversion, he states. As examples, he cites the preaching of both John the Baptist and Christ in

order to illustrate that while some of their listeners displayed signs of "external religion," their preaching did not always result in true religion.

18. Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 115. Beyond the conviction of sinners' consciences, for the already-converted the purpose of preaching was "to stir up the pure minds of the saints, and quicken their affections, by often bringing the great things of religion to their remembrance, and setting before them in their proper colors, though they know them, and have been fully instructed in them already" (115-116).
19. Ibid., 115.
20. Filson, "Fit Preaching," 92.
21. Kimnach, "The Sermons: Concept and Execution," 250.
22. Ibid., 250.
23. Ibid., 250.
24. Valeri, "Edwards' Homiletical Method," 13.
25. Marsden notes, "New England's Congregational clergy were the most revered men in the provinces. They were the best educated and had long held a near-monopoly on public speaking, preaching at least two sermons a week. Their churches were '"established" as state institutions supported by taxes. They were usually full, due to either law or custom" (*A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards*, 5). Valeri adds that "In Northampton, as in most towns in colonial New England, the sermon was the central event of worship, and accordingly crucial to the corporate religious life of its people" ("Edwards" Homiletical Method," 15).
26. Valeri, "Edwards' Homiletical Method," 13.
27. Kimnach, "The Sermons: Concept and Execution," 253.
28. Minkema, "Introduction," 27.
29. Ibid., 253.
30. Minkema, "Introduction," 28.
31. Kimnach notes that "At Northampton itself, his grandfather gathered in "five harvests, as he called them," in 1679, 1683, 1690, 1712, and 1718, some greater than others, and in each "the bigger part of the young people in town" seemed to be drawn to them." ("Preface to the Period," 8).
32. Ibid., 8.
33. Miller, *New England Mind*, 301.
34. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures, Vol. 5*, 253. Old states that the problem was not that the pews were empty during Edwards' time as a preacher and pastor; they were full, but people were falling asleep. He notes, "Edwards had a vision of Christian society that surpassed by far what had already been accomplished by New England even in the days when its vision was most fresh and its devotion most ardent. Edwards was eager to press on to an even more godly society. He wanted to see people awaken to the most profound realities of the spiritual life. The hopes of the founding fathers had not yet been realized; the millennium had not come, but the hope was still very much alive, and Edwards's

yearning for spiritual awakening was evidence that the New England vision was indeed still very much alive" (253).

35. Cady, "The Artistry of Jonathan Edwards," 71. Kimnach states that "Edwards became a master of his inherited sermon form, but in the 1730s, at the zenith of his mastery, he began experimenting artistically with the sermon. He apparently did everything he could do without actually abandoning the old form entirely, and the only possible conclusion one can draw from the manuscript evidence of his experiments is that he was searching, consciously or unconsciously, for a formal alternative to the sermon itself" ("General Introduction," 40-41).

36. Kimnach observes that "Edwards became a master of his inherited sermon form, but in the 1730s, at the zenith of his mastery, he began experimenting artistically with the sermon. He apparently did everything he could do without actually abandoning the old form entirely, and the only possible conclusion one can draw from the manuscript evidence of his experiments is that he was searching, consciously or unconsciously, for a formal alternative to the sermon itself" ("General Introduction," 40-41).

37. Edwards, *Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, xiii.

38. The only variation Edwards introduced was the "lecture" sermon, which propounded more abstract theological doctrines with a few brief points of application, and had no formal Application section (Edwards, *Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, xiii).

39. Stein, "Editor's Introduction," 83.

40. Cherry, "Symbols of Spiritual Truth," 263.

41. Turnbull, "Jonathan Edwards—Bible Interpreter," 429.

42. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 57.

43. Cherry, "Symbols of Spiritual Truth," 264.

44. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 33-34.

45. Old, *Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures Vol. 5*, 248.

46. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 10. Stout classifies Edwards as a "fourth-generation" New England Puritan preacher in the period of transition from those preachers who trained in England, then at Harvard, and then at Harvard and Yale. Fourth-generation preachers like Edwards "learned anew the importance of delivery both in theory and in fact" (*New England Soul*, 6).

47. Kimnach notes that Edwards, as a careful scholar, probably studied "at least one" of the many available preaching manuals of his day. Certainly the works of Mather and Edward are listed in his "Catalogue" of books, and both find expression throughout his works ("General Introduction," 10, 16). Marsden notes that Edwards "read widely and voraciously and borrowed freely," and was primarily grounded in seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Puritan sources ("The Quest for the Historical Edwards," 7-9). See also Smith, Section 4, "Learned Background: Edwards' Reading," pp. 52-73 in *WJE Volume 2*.

48. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*, 207-208.
49. Turnbull, "Jonathan Edwards—Bible Interpreter," 430. Perkins' work was first published in Latin in 1592 and then in English in 1606.
50. Lischer, "William Perkins," 298; Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*, 206.
51. Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, Section X, "Preaching the Word." Perkins quotes the Latin saying attributed to Ovid's *Artis amatorae*: "As the Latin proverb says, *Artis etiam celare artem*—it is also a point of art to conceal art."
52. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures, Vol. 5*, 253; Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, Section 7, "Use and Application." A discussion of various applications can be found in Chapter 1 of the *Regula Pastoralis*, which indicates all forms of "admonitions" to many different types of people by the preacher.
53. Blacketer, "William Perkins," 47. Blacketer summarizes Perkins' understanding of the "plain" style of preaching: "While the preacher must use the arts [of grammar and rhetoric] to get at the meaning and application of the biblical text, they must be concealed in the delivery of the sermon, so that the only thing on display is the Spirit of God, and not the eloquence of the preacher. Greek and Latin terms should be absent from the sermon. Thus the plain style of preaching required the use, but not the display, of learning" (46).
54. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 54.
55. Miller, *New England Mind*, 339.
56. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 53.
57. Though the Puritan "plain style" underwent changes at the hands of successive Puritan preachers, generations of student-preachers viewed Wilkins' 1646 work *Ecclesiastes* as a work of homiletical authority. This work "dichotomizes and distributes all things into their proper categories. Thus, it is not only clear in its exposition of the sermon form, but it gives a vivid impression of the mentality which gave birth to the classical Puritan sermon" (Kimnach, "General Introduction," 28).
58. Jones, "The Attack on Pulpit Eloquence," 113 (in *The Seventeenth Century*).
59. Kimnach, "The Sermons: Concept and Execution," 250.
60. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 52.
61. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 3.
62. Turnbull, "Jonathan Edwards—Bible Interpreter," 431-432.
63. Kimnach, "The Sermons: Concept and Execution," 254. Smith observes that Edwards' preaching career can be divided into three phases. His early sermons "are notable for their stress on Edwards' personal religious odyssey, his meditations, thoughts and recounting the times when he had the most vivid sense of the presence of God." During his middle years, his sermons became "highly theological in content and pastoral in tone," while the sermons in his later years "suggest that his concern for preaching was on the wane, a result of his being distracted by the preparation of his treatises" (*Jonathan Edwards*, 139).

64. Though a student of Yale, Edwards was highly influenced by Harvard thought: his grandfather Solomon Stoddard graduated from Harvard in 1662 and his father in 1691 (Kimnach, "General Introduction," 4). Editions of Ramus' works spread all over Europe, and "both British and Continental editions make their way to the British Colonies in America, and especially to Harvard" (Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 15). Many of Edwards' tutors at Yale were graduates of Harvard.

65. Kuklick, "Seven Thinkers," 126.

66. May and Wisse, *Cicero: On the Ideal Orator*, 10. Edwards studied at Yale College in Wethersfield, which was at the time led by his cousin Elisha Williams who followed the Port-Royal logic of Arnauld and Nicole. Theusen notes that "Arnauld and Nicole were part of a longer tradition of logic, beginning with the sixteenth-century French humanist Petrus Ramus" ("Editor's Introduction," 4-5).

67. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 556.

68. Kuklick, "Seven Thinkers," 126. He notes that in the late sixteenth century at Cambridge, Ramean philosophy and rhetoric was important to the writings of Richardson and Ames. Amesean ideas and texts became central to American Puritanism, forming the core of their thought following the founding of Harvard in 1636. Philosopher Samuel Johnson, one of Edwards' tutors at Yale, saw himself as standing very much in line with this tradition. Edwards inherited a Ramist framework, but "modernized" Calvinist theology through the lens of Locke comprehended in a Cartesian context, through the Newtonian rationalist view of Samuel Clarke. Old points out that while at Yale, Edwards had "read John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which provided a philosophical matrix for him to understand his religious experience" (*Reading and Preaching Vol. 5*, 249).

69. Miller, *New England Mind*, 328-329. He notes: "But it is eminently worth noting that Puritans were herein not following a course of their own setting, but one laid out by scholars rather than by divines, and not as primarily determined by piety" (329).

70. Miller, *New England Mind*, 317.

71. Buckingham, "Stylistic Artistry," 137.

72. Ibid., 326.

73. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 284.

74. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 15.

75. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 55.

76. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 217-218.

77. Yabrough and Adams, *Delightful Conviction*, 11.

78. Old, *Reading and Preaching Vol. 5*, 254.

79. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word,* 193.

80. On the international scope of Edwards' legacy, see for example the article by Bebbington, "Remembered Around the World," and Carrick, *The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards*, Chapter 1.

81. Found in the *Northampton Covenant of 1742* (Dwight, *WJE 1* or online in *Church and Pastoral Documents WJE 39*); see also Edwards, "An Humble Inquiry" of 1749 in *Ecclesiastical Writings, WJE Vol. 12*).

82. See for example the article "Fear Appeals for Persuasive Communication" in Nelissen, *Marketing for Sustainability* for a summary of various models.

83. Nelissen, *Marketing for Sustainability*, 96-97.

84. O'Keefe, *Persuasion: Theory and Research*, 225.

85. Ibid., 228 (parenthesis his).

86. Nilessen, *Marketing for Sustainability*, 99.

87. Ibid., 100.

88. Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 8. He states that this definition is based upon the New Testament concept of preaching "the specific news that Jesus died and rose again" (10), which is the "good news" of the gospel. Since every person is confronted with the two issues of 1) sin and 2) death, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is indeed the good news, he states. On the cross Christ dealt with the sin problem, and his resurrection dealt with the death problem (10). As heralds of this gospel, Christians are to bear witness by proclaiming this good news to lost people and by making disciples (11-12).

89. Viola, *Reimagining Church*, 137.

90. Campolo, *Red Letter Christians*, 33 (italic his). He believes, for example, that Christ already has initiated his Kingdom, which involves "*a transformed people living in a transformed society*, and when we preach this message to people in our day, we are preaching the gospel, the Good News" (33).

91. Old points out that Edwards was a part of the "New England School" of Puritan preaching. With its emphasis on prophetic and evangelistic sermons, "this double emphasis has, ever since the first generation of New England preachers, continued through the whole history of the American church" (*The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures Volume 5*, 169).

92. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 55. He notes that in light of Edwards' background preparation and reading, How large a part culture played in producing the sermons of Edwards we cannot determine, but the background of preparation is obvious.

93. Edwards, *Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, xii.

94. This refers of course to Craddock's landmark 1971 work *As One Without Authority*.

95. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching*, 38.

96. Allen, "Preaching and Postmodernism," 35.

97. Ibid., 36 (parenthesis his).

98. Marsden, *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards*, 142.

99. Kimnach, "General Introduction," 21-22.

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THE GREAT AWAKENING—CALVINISM, ARMINIANISM AND REVIVALISTIC PREACHING: HOMILETICAL LESSONS FOR TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

The *Great Awakening* is a term first used by Joseph Tracy, among others, to describe the revival that occurred during the 18th century in the American colonies reaching its peak in New England in the 1740's.[1] However, the term *Great Awakening* has been challenged by scholars such as Jon Butler who contends that the term cannot be accurately applied to the revivals of the 18th century and is an invention of 19th century historians. Butler argues that the revival of the 18th century was neither great nor widespread, but was localized affecting primarily the Northern colonies.[2] Determining whether the 18th century revival in the American colonies was great and general or localized and scattered is beyond the scope of this paper. Whether generalized or localized both Tracy and Butler agree that the revival was driven primarily by the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. Concurrent with the revival in the Northern American colonies was a revival that was taking place in England also associated with the preaching of Whitefield and additionally John Wesley.[3]

Church historians acknowledge that Edwards, Whitefield and Wesley were powerful and effective preachers. Edwards was recognized as "the most powerful and most effective preacher ever heard on the America continent."[4] The praise for Whitefield is even grander: "We may accept the almost universal verdict that for dramatic and declamatory power he had no rival in his own age, and no superior in any age."[5] The praise for Wesley is more tempered recognizing that he was not "the most exciting or eloquent speaker of his time."[6] However, while people were not excited by his eloquence they were "moved by his vision of the Christian life and gospel of universal redemption."[7]

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the preaching of Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley in the context of the revival in both the Northern American Colonies and England between 1737 and 1743. In order to accomplish this task, ten sermons of each preacher written and delivered between 1737 and 1743 were randomly selected and examined. Analysis

focused on sermon structure, content, and evangelistic appeal. However, their sermons could not be analyzed solely within the context of 18th century revivalism. The sermons were also analyzed recognizing the context of the 18th century debate between Calvinism and Arminianism. Additionally, consideration was given to the spiritual journey of each preacher, in particular to his conversion experience since to some degree all theology is autobiographical.

The analysis of their sermons sought to respond to two primary questions:

1. What impact if any did the preacher's Calvinistic or Arminian theology have on his preaching style, sermonic content, and evangelistic appeal?
2. Why did the preacher's preaching spark a revival?

The paper will then conclude with some suggested homiletical lessons for today.

CALVINISM, ARMINIANISM AND THE "GREAT AWAKENING"

In 18th century England and her colonies all Calvinists were high Calvinists reflecting five point Calvinism. Following the Synod of Dort, a high Calvinist embraced the 5 points of: (1) total depravity, (2) Unconditional election, (3) limited atonement, (4) the irresistibility of grace, and (5) the final perseverance of the Saints. The majority of high Calvinists were also infralapsarians or sublapsarians.[8] In the American colonies during the 18th century high Calvinism was represented by Jonathan Edwards.[9] However, though he was a five-point Calvinist his own words challenge any assumption that he embraced everything Calvinistic:

> However the term "Calvinist" is in these days, among most, a term of greater reproach than the term "Arminian;" yet I should not take it at all amiss, to be called a Calvinist, for distinctions sake: though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines which I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in everything just as he taught.[10]

In his own self-assessment, Edwards reveals three telling considerations: (1) the tone of the debate in the 18th century between Calvinists and Arminians, (2) he clearly sees himself as a Calvinist, and (3) though willing to embrace the term Calvinist as a matter of distinction, he makes it clear that he did not necessarily embrace everything Calvinistic.

A closer examination of Edwards reveals that there were at least four areas in which Edwards went outside traditional Calvinistic confines.

Scholars would agree that Calvin's references to missionary/evangelistic endeavors are at best "scanty and vague."[11] Yet Edwards not only showed a missionary/evangelistic spirit in his own preaching, but he also was a supporter of Whitefield's intenerate preaching in the American colonies.[12]

Edwards' emphasis on a conversion or a "new birth" experience also went beyond Calvin. The same can be said of his advocacy of experiential religion and his use of emotional appeal in his sermons.[13]

John Wesley was an Arminian. In the early stages of the revival in England Wesley did not make Arminianism or Calvinism a focus of his preaching. However, in his letters he describes an experience that would ultimately cause a breach between himself and Whitefield. He notes on April 15, 1739[14] that he had written all morning on the subject of "free grace," and is vexed with uncertainty over whether he should go public with his thoughts. Finally Wesley resorted to casting lots and the message was clear, "preach and print." On April 26, 1739 Wesley penned the sermon "Free Grace" based on Romans 8. He delivered the sermon and subsequently published it. However, there is no record that he ever preached the sermon again even though some scholars such as Dallimore argue that this was the "most powerful and impassioned of Wesley's sermons."[15] In spite of the clear differences between his Arminian beliefs and the Calvinistic theology supported by Whitefield, Wesley would argue throughout his lifetime that on the issues of original sin and justification by faith there is not a "hair's breadth" difference between Wesleyans and Calvinists.[16]

In "Free Grace" Wesley emphasized two primary issues that led him to make a public stand against Calvinism. First, for Wesley, Calvinism makes preaching in vain. Wesley articulates, "It is needless to them that are elected. For they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore the end of preaching, 'to save souls,' is void with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected. For they cannot possibly be saved."[17] Second, Wesley argued that Calvinism destroys a zeal for good works.

George Whitefield was an Anglican minster and a former member of the "Holy Club" at Oxford with Charles and John Wesley. However, in contrast to both of the Wesleys, Whitefield was a Calvinist. Some historians have described Whitefield as a moderate Calvinist. Moderate Calvinism focused primarily on total depravity and the belief that all of salvation is a gift from God including the gift of faith.[18] During the heated debate with Wesley following Wesley's publication of "Free Grace," Whitefield temporarily aligned himself more closely with high Calvinism. The primary influence in moving him at least temporarily towards high Calvinism seems to be the writings of John Edwards of Cambridge. On the voyage from England to the American colonies in 1739 Whitefield read his works extensively.[19]

CONVERSION EXPERIENCES

Edwards, Wesley, and Whitefield all record emotional conversion experiences. Edwards describes his conversion to have begun with numerous encounters that caused a "sweet burning" in his heart.[20] The critical moment of conversion for Wesley came when in a time of contemplation his mind was overtaken by "a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God." Wesley describes his conversion in his journal:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt *my heart strangely warmed*. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.[21]

George Whitefield depicts his conversion in the following words, "O! with what joy—joy unspeakable—even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke upon my desolate soul!"[22]

ANALYSIS OF SERMONS PREACHED

The ten sermons of each preacher were written and delivered between 1737 and 1743 were randomly selected and analyzed. Analysis focused on sermon structure, content, and evangelistic appeal, discussed below.

Sermon Structure

All ten of Edwards's, Wesley's and Whitefield's sermons analyzed were deductive sermons structured along a series of three movements:[23]

1. A scripture passage is read followed by a detailed explication of the text.
2. A doctrine or theological axiom is drawn from the text.
3. An application is made.

The similarity in sermon structure is not surprising since the structure reflects the model of Puritan preaching in the British pulpit which was exported to the American colonies. Arthur Hoyt describes the structure of 18th century Puritan preaching in the following way:

The method of sermonizing was first to unfold the text historically and critically; then to raise from it a doctrine; then bring forward the proofs, either inferential or direct; then illustrate it or justify it to the understanding by the reasons drawn from the philosophy of the subject, or the nature of things; and finally conclude with an improvement by the ways of uses of inferences and timely admonitions and exhortations. These application, or uses and exhortations often formed the greater part of the discourse.[24]

Sermon Content

At a quick glance any differentiation in sermon content can be overlooked. Outside of Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace" and a few sermons by Whitefield delivered after 1739 while embroiled in the controversy with Wesley there seems to be little indication of the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism or Arminianism in their sermons. The focus of Edwards', Whitefield's, and Wesley's sermons are centered on ruin through sin, redemption through Jesus, and regeneration through the Holy Spirit. However, there are clear differences in how they express their messages of ruin, redemption, and restoration. Both Edwards and Whitefield expressed redemption and regeneration in the language of the elect. Whitefield's sermons focused on redemption and regeneration as exclusive gifts given to the elect. He notes, "God, as a reward of Christ's sufferings, promised to give to the elect faith and repentance."[25] Edwards' sermons included similar language. He writes, "But the effect will be exceeding different with different persons: to the elect their eternal salvation, [to] reprobates, everlasting condemnation."[26]

In contrast the term elect was not found in any of the sermons of Wesley that were analyzed. Wesley understood the implication of the word and what it implied to the audience and seemingly avoided its use to articulate that God's grace was free to anyone.

Evangelistic Appeal

All three preachers emphasized something that was new to preaching in the 18th century, namely the role of emotional appeal as an agent of conversion. The emotional conversion experience of Edwards, Wesley, and Whitefield may have influenced their belief in this area. However, it was also clearly theologically driven. Edward's believed that because of total depravity no degree of logic could ever reach man's inclination to sin. People needed to have their hearts touched in the sermon in order to open the door to conversion.[27] Convinced of the power of words to move affections, he carefully chose his words as he developed his sermon manuscripts. *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* is a classic example of his rhetorical genius in using verbal imagery through metaphor and descriptive adjectives to

stir the emotions of his hearers through a description of God's wrath and
hell's torment. It also is an example of his belief that because of humanity's
total depravity they could only be emotionally moved through terror or
humiliation.[28]

Like Edwards, Whitefield believed that logic could not reach man's
inclination to sin. However, Whitefield who favored an extemporaneous form
of preaching as opposed to Edwards' preference for manuscript preaching
centered his emotional appeal not on logos but on pathos expressed through
a creative form of delivery. Whitefield was known to weep, shout, and be
overcome with emotion in the delivery of his sermons. The response of the
audience was just as dramatic as he made them both laugh and cry.[29]

Like Whitefield, Wesley favored an extemporaneous preaching style.
However, unlike Whitefield who was noted for his emotional preaching,
Wesley was known for his calm dignity. Like Edwards his emotional
appeal was found in his words. However unlike Edwards who focused on
painting a picture of terror and condemnation in order to move the hearts
of his hearers, Wesley sought to move his hearers by painting a picture of
the grace and mercy of God. The difference is clearly a theological one.
Edwards focused on stirring the emotions through fear or terror because
his high Calvinism taught him, "Natural man cannot see anything of God's
loveliness, his amiable and glorious grace, or anything which could attract
their love; but they may see his terrible greatness to excite their terror."[30] In
contrast, Wesley's Arminian understanding of prevenient grace led him to
believe that human beings were capable of responding to and being moved
by the grace of God.

Preaching and Revival

All three men had different preaching styles. Edwards tended to
be a manuscript preacher and although Whitefield and Wesley were both
extemporaneous preachers Whitefield was an emotional preacher while
Wesley preached with calm dignity.

Edwards was a high Calvinist. Whitefield was a moderate Calvinist.
Wesley was an Arminian. Yet, the preaching of these three men with their
stylistic and theological diversity spawned a religious awakening. How
could men with such diversity accomplish the same thing? I would suggest
that The *Great Awakening* was a result of their commonalities and not their
differences that sparked a revival.

The content of their preaching though Calvinistic or Arminian
focused on the basics—ruin through sin, redemption through Jesus,
regeneration through the Holy Spirit. Such focus on the basics was a key
to sparking the *Great Awakening* through leading people to a conversion or
"new birth" experience.

Another commonality was the role of emotional appeal in their
sermons. From their own conversion experiences and their theological

understanding of the nature of man each preacher had come to understand that logic alone could not reach the human heart. The revival that was sparked by their preaching bears fruit to their premise.

A final commonality was their belief in the central role of preaching to conversion. However, their theological basis for its centrality differed among the preachers. For Wesley the centrality of preaching to conversion or "new birth" only made sense in an Arminian context. Preaching was a vehicle through which God initiates his grace that enables men or women to respond to him.[31] For Wesley Calvinism made the centrality of preaching null and void.

In contrast Edwards and Whitefield still saw the centrality of preaching within the context of their Calvinistic theology. They argued that God had appointed both those who would be saved and preaching as an instrument of salvation. Further they argued that since they did not know whom the elect or the reprobate were they by necessity must preach to both.[32]

THE SUBSIDING OF THE AWAKENING

One other possible insight emerged in studying the contribution the preaching of Edwards, Whitefield and Wesley made to the *Great Awakening*. Organization was not the strength of Whitefield. Thus he largely failed to provide follow up for new converts. In contrast, Wesley argued that a lack of spiritual oversight brought about the decline of the Great Awaking. Wesley insisted that converts be organized and built up in the faith. In fact if there were no societies in place for this purpose Wesley felt very strongly that no preaching should be done.[33] Was this contrast between Whitefield and Wesley solely a matter of personality and talents or did it also have a theological basis? Could it be that Whitefield's belief in the perseverance of the saints contributed to his lack of follow up? In fairness, it should be pointed out that Edwards did see some value in follow up and put some infrastructure in place for this, though clearly the infrastructure of Wesley was much more extensive.

SUGGESTED HOMILETICAL LESSONS

From this brief analysis of the preaching of Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley in the context of 18th century revivalism, some potential homiletical lessons emerge for revivalistic preaching in the 21st century. Preaching that ignites revival:

1. Is driven by a theology of preaching that sees the centrality of preaching to be the experience of conversion or "new birth."
2. Emphasizes the basics: ruin through sin, redemption through Jesus, and regeneration through the Holy Spirit.
3. Understands that logic alone will not reach the human heart

and thus the need to recognize the role of emotional appeal in preaching.

CONCLUSION

The preaching styles of Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley may not have been primarily influenced by their Calvinist or Arminian beliefs. Each preacher seems to have utilized his own individual preaching style to accomplish a similar purpose. Yet, in spite of their differences all three preachers had strikingly similar content. However, there appears to be a possible connection between the preachers' Calvinist or Arminian beliefs and the way they followed up with those who had a "new birth" experience as a result of their preaching.

This study has also shown that while preaching can spark revival, long-term care of new converts is needed. New believers require an organized system of discipleship that moves from new convert to maturing disciple.

NOTES

1. Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the time of Edwards and Whitefield* (Boston, MA: Tappan and Dennet, 1842), 1.

2. John Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,*" Journal of American History 69* (October 1982): 305-308.

3. Justo L. Gonzalez, *From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century,* A History of Christian Thought 3(Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), 316.

4. News for Christians: Library of Classic Sermons, "*Jonathan Edwards (1701-1758),* http://www.newsforchristians.com/classics.html (accessed October 1, 2010).

5. Charles Horne, *The Romance of Preaching.* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1914), 249.

6. Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century.* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 27.

7. Ibid.

8. The doctrine advocates that God decreed both election and reprobation before the fall.

9. Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate.* (Whitmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1987), 36.

10. Paul Ramsey, ed., Freedom of the Will. The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 131.

11. Charles Chaney, *Reformed Review* XVII (1964): 25.

12. George C. Claghorn, ed., *Works of Jonathan Edwards,* vol. 16 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 80. "You are one that had the blessing of

heaven attending you wherever you go."

13. Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Rival Tradition in its British Context.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 81.

14. John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley,* vol. 1 (London: The Epworth Press, 1931). 302-303.

15. Dallimore, 27.

16. John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley,* vol. 4 (London: The Epworth Press, 1931). 298. He utilized this analogy in a Letter to John Newton, 14 May, 1765.

17. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Eds.), *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 52.

18. Coppedge, 38.

19. Ibid, 53.

20. Jonathan Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light," In the *Works of President Edwards*, vol. 4 (Leavitt and Allan, n.d.), 4:443

21. E. C. Barton, *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley,* vol. 1 (Lodon: Epworth Press, 1938), 475-476.

22. Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century,* vol. 1 (London: Billing and Sons Limited, 1970), 77.

23. Edwards' sermons: The Sorrows Of The Bereaved Spread Before Jesus; The Means And Ends of Communication; God's Grace Carried On In Other Places; Youth Is Like A Flower That Is Cut Down; Mary's Remarkable Act; Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God; Seeking After Christ; The Importance And Advantage Of A Thorough Knowledge Of Divine Truth; Gospel Ministers A Savor Of Life Or Of Death; Mercy And Not Sacrifice.
    Wesley's sermons: The First-Fruits Of The Spirit; The Spirit Of Bondage And Adoption; The Righteousness Of Faith; Free Grace; The Almost Christian; Scriptural Christianity; Christian Perfection; Awake Thou That Sleepest; Salvation By Faith; The Way To The Kingdom.
    Whitefield's sermons: Walking With God; Christ the Believer's Husband; Thankfulness For Mercies Received, A Necessary Duty; The Great Duty of Family Religion; Christ the Best Husband: Or An Earnest Invitation To Young Women To Come And See Christ; The Potter And The Clay; Abraham's Offering Up His Son Isaac; The Temptation Of Christ; The Folly And Danger Of Not Being Righteous Enough; The Seed Of The Woman, And The Seed Of The Serpent.

24. Arthur S. Hoyt, *The Pulpit and American Life* (New York: MacMillan, 1921), 12-13.

25. Whitefield's Sermons, "The Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent," http://www.reformed.org/documents/whitefield/WITF_001. html (accessed September 4, 2010), 6.

26. Henry S. Stout and Nathan D. Hatch (Eds.), *Jonathan Edwards' Sermons and Discourses 1739-1742,* vol. 22. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,

2003), 207.

27. Crawford, 86.

28. Robert Doyle Smith, "John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards on Religious Experience: A Comparative Analysis," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, from http://evangelicalarminians.org/node/301 (Accessed on October 7, 2010), 1.

29. Clarence Edward Macartney, *Six Kings of the American Pulpit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1942), 31-34.

30. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards.* (London: W. Ball, 1839), 833.

31. Kenneth J. Collins, *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 126-128.

32. Coppedge, 90.

33. Dallimore, 27.

PREACHING WITH AUTHORITY
WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE IT

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ABSTRACT: The authority which preachers were granted in previous generations has gradually disappeared. Pluralism, hermeneutical shifts, and the impact of visual communication has contributed to this demise, leaving them to wonder how much authority they have. Proclaiming God's Word with a new authority can be accomplished in the twenty-first century when pastoral responsiveness is demonstrated and appropriate communication skills are utilized.

INTRODUCTION

"Question Authority." Though I saw this bumper sticker for the first time several years ago, it reappears every so often while driving on the interstate or walking through a parking lot. After not seeing one for some time, I recently came across another one and figured the owner had never removed it from his car. But it wasn't faded or scratched. It looked new. "Question Authority" was back. Or maybe, it never left. As I watch the evening news, issues of authority continue to present themselves and I'm surprised revised stickers have not appeared advocating "Question Authority More Than Ever," or perhaps, "Defy Authority."

Am I being facetious? Certainly. But I'm not off base because authority is being questioned, challenged or defied by people from all walks of life. Whenever authoritative leadership is exercised in families, schools or government, rather than acquiesce it is not unusual for people to respond by saying "wait a minute" or "I disagree." Authority is not perceived as something to embrace but to cast doubt upon or confront when deemed necessary. Throughout history, leaders have used their authority for numerous reasons and in many instances, for self-serving and destructive purposes. As a result, it can be seen as limiting, oppressive, dehumanizing and an unjust exercise of power because it is understood that no person, group or tradition can speak authoritatively for all people.

"Question Authority" is heard in our churches as well. Congregations have fallen victim which should not come as a surprise when leaders behave

in sinful ways. Peruse a recent edition of *Christianity Today* and you should not be shocked to find a report of a major denomination in the midst of conflict, sexual abuse on the mission field, or the mishandling of church finances. You wonder how churches which affirm God's authority can have such tarnishing incidents. "Hypocrites" is the shrill cry of the outsider. You can understand why people are not eager to join our ranks. Should you expect someone to embrace what you are not practicing yourself?

However, the questioning of authority characterizes churches even when holiness, integrity and faithfulness are evident. Leaders are doing their jobs with excellence and zeal. Ministry is being accomplished. Lives are being transformed. Heaven is rejoicing and you would think earth would be too. Still, leaders are having their authority tested. Instead of confidence and support, there are questions, challenges and scrutiny. In previous generations, a certain authority was inherently granted to clergy. However that authority has been slowly shrinking to the size of congregational expectations. The winds of cultural change are not only blowing outside our churches but have made their way into the house of the Lord.

Before we start wringing our hands in fretfulness and dismay, let's not forget history has a way of repeating itself. This questioning of authority is nothing new. The Corinthian church was squabbling over apostolic authority and Paul had to plead with them so as to avoid greater divisions within their ranks. In 1 Corinthians he writes: "One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.'" Paul does not claim any personal authority in this conflict and instead points to the cross to underscore their folly and declares, "we preach Christ crucified."

QUESTIONING AUTHORITY

Where does this questioning of authority leave men and women as they stand in their pulpits? They are in unfamiliar places because the security of being recognized as a person of influence has been ebbing away. David Buttrick aptly describes the situation:

> Traditional Protestantism rests on a working model of authority involving Word and Spirit, but the synthesis of Word and Spirit has collapsed, torn apart by cultural splits between reason and feeling, between so-called objective and subjective truth. No wonder we struggle in a crisis of authority! Of course, Catholics are facing many of the same problems in discussions of the role of tradition. Let us be emphatic: We wrestle not with particular notions of "authority," but with the whole authority model per se.[1]

Likewise, Fred Craddock states in *As One Without Authority* that "no longer can the preacher presuppose the general recognition of her authority

as a clergy, or the authority of her institution, or the authority of scripture."[2] So if you think people are listening on the basis of ministerial position, you are naively mistaken. The authority which may have been granted in another generation has been replaced by questioning, suspicion and in some instances, disrespect. Instead of attentively sitting with Bibles open, waiting to hear what you have to say, people may be slouching in the pew with arms crossed against their chests. Doubts and skeptical comments are swirling inside their heads. As Will Willimon states, "American culture now determines the boundaries of the church's speech."[3] It is a new day in which to preach! Craddock believes understanding this new context is critical and states that "unless recognized by the minister and met with a new format, his sermons will at best seem museum pieces" [4] Consequently, you should remind yourself the next time you take your place behind the pulpit on a Sunday morning that you are not necessarily standing with the authority of yesterday.

Against this backdrop, we are called to preach, convinced the gospel is "the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:18). But how? Can it be done in this juncture in history? What authority do we actually have? Must we compromise our preaching? Does it need to be reduced to a pious dribbling of thoughts so as to not offend anyone? Or are we just supposed to express our doubts, musings and questions in the hope that a responsive chord is struck and someone might happen to have a transformational experience?

I believe biblical authority is foundational to preaching. But my conviction is not necessarily shared by the people who sit in our pews on Sunday mornings. Do I want men and women to trust in the authority of God's Word? Absolutely. Is it my desire that individuals listen with open minds and hearts for their spiritual welfare rather than challenge what is spoken? Again, yes. But not everyone is at the same place. While confidence in Scripture is at the core of my life, I dare not assume the same with my listeners. Nor should I take for granted that people respect my authority (or it has been given in the first place). Declarations such as, "The Bible tells us," or "The Lord said" does not improve anyone's listening skills but may work against me, causing others to perceive me as a threat rather than someone worth hearing. Even careful exegesis and impassioned preaching may be counter-productive when perceived as pulpit bullying.

As a servant of God's kingdom, I am committed to the authority of the Scriptures and submit to its clarity as well as its mystery. When preparing to preach, I rejoice in the Word's timelessness and power. But in the back of my mind I am still asking, "How much authority do I really have?" In Matthew 28, Christ said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (v.18). His words are my marching orders and He has promised me the ability to carry them out (v.20). But how much authority is mine? While the Lord has all authority, I only have some. Just how much authority in an anti-authority world is the question.

THE DEMISE OF AUTHORITY

What dynamics have contributed to this gradual demise of authority? What developments have led to this challenging environment? Three streams of influence are at the core of the crumpling – pervasive pluralism, hermeneutical uncertainties, and the power of visual communication. Though these influences should not dictate how clergy craft and deliver their sermons, neither can they be ignored. To proclaim God's Word in the twenty-first century with sustaining effectiveness necessitates accounting for these dynamics.

Pervasive Pluralism

Over the years, I have been involved in conversations with individuals who bemoan the changes in our society. The comfort of a Christianized society is eroding before their eyes. They feel strangely irrelevant in a world they believe ought to be their own. They recognize that people no longer sense an obligation to belong to a religious community or that they are even supposed to believe in God. When I share my thoughts of pluralism becoming more pervasive in the future, they nod in agreement but remain displeased.

But pluralism is nothing new. It has existed for centuries. God's people have frequently found themselves in diverse settings, and not surprisingly, doing well in many instances. When called, Abraham was promised that he would be blessed and his name made great among the nations. The Israelites were surrounded by numerous gods while enslaved in Egypt. Unfortunately, Moses had to continue to deal with these deities during the Exodus because instead of leaving them behind, the Israelites brought them along. Elijah confronted the priests of Baal and prophets of Asherah on Mt. Carmel when he called down fire from heaven. While in Babylon, Daniel stood firm while surrounded by a plurality of gods. Peter confessed his allegiance to Jesus against the backdrop of Roman polytheism. At the Areopagus, Paul openly preached to the Greeks with their deities surrounding him. And so for the people of God to find themselves situated in a pluralistic setting (and prospering) is not without precedent.

Accompanying this rise of pluralism has been what Peter Berger refers to as "a concomitant loss of commonality and/or 'reality.'"[5] What was once considered to be real is not necessarily viewed in the same way. Historically, the established groups of society (i.e. churches) existed as monopolies and were legitimized by their ability to exercise some degree of societal control. But as Berger writes with Thomas Luckmann, pluralism has helped "undermine the change-resistant efficacy of traditional definitions of reality."[6] Reality, as we have known it, has changed and will only continue to change. Christianity is not as dominant as in previous generations. Ronald Cram offers that we live not in the world of Christianity but "Christianities"

which have "become just one sect among many, without a position of privilege or prominence."[7]   Furthermore, with the increased immigration of people from around the world with different worldviews and value systems which clash with the established order, it is not difficult to foresee the continued collapse of the hegemonic systems of the past.[8]

So what is pluralism?   Assigned a wide range of meanings, it is a philosophical perspective which emphasizes diversity rather than homogeneity, differences instead of sameness, and multiplicity over unity. Nicholas Rescher defines it as "the doctrine that any substantial question admits of a variety of plausible but mutually conflicting responses."[9]   For Os Guinness, pluralism is "a process by which the number of options in the private sphere of modern society rapidly multiplies at all levels, especially at the level of worldview, faith, and ideologies."[10]   Advocates contend there is no reality "out there" and even if there is such a reality, it cannot be known or experienced because reality is always perspectival and subjective.   Truth can only be known from one's vantage point and is limited by previous understandings and personal experiences.   Such socially constructed perspectives and ideologies are nearly impossible to harmonize and as Berger and Luckmann contend "encourage both skepticism and innovation and (are) thus inherently subversive of the taken-for-granted reality of the traditional status quo."[11]

This widely-encompassing system offers a major challenge to preaching because it contends "any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong."[12] This understanding embraces positions united in their rejection of not only objective truth but even its possibility.   "The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism.   No religion has the right to pronounce itself right or true, and the others false, or even (in the majority view) relatively inferior."[13]   In a society such as ours with innumerable voices, a plethora of worldviews is inevitable.   As awkward and problematic as it may be to live alongside of one another, tolerance is not simply preferable but essential.[14]

Historically when our nation seemed not as diverse, the dominant culture was still quite tolerant.   Acceptance was given to different people groups even though it was perhaps done grudgingly.   The thinking was along the lines that as Americans we should tolerate immigrants and diverse social groups with their strange ways for reasons that are beneficial for everyone. Justice may or may not have entered the equation.   Tolerance was offered because the advantages were perceived to outweigh the disadvantages.   As a result, the edges of the status quo got smudged so as to include people who were considered more "other" than "us."   Over time, movements at the fringes of society have grown and multiplied so that the "others" are now considered mainstream and diversity has become a way of life.   With the continued global influx of people, the establishment has had to bend even more.   This development is welcomed by many, resisted by some, and begrudgingly accepted by others.   Regardless, pluralism is the reality and

tolerance is deemed a price worth paying, especially if the alternative is intolerance.[15]

Unfortunately, this shift does not end with acceptance. Tolerance has taken on new meaning. Whereas it once meant respecting the differences that exist between people, tolerance has evolved to mean "a dogmatic abdication of truth-claims and a moralistic adherence to moral relativism – departure from either of which is stigmatized as intolerance."[16] In other words, if I am to be truly tolerant then I must jettison my convictions about God's truth.

This shift should lead us to ask if tolerance has gone too far. Is there a limit? After all, is not Christianity about truth that is grounded in history? Meic Pearse states:

> Where the old tolerance allowed hard differences on religion and morality to rub shoulders and compete freely in the public square, the new variety wishes to lock them all indoors as matters of private judgment; the public square must be given over to indistinctness. If the old tolerance was, at least, a real value, the new, intolerant "tolerance" might better be described as an antivalue; it is a disposition of hostility to any suggestion that one thing is "better" than another, or even that any way of life needs protected space from its alternatives.[17]

The implications are frightening. It means people, including the ones sitting in our pews, will not believe the exclusivity of the gospel. They will not recognize pseudo-spiritualities or be offended by anti-Christian ideas. Donald Carson comments: "No matter how wacky, no matter how flimsy their intellectual credentials, no matter how subjective and uncontrolled, no matter how blatantly self-centered, no matter how obviously their gods have been manufactured to foster human self-promotion, the media will treat them with fascination and even a degree of respect."[18] Sadly, people's thinking will indiscriminately flow with the crowd. They will not be discerning enough to recognize the foolishness but tolerant to the point of amalgamating spurious and heretical ideas with orthodox doctrine.

Not only is tolerance advocated in pluralistic settings but openness is expected. In order for the quest for truth to continue, openness must prevail. To this point, Allan Bloom comments:

> Openness – and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings – is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and of culture teaches that the entire world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not think you are right at

all.[19]

      With such openness, there is no possibility of making a truth-claim because if you venture to offer one, you are no longer open. Openness is hostile to assertive claims. Anyone who affirms the absolute nature of God's truth is looked at with disbelief and bafflement. As a result, I may feel intimidated to make a biblically-grounded statement (and do so with conviction). I can be made to feel as if I've come from another universe by the ways people respond. It isn't that I do not have well-examined and deeply-held beliefs but I am out of sync with a world advocating tolerance (and not tolerating anyone who sounds the least bit closed minded and intolerant).

George Hunsberger states:

> Christians imagining any form of direct public assertion of the Christian message do not have to be told that it will meet with a cloud of questions about its legitimacy. Besides pushing them toward silence, the atmosphere erodes the strength of their own inner conviction that the Bible's account of things can be taken to be a valid option for construing the world.[20]

      In other words, I may be uncomfortable believing with the certainty as I did in the past because as Fred Craddock states "those who speak with strong conviction on a topic are suspected of the heresy of premature finality."[21] I can still believe (and I do) but common sense tells me to be tentative. Any claim to factuality needs to be qualified or tempered and perhaps, is best held as a private opinion. If I find myself thinking this way, I am cowering to pluralism's pressure to be tolerant and open. And if so, can I preach with any sense of authority?

Hermeneutical Quagmire

      A second challenge to our authority in preaching is hermeneutical. As a field of study, there are numerous theories. Johnson Liem writes:

> Theories of how to interpret texts abound in today's world. They can be inspiring yet frustrating. Inspiring, because they give you a base to work from, yet frustrating because we are suffering from theory overload syndrome. Another danger is that theory has displaced the study of literature itself and ends up becoming an exercise in ventriloquilism! Without our realizing it, instead of theories becoming our servants, they have become our masters. Theories currently advanced seem to raise more questions than provide answers and more problems than solutions. In the end they claim too much but fail to deliver what they promised just like

historical criticism.[22]

Consequently, preachers who desire to be faithful in their proclamation can feel as if they are plodding through a hermeneutical quagmire. Without question, discovering the meaning of a passage can be very demanding. Hermeneutics is complex. It is an art, science and spiritual activity. Where one begins and another one ends is not easily discerned. Questions abound and simplistic answers are not sufficient. For instance, who "produces" the text? Is it the author? Is the Holy Spirit responsible as 2 Timothy 3:16 suggests? How about the reader or the faith community itself? If so, what is the relationship between the author and reader(s)? Or perhaps, does the text independently "produce" meaning?

History is a reminder that variety has characterized hermeneutical approaches. Interpretations have run the spectrum from orthodox to heretical. They have been spurious, interesting and laughable. During medieval times when hermeneutics was characterized by allegory, passages were thought to contain potentially as many as four meanings with some being far-fetched and improbable. With this profusion of misleading meanings, it is understandable why the Reformation scholars rejected the allegorical approach and employed the *sola scriptura* principle to guide their hermeneutics. Of this shift, Martin Luther remarked: "No violence is to be done to the words of God, whether by man or angel; but they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids, lest we give our adversaries occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures."[23]

The Reformers' emphasis on the clarity and understandability of the Bible led to the idea that not only did the Word of God have a plain sense but anyone could grasp the basic meanings. In His graciousness, God accommodated to human capacities and whatever limitations existed, they were not insurmountable. So with their Bibles in hand and as John Calvin would contend "the inward testimony of the Spirit," interpretation was possible for everyone.[24]

With the rise of higher criticism during the 19th century, the Bible's authority was increasingly being questioned. Rather than statements being taken at face value and considered as trustworthy, scholars called for the reconstruction of the actual events. What were the facts behind the recorded data? They argued what happened is not necessarily what is recorded. Biblical texts are reflections of the writers' interpretations of events or what they understood someone to have said. During the 20th century, scholars continued in this quest and argued the accounts are true, partially accurate, questionable or erroneous. The need was for interpreters to get behind the reported world of the text to the actual occurrences and words. Today, liberal scholars continue to engage in Bultmann-like searches to demythologize the stories and make them more realistic and acceptable. Their research may appear oppositional to an evangelical approach but not necessarily because

they share a common goal of discovering the meaning of the text by entering the worlds of such characters as Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jesus and Paul. Though their conclusions may differ widely, their intentions can appear much the same.

Knowing the mind and heart of God is at the heart of preaching. Understanding the reasons behind a narrative, poem, prophecy or epistle is crucial to the task. What was the context? Who was involved? How did the events unfold? What was the author seeking to achieve with his audience? Hermeneutics is a discipline which must be done with integrity, diligence, wisdom and sensitivity to Spirit of God. However the hermeneutical quagmire is thick because culture is shifting or as a postmodernist might say, we do not know things quite like we used to know them. Whereas the hermeneutics of modernity believed that ideas could be known, contemporary approaches reflect the pervasiveness of pluralism. Individuals are more willing to be inconclusive and are not especially concerned about authorial intent. With this type of hermeneutic, there is not necessarily a point to ascertain but several points worthy of consideration. Patrick Slattery writes:

> Historical, textual, artistic, and autobiographical interpretation in the postmodern era all acknowledge a double-edged dimension of clarity and ambiguity in hermeneutics. However, unlike modern empiricists who demand unbiased certainty and scientific proof, postmodern scholars celebrate the irony of interpretation by recognizing that ambiguity is integral to the human condition and the natural world. Postmodern hermeneutics affirms the primacy of subjective understanding over objective knowledge and conceives of understanding as an ontological (study of being) problem rather than an epistemological (study of knowledge) problem.[25]

This approach is not author-centered but reader-focused.[26] Though a writer's words have value, the emphasis has shifted to the readers who are to "mingle" themselves with a text. In so doing, readers are capable of producing their own meanings. Instead of our being transformed by God's Word, Anthony Thiselton states texts "suffer transformation at the hands of readers and reading communities."[27] He says: "Readers may misunderstand, and thereby misuse them; they may blunt their edge and domesticate them; or they may consciously or unconsciously transform them into devices for maintaining and confirming prejudices or beliefs which are imposed on others in the name of the text."[28]

The significance of this shift cannot be over-emphasized. It takes the authority of God's Word and places it in the hands of the interpreter or faith community. But is this shift warranted? Is it valid to some extent? From one perspective, this shift should be welcomed because the words of the author can become the reader's words. As a message had an impact on its recipients in the past, it should create a similar response today. When

prophets declared their messages, they expected responses consistent with their words. As Paul addressed problems in the churches, he was not making suggestions but calling for godly obedience. Clearly, he expected them to act according to his instructions.[29] Quite simply, there was correspondence of meaning.

Regarding this relationship, Kevin Vanhoozer writes:

> "Understanding" is still the end of the interpretive process, though the means to that end involve active reader participation. Reading is . . essentially an obedient activity. Its aim is to let the author and the text manipulate the reader so that he or she gradually comes to experience and adopt the ideology (the worldview) of the text. Again, the emphasis is squarely on understanding, on discovering and embracing the ideology of the text.[30]

But as Thiselton wrote, biblical texts are being altered or "suffer transformation" by their readers to mean things their authors never had in mind. As E.D. Hirsch states: "Unless there is a powerful overriding value in disregarding the author's intention (i.e. original meaning), we who interpret as a vocation should not disregard it. Mere individual preferences would not be such an overriding value, nor would be the mere preferences of many persons."[31] He continues:

> To treat an author's words merely as grist for one's own mill is ethically analogous to using another man merely for one's own purposes. I do not say such ruthlessness of interpretation is never justifiable in principle, but I cannot imagine an occasion where it would be justifiable in the professional practice of interpretation. The peculiarly modern anarchy of every man for himself in matters of interpretation may sound like the ultimate victory of the Protestant spirit. Actually, such anarchy is the direct consequence of transgressing the fundamental ethical norms of speech and its interpretation.[32]

This anti-authorial approach is reflected in the writings of Jacques Derrida who states a text is "no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network a fabric of traces, referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces."[33] Dana Fewell and David Gunn offer a similar deconstructionist position when they write: "Meaning is not something out there in the text waiting to be discovered. Meaning is always, in the last analysis, the reader's creation, and readers, like texts, come in an infinite variety."[34] In regard to postmodern education, William Doll writes: "Meaning is not extracted from the text; it is created by our dialogue with the text. Thus, the difference

between the author's historical situation and our own is a necessary and productive difference."[35]

Walter Brueggemann reflects this approach also and states the Bible "requires and insists upon human interpretation, which is inescapably subjective, necessarily provisional and inevitably disputatious."[36] Then he proposes an interpretive rule that "all of our interpretations need to be regarded, at the most, as having only tentative authority. This will enable us to make our best, and most insistent claims, but then regularly relinquish our pet interpretations and, together with our partners in dispute, fall back in joy into the inherent apostolic claims that outdistance all of our too familiar and too partisan interpretations."[37]

Craddock seemingly wants to join the reader-focused chorus and remarks that with inductive preaching "the listener completes the sermon."[38] He writes:

> Now it is customary to say that the congregation completes the sermon, but usually what this means is that the preacher has told the people what has to be done and then they are to implement it. What is here suggested, however, is that the participation of the hearer is essential, not just in the post-benediction implementation but in the completion of the thought, movement and decision-making within the sermon itself. The process calls for an incompleteness, a lack of exhaustiveness in the sermon. It requires of the preacher that he resist the temptation to tyranny of ideas rather than democratic sharing.[39]

Within this challenging hermeneutical context, how are men and women who are committed to the authority of God's Word supposed to preach? Does this epistemological shift undermine their preaching? William Larkin correctly asks:

> . . . how can evangelicals intelligibly and effectively express and commend the message of a Bible which claims to speak eternal and universal truth? When the reigning paradigm says the interpreter is decisive for the "weaving" of meaning, how are evangelicals, who have always affirmed authorial intent, recoverable from texts as the locus of meaning, going to describe the interpreter's relation to the production of meaning? Within an epistemological framework, which sees interpretation as a participatory "give and take" between text and interpreter, how do evangelicals, known for their commitment to Scripture as the primary authority, practice a hermeneutic which will permit the Bible to exercise its full authority?[40]

The hermeneutical quagmire only gets deeper with Paul Ricoeur

who takes a mediating position between the objectivism of authorial-intent and the subjectivism of reader-response and calls for the autonomy of the text. "Writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant; henceforth, textual meaning and psychological meaning have different destinies."[41] In other words, the mere activity of writing about an idea or describing an event alters the author's intent. Ricoeur states: "With writing, the verbal meaning of the text no longer coincides with the mental meaning or intention of the text. This intention is both fulfilled and abolished by the text, which is no longer the voice of someone present. The text is mute."[42] As a result, he proposes: "The sense of the text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden, but something disclosed. What has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what points towards a possible world . . understanding has less than ever to do with the author and his situation."[43]

In seeking to understand a text's meaning, Ricoeur distinguishes two types of hermeneutics that imply distinct, even opposing stances toward the text. In *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, he writes of the reader approaching the text with great respect and trying to listen conscientiously to discern its message. This approach he terms "a hermeneutics of restoration." Subsequently, as a reader utilizes a second hermeneutic, he or she is able to come to the same text but with suspicion and attempt to demystify its claims so as to arrive at the truest meaning. Ricoeur refers to this approach as "a hermeneutics of suspicion."[44]

But why this double hermeneutic? Ricoeur insists: "The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading. The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer. It (text) thereby replaces the relation of dialogue, which directly connects the voice of one to the hearing of the other."[45] And what is the result of this dual approach? There is a surplus of meaning. There is not one meaning or message in a text but several which Ricoeur refers to as a "principle of plenitude." So when preaching, our sermons "should exploit the layers and possibilities of the surplus of meaning in texts as much as possible to help hearers in their various interests and needs, in a way that people can identify themselves with different persons . . "[46]

In this Ricoeur is attempting to free the Bible from fundamentalist, objectivizing interpretations as well as culture-bound, subjectivizing ones by asking the reader to listen attentively to what the Bible states. His remarks have merit because human knowledge is limited and perspectival. However, interest-free reading is not entirely feasible because everyone filters information through existing beliefs. Understandings are formed in unrecognized, uncriticized and powerful ways. We can read the Bible with a rigidity and spiritual smugness that tends to freeze passages in their historical context. But when texts are approached with a degree of suspicion, it may force us to delve into them in fresh ways so as to more fully grasp the author's

intention. In so doing, we may be surprised by our pre-understandings and biases, and startled out of complacency.

However, Ricoeur's belief in a text's autonomy and insistence on openness must be questioned. If a passage is open to a reader's understanding, then is one response as good as the next? Does it mean that readers determine the meaning? Furthermore, the Bible calls for historically grounded and informed responses. When God's truth is being considered, people cannot be allowed to establish meanings based simply on their interactions with the text. Because words mean something to one person, it does not follow that the same words mean the same thing to another person. In *Divine Discourse*, Nicholas Wolterstorff gets at the heart of the matter. "The issue is whether one's conclusions are correct, whether they are true – whether the discourser did in fact, by authoring or presenting this text, say what one claims that he said."[47] In essence, history cannot be dismissed because of distance. If the facts are undeniably true, they are to be embraced and applied regardless of time or circumstances. Any reader's response cannot be arbitrary. The text controls the response, not vice versa.

In summary, we live in a world of hermeneutical uncertainty which as Larkin contends leaves us with the challenge to frame "a meaningful and convincing concept of biblical authority in an age which has no certainty to which that concept can be lashed." And he offers "it must be done to a generation weary and wary of authoritarianism, in fact a generation definitely unwilling to submit to any authority which it has not first corrected according to its own liberation agenda."[48]

Visual Communication

A third challenge to our authority in preaching is the impact of visual communication. Whereas pre-modern history can be described as aural/oral and modernity as literate, postmodernity has been termed the electronic age in that it is an era which is dominated by images.[49] Emery Tang describes the situation:

> Ours is a post-literate world, which means that the printed word no longer monopolizes communications. This is in fact an image-saturated culture a visual age in which photography, television, comic books, and the motion picture holds sway. Without taking undue pains to prove it, I am safe to say that all of the communications media are pervasive in their consequences, whether personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical or social; that they leave no aspect of us untouched, unaffected or unaltered.[50]

One could argue Tang's comment is outdated, in that communications are beyond post-literate, and we have passed into a world where we are continually gazing at digitally formed images. Through advanced

information processing, we have created a "'hyperreality' . . (which) looms larger than life, a brilliant improvement over the mundane natural order of things."[51] Through advanced information processing, we have been allowed "to overcome and displace the naturally occurring world insofar as we are able to produce an artificial universe that is more brilliant, pliable and rich."[52] Quentin Schultze may be closer to the truth regarding visual imagery when he states it has become "the primary language of our day (which) draws together people of all ages, races, genders and classes."[53] Regardless of the nuances in their understandings, the reality is that images are powerful. Images are not just a way of communicating thoughts but a means of actually shaping them. And images challenge the authority of our words.

Consider the power of images. They are bright and dim, stunning and subtle, conspicuous and cleverly concealed. Drive down Main Street, glance through a magazine, watch a video, or stroll through the shopping mall and your senses are bombarded with image-laden messages, the effectiveness of which is seemingly becoming more powerful over time.

In his discussion of sermon development, David Buttrick uses an analogy from the film industry. He writes:

> In an earlier era, movie directors worked with a fixed-location camera and moved actors around in front of the lens. Once upon a time the procedure was considered reality, but now when we view old films on late-night TV, they seem stilted and quite unreal. Today directors use a camera on a moving boom so that camera angles change, lenses widen or narrow, distances vary, imitating the actual way we perceive reality. Moreover, directors match the complexity of human consciousness by filming daydreams, memories, apprehensions, and the like. Thus, with different lenses and shifting camera angles, film makers give us an awesome sense of the real. While modern cinematography may have influenced our modes of perception, more likely it has followed from alterations in human consciousness.[54]

Marshall McLuhan predicted in the 1960s that we would be saturated with these sensations which would then "reshape personal lives as well as restructure social interdependence."[55] Perhaps more than we realize, his words are being fulfilled. The image manipulations of the media tell us what to think, feel and do. The result, Larkin fears, is people becoming even more indifferent to authority and opting for "laid back 'surface' lives of depthlessness . . governed by simulated images about reality."[56] And what was of greatest concern to McLuhan is that any medium had "the power of imposing its own assumptions on the unwary."[57]

But how is it that visual communication is able to have such far-reaching influence? How is it that images are so obviously and insidiously powerful? Could it be as Pierre Babin suggests we have stopped thinking?

He writes:

> A certain kind of thinking is losing ground: thinking that stresses precise ideas, exact wording and rigorous knowledge. Young people today prefer evocative and symbolic language to precise formulations of faith. This preference makes them at home with the new language of audio-visuals.[58]

Michael Warren adds that messages coming from images are more acceptable because "they fit in with a culturally produced ethos, with a way of life and habit of thought that has emerged among people over time."[59] Messages are received because "the production and communication of images themselves helped create the very ethos that makes them acceptable, partly because the suggestive power of the visual images is compounded by the mimetic tendency in all persons."[60] Visual communication has created a new reality has become the lens through which we receive our new information.

However we are not discerning enough to recognize the extent of influence. We are unable to filter the good from the bad, the righteous from the unrighteous, the healthy from the harmful. As Schultze states, we are not image-savvy. "We must contend with an image-saturated yet largely image-ignorant society. Our lives are image-intense, and undoubtedly movies and commercials have an enormous impact on young and old alike. But at the same time we are not very astute about how images communicate."[61] Instead of filtering messages, we are absorbing. When we should be at odds with the assumptions and values of certain images, we are not discerning enough to respond appropriately and consequently, images have come to be our new authority.

Consider the power of images.[62] Drive by an automobile dealership to take a look at the new models. You have seen them on several television commercials but you want to see them for yourself. They are bright, shiny and sleek. You are enticed and begin to rationalize why you should have one. Your mind and heart have been captured. Only the reality of the sticker on the window stops you! Or perhaps a cereal commercial flashes across the screen and though you are not told its nutritional value, trim physiques and bright smiles communicate it would be good to pick up a box the next time you are shopping. Though you are not salivating in the aisles, you are headed for the cereals and are not too concerned about the carbohydrates. And during a hotly contested political election, you are inundated with commercials filled with images to get you to vote for a candidate (or against his opponent). What does the candidate stand for? You are not sure but the message is obvious. You are being manipulated by images and "sold" a candidate without him articulating his stance on a political issue.[63]

What is the result of the visualization process? In what ways does it have an impact on preachers who are so dependent on words? First, Ellul contends words are being "humiliated." They are losing their commanding

presence. Knowledge is not something obtained by laboring over texts or through active dialogue but gleaned through polished and unobtrusive images. Paradoxically, these images are ambiguous and clear. They are obvious and extremely subtle. Ellul writes in *The Humiliation of the Word*:

> Thus the image contains within itself a deep contradiction. It is not ambiguous: it is coherent, reliable and inclusive; but it is insignificant. It can have innumerable meanings, depending on culture, learning, or the intervention of some other dimension. For this reason I must learn to see, before looking at the image. After seeing it, I must learn to interpret it. The image is clear, but this clarity does not imply certainty or comprehension.[64]

Our understanding of images is highly subjective. One person interprets the image one way, another might construe it differently. Images signify what we want. Consequently, meanings can be as numerous and diverse as the audience because "images leave the viewer, not with carefully crafted ideas and precepts but with impressions (which) function to allow the viewer to construct one's own interpretation."[65]

Second, we should not be naïve because images are not innocent but can be quite biased. Image makers can create or structure their communication so people will be led to see what they want. Piguet and Morel observe: "The structure of a picture is the result of the producer's selection of technical means to portray specific elements of reality. In the final analysis, structure is 'what has been chosen for us to see.' It is objective fulfillment of a personal plan or design."[66] What is the result? Ultimately, as Walter Ong states, it will lead to a "transformation of consciousness."[67]

Not only are people being humiliated and manipulated by images as Babin suggests they are being destructured. The process takes place imperceptibly but irresistibly and they become "fragmented" people. Piguet and Morel state: "We crumble into fragments because everything we see on television, everything we hear on the radio, and everything we read in magazines comes to us piece by piece, without any logical connections – an advertisement, a song, a catastrophe, a report, or the pope's blessing."[68]

Accompanying the destructuring and fragmenting, Babin believes another consequence is externalization. Through images, the media exercises its authority and causes us to conform to societal or group norms. In a print-dominated world, the situation was significantly different. Sequential thinking, mental engagement, and a sustained attention span were more common. For instance, a person would read in private and would be alone with himself and his thoughts. In contrast, visual presentations offer little room for being with oneself. Information comes rapidly and "with minimal effort on the part of the viewer, who becomes part of the communal mass mind."[69] Consequently, we become "deaf to the voice speaking in our innermost depths. We live 'outside' ourselves. Being 'in' has replaced

'being.'   In the language of Jesus, we have gained the world but have lost our soul."[70]

     This shift toward visual communications has an impact on people's ability to listen to verbal communications.   Historically, preachers have depended on such rhetorical devices as repetition, allusions to the Bible, and exhortations. Though such means remain useful, Thomas Troeger states, they lack "what television has conditioned the congregation to expect: immediacy, vividness, and a fast-paced plot."[71]   This knowledge-through-imagery development should be alarming to clergy.   Truth and misinformation, Scriptural and unbiblical ideas can be spread with ease. Engaging the mind is not required to shape thinking, feelings and actions.

     But of greatest concern is the potential of abandoning God's Word. Again, Ellul states:

> In this connection the most unthinkable reversal takes place: when all of Christianity is based only on the word, and the word is accepted as the Word of God than can be expressed only by the human word corresponding to it, then the contempt and abandonment of this human word inevitably signifies abandonment and contempt for the Word of God. By allying itself with images, Christianity gains (perhaps!) efficacy, but destroys itself, its foundation, and its content. In reality nothing is left to say – not because the word is false but became images have emptied it of meaning.[72]

CONCLUSION

     In response, how should preachers deal with the preponderance of images? Can we begin to compete with their power? In this regard, John Stott states:

> We have a colossal task on our hands if we hope to counteract the baneful tendencies of much television. We can no longer assume that people either want to listen to sermons, or indeed are able to listen. When they are accustomed to the swiftly moving images of the screen, how can we expect them to give their attention to one person talking, no frills, no light relief and nothing else to look at?73

     In light of these shifting realities, I am convinced biblical preaching is not only possible but essential for the people in our churches and a world in need of a truth-filled message. I concur with Scott Gibson who writes: "The Bible is self-authenticating. By the power of the Word through the Holy Spirit these God-breathed words change the lives of men and women. If we preach it, we will not be put to shame."[74]

     Can it be done is not the question. The issue is how are we to go about our task? How are we to preach to a generation "unwilling to

submit to any authority which it has not first corrected according to its own agenda?"[75] Appropriately responding is more than a challenge but integral to our mission.

NOTES
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2. Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority* (rev.) (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 14.
3. William H. Willimon, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 50.
4. Craddock, 15.
5. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday), 135.
6. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 125.
7. Ronald H. Cram, "The Future of Christian Religious Education in the Era of Shrinking Transcendence," *Religious Education* 96:2 (2001): 170.
8. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter Berger states religious ex-monopolies can no longer take for granted the allegiance of their client populations. Since allegiance is voluntary and less certain, traditions which previously could be authoritatively imposed must now be "marketed" and "sold" to a clientele that is no longer constrained to "buy." See 127-153
9. Nicholas Rescher, *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 79.
10. Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 93.
11. Berger and Luckmann, 125.
12. D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 19.
13. Ibid.
14. I am not suggesting pluralism is without value. In many instances, it should be celebrated for the richness it offers society. God brings diverse people together for redemptive purposes as evidenced in the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3).
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16. Meic Pearse, *Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. 32-33.
19. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Soul's of Today's Students* (New York:

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20. George Hunsberger, *Catalyst*, 30:4, (April 2004).

21. Craddock 11.

22. Johnson Liem, "Contemporary Hermeneutics: Bane or Boon? *Evangel*, 20:3 (2002): 70.

23. Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, Works of Martin Luther 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 189.

24. John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 1.7.4.

25. Patrick Slattery *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* (New York: Garland, 1995), 105-106.

26. A seminal work on authorial intent and reader response is W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *Sewanee Review*, 54 (1946). The article argues the intent of the author is irrelevant and the meaning of a text is assigned by the reader.

27. Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 31.

28. Ibid.

29. Regarding the relationship of authorial intent and divine authorship, see Michael A. Bullmore, "Re-examining Author's Intent: The Nature of Scripture, Exegesis and the Preaching Task," Unpublished paper presented at the Evangelical Homiletics Society, October 1996.

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31. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976), 90.

32. Ibid. 91.

33. Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 84.

34. David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell (*Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University, 1993), xi.

35. William E. Doll, Jr., *A Post-modern Perspective on Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), 135.

36. Walter Brueggemann, "Biblical Authority," *Christian Century*, 118:1 (2001), 16.

37. Ibid.

38. Craddock 64.

39. Ibid.

40. William J. Larkin, "Culture, Scripture's Meaning, and Biblical Authority: Critical Hermeneutics for the 90's," *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 2 (1992): 173.

41. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981), 139.

42. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*

(Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 1976), 75.

43. Ibid. 87.

44. See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1970), 20-36.

45. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 147.

46. Gijsbert D.J. Dingemans, "A Hearer in the Pew: Homiletical Reflections and Suggestions," in *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture*, eds. Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 44.

47. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University), 1995, 181.

48. Larkin 177.

49. For an overview of the history of communication, see Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

50. Emery Tang, "Understanding the Listener as a Movie-Goer," *Preaching*, 2:5 (1967): 28.

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54. Buttrick, 55.

55. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 9.

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59. Michael Warren, "Images and the Structuring of Experience," *Religious Education*, 82:2 (1987): 247.

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64. Ellul 8.

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FROM EVERY TONGUE, TRIBE AND NATION

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Revelation 7:9-17

INTRODUCTION

John's description is vivid and powerful: "There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from very nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the lamb" (Rev. 7:9). Whenever I hear these words my mind goes to an event I witnessed just a few years ago. For those of us who were there it is perhaps the closest we will come to this great scene, this side of glory.

It occurred at the Lausanne Gathering of 2010 held in Cape Town, South Africa. More than 4,000 Christian leaders of all ages and callings had come from 185 countries. It was a marvelous experience. On the final night there was a processional with delegates representing many countries of the globe carrying banners, dressed in either white or national dress. Accompanied by a 400-piece choir and orchestra from South Africa, we together sang that great hymn of the Church, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name." We had interacted together all week across national, ethnic, language and denominational boundaries. We had experienced the power of God's Spirit and a unity like few had ever known.

The chills went up and down our spines as we sang the final verse: "Let every kindred, every tribe on this terrestrial ball, to Him all majesty ascribe and crown Him, Lord of all." That is the kind of scene described in Revelation 7.

When people encounter the book of Revelation they tend to think of future things. But it is important to remember that this book is not just about the future; and certainly not the way some have treated it, turning the book into a religious horoscope to discover every detail of the world to be. Much of this book can only be understood in light of what was going on at the end of the first century as John penned it, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, on the Island of Patmos. Much of Revelation can also be read against the backdrop of what is happening in our world today, and what happens in every generation. Thus, it has great relevance for the present.

Revelation, the apocalypse, is an unusual book to be sure. It is filled with strange objects: seals, scrolls, flying creatures, beasts, trumpets, dragons and the list goes on. I've often thought that Steven Spielberg, the American film director, writer and producer would have a hey-day with all of the effects in a movie on this book.

BACKGROUND TO CHAPTER 7

Chapter of 7 of Revelation is a portrayal of two great multitudes. The first is described in verses 1-8 and the second in verses 9-17. The first great multitude is depicted in verse 4, "Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel." The text goes on to list 12,000 sealed from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. We should note, however, that the tribe of Dan is not listed, but is replaced by Manasseh, normally part of the tribe of Benjamin. In the Old Testament Dan is frequently associated with idolatry, and perhaps these folks had forfeited their rightful place in the list.

All kinds of wild, imaginative ideas have been generated over the identity of the 144,000. But it is best to see it as a number of fullness and completion. Some have taken this first multitude to in some manner portray the literal nation or people of Israel. Others believe it is pointing to the New Israel, the Church. However one might interpret the identity of this group, they are portrayed as coming from the same people, "the tribes of Israel."

When we get to the second multitude in verses 9-17 the symbols, numbering and attendees change. For now there is a gathering of a great multitude, too vast to number. They come from every nation, tribe, people and language.

THE SCENE OF CHAPTER 7

It is an incredibly moving scene with both future and present ramifications. John writes:

> After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (vs. 9-10).

The first thing I notice about this scene is that the very things that normally divide people have somehow been subdued in this great act of unity and worship. To the list of nation, tribe, people and language we could add culture, race and ethnic group. These are of course realities that give identity to people here on earth. They are moreover good gifts of God.

Without nation, tribe, people and language it would be difficult for us to exist on this planet. Along with identity, they provide individuals a way of seeing the world and symbols (i.e. language) to make sense of reality and communicate with each other. They provide cohesion for social groupings.

But in our fallen world these good gifts get used in corrupted ways and divide us, often tearing us apart. Nations historically take on power as if they were ultimate, and thus history is the story of war after war. Tribes have historically often become insular, protective of their own turf, and thus vehicles for great conflict. People, language, culture, race and ethnicity frequently take on a disproportionate importance, far beyond what God ever intended. All of these realities tend to divide—pull us apart. They incline us towards unbridled nationalism, ethnocentrism and overt racism.

But here in the scene of the great multitude those points of friction have given way to a profound unity. The people are together around the throne worshipping God. They are filled with joy and a greater sense of purpose than any nation, tribe or people could ever give them.

How is a gathering of such diverse peoples possible? First, it is clear that it has nothing to do with their own native prowess, inclinations or capabilities. They are there because they've been washed in the "blood of the lamb." The worshippers are wearing "white robes" v. 9, a symbol of cleansing. They have been made right with God and hence reconciled to each other through the work of Christ.   Verse 14 notes, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This great, diverse multitude is not gathered because of national, tribal or linguistic identity. They are there because of the finished work of Christ the Lamb on the cross.

A second reason this gathering of diverse people is possible is their engagement in a vital common activity: the worship of the Lamb. Their liturgy is rehearsing the grandeur and worth of almighty God:

> They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (vs. 10-11).

This stands in stark contrast to the kinds of worship frequently taking place on earth. For our worship is too often centered in the very realities they are overcoming in their worship: nation, tribe, people and language.

The reason John is writing in this unusual apocalyptic language is that there is great opposition and persecution occurring in the world of that time. Apocalyptic is a kind of symbolic code for hard times. One of the greatest pressures upon first-century Christians was emperor worship:

worshipping the nation and the key symbol of the nation. The empire was saying to early believers, "Yes, you can have your religion, but only if you first worship the nation to maintain peace and cohesion throughout the empire." That is why in Revelation 13 the state is portrayed as the beast, a symbol of its clamoring for dominance and worship.

But here in Revelation 7 in place of idolatrous worship they gather around the throne in praise of the God of all creation, redemption and a final consummation. And unlike our worship today, this worship unifies rather than divides. There is today great division over this matter of worship, as people go from church to church looking for a worship style that "fits me." Granted, we all worship with particular styles. There is to be sure no such thing as a cultural worship, and we all have proclivities towards certain forms and cultural expressions in our worship. But frequently these forms are great barriers and causes for division within the body of Christ. In contrast, around the throne the multitude from every tribe, nation, people and language is united in worship. In verse 9 they are holding palm branches, a symbol of either victory or peace. In either case the old divides, divide no more.

There is a third reason that the multitude can gather in this way. They have found their ultimate satisfaction in life through the Lamb, also depicted as a shepherd. In Him they have found the great source of life, meaning and hope:

> They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (vs. 15-17).

There are great gifts of common grace that God gives to humanity through nation, tribe, people, language, culture, race and ethnicity. Being a Christian does not mean turning our back on these good gifts. Rather, it means saying "no" to their idolatrous enticements. Above all it means that they are not our primary sources of satisfaction or our ultimate hope. For here it is Christ, the Lamb and the Shepherd, who protects, feeds with imperishable food, and guides us to the right places for living water. And it is this God who will bring consolation when life or death seem grim, unforgiving and impossible to face.

The God being worshipped at the throne, the Triune God of the universe, our God, is the source of everything we need in the midst of life's greatest challenges. This God will wipe away every tear and meet the deepest longings of the human heart.

APPLICATION

So what do we make of this powerful scene around the throne? What possible implications does it have for us and for our time?

We should note that this scene is not just portrayed as a gathering at the end of time in heaven, or for the consummation of Christ's Kingdom. This was the scene envisioned as the Hebrew story began to unfold with the call of Abraham in Genesis 12: "I will make you into a great nation…. And all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (vs. 2-3). Later God shows Abraham something akin to the great multitude gathered around the throne: "He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be' "(Gen. 15:5).

The great scene of Revelation was foreshadowed when God called Jonah to be a prophet to Nineveh—a secular, decadent Gentile city. It was a sign that people could come to God from every nation, tribe and tongue. And of course we know that Jonah wasn't sure he liked that prospect.

This is the scene portrayed by the prophet Isaiah: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, and a calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them" (11:8).

This is the scene portrayed at the nativity when wise men from the East, not privy to the prophetic Word such as Isaiah, came and worshipped the Christ in the manger.

And this is the scene of Pentecost in Acts 2:

> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galatians? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome…; Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (vs. 5-11).

And this is the scene that God expects to be displayed among His people today as we live, work and worship together. Given the kind of world we live in today, a global village with so much access to each other, I believe that God expects it now more than ever. Revelation 7 is not just about a future gathering. Our Lord expects that in this world and in our time, from every nation, tribe, people and language we stand before the throne and the Lamb, crying out in one voice, "Salvation belongs to our God."

It is certainly not easy to achieve this kind of unity on this side of glory. After all, as we've noted, our nations, tribes, people and language are

good gifts of God. We all at times enjoy the wonderful times of fellowship, learning and worship in our own mother tongue and culture. Those expressions are reminders that the Gospel can be incarnate, expressed and lived out in the particulars of all cultures. It is therefore not all bad that we each are drawn to a particular style of worship reflective of our own culture.

But if our entire Christian experience is lived in that fashion, we will not experience the reality that one day awaits us. We will be cut off from the tremendous growth that we each can experience by gathering around the throne together. And our witness to the world will be thwarted without the unity embedded in the Revelation 7 experience. The key is that in some manner the Church of Jesus Christ, and each of us as the Body of Christ, begin to reflect in our relationships, our life together, our worship, our learning experiences and our fellowship something of that moving scene around the throne. And by the way, we should never expect that such experiences in this world are always going to look and sounds just like me.

CONCLUSION

Part of the reason that processional in Cape Town, South Africa was so powerful was that we all knew the context in which we were experiencing it. Just a few years before such a gathering together of every nation, tribe, people and language would have been nearly impossible in South Africa. We all knew that the evil, distorted theology of apartheid in that country was the exact opposite of what we were witnessing that night. We new it was the very opposite of the great scene of Revelation 7 of which we sang.

My hope and prayer for each of us is that we will be growing in our anticipating of the event around the throne; that we will be living it as we await its full coming. We do so not to be politically correct or to make ourselves feel good about what we have accomplished. We do so to reflect the reality of the Church in the twenty-first century, and to reflect the way we will one day worship and fellowship for all eternity.

BOOK REVIEWS

Preaching & Preachers, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. 40th Anniversary Edition, edited by Kevin DeYoung. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011, 978-0-310-33129-2, 346 pp. $14.39.

Reviewer: *Kenneth E. Bickel, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana*

Reading the insights of a great biblical expositor provides both a learning and a devotional experience. Immersing yourself in the 40th anniversary edition of *Preaching & Preachers* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones provides just such an opportunity. The fact that this edition also includes reflective essays on the life and teaching of Lloyd-Jones from six respected and contemporary preachers only enriches the undertaking.

While I would not agree with all of the opinions offered by Lloyd-Jones, I can agree with the multitude of individuals who have been favorably moved by his passion for preaching and his commitment for sound exposition of the biblical text. He spoke of preaching as "the most glorious calling" and asserted "without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching" (17). Those are lovely words to the ears of homileticians.

One issue with which Lloyd-Jones dealt touches on a very contemporary movement. In an online post, one of my students recently commented, "There appears to be a growing trend (especially in West Coast churches) that preachers must be more like facilitators and not be monologists. If this were the case, then the Sunday morning/Saturday evening time would be more like a Sunday school class rather than preaching." Apparently, a generation ago, voices expressed similar ideas in Lloyd-Jones' hearing. The author's sentiments are made clear. The proclamation of biblical truth by an individual with spiritual authority will always remain a necessary responsibility of the local church (58).

While Lloyd-Jones has long been connected with the careful teaching of God's Word to God's people, it is refreshing to read of his consistent (that is, virtually weekly) commitment to preaching evangelistically. To fail to do so, in his opinion, is to fail to recognize that some of the people in the pews who think of themselves as Christians, in actuality, need to come face-to-face with the gospel message. He spoke of the tendency to overlook that as "the most fatal blunder of all" (159).

One opinion put forth by the author touched a resonating chord with me. Many voices advocate mapping out a program for preaching that

covers a year in advance. While I do not think for a minute that is wrong, it is not something I have ever been inclined to do. Lloyd-Jones obviously felt strongly about the idea. "We must not be in control of this matter; we must not decide in cold blood, as it were, what we are going to do, and map out a programme, and so on. I am sure that that is wrong" (203). His admonition made me feel a bit better about my indolence in the matter.

I also resonated with the emphasis he packed into the declaration, "Stories and illustrations are only meant to illustrate truth, not to call attention to themselves" (244). I appreciate those preachers who are careful to use illustrations, the primary purpose of which are to shed light on the biblical truth, not to draw attention mainly to the illustration or story itself. I agree with Lloyd-Jones that to use illustrations and stories simply because of their inherent attractiveness is to lift up entertainment higher than exposition.

Lloyd-Jones showed his genius when he spoke against preachers endeavoring to be eloquent in their preaching. He stated clearly, "I would lay it down as a rule that the preacher should never try to be eloquent; but if he finds himself becoming eloquent then that is of great value, and it can be used of God" (250). Those are wise words. The primary endeavor is to present biblical truth clearly and concretely, with passion and authority. If, by doing so, the preacher achieves a measure of eloquence, so be it; it is a gift from God, not the product of a direct effort on the part of the preacher.

The essays provided by the six contemporary preachers are engaging and valuable. Those who take preaching seriously would find them appealing. They not only highlight insights that reflect well on Dr. Lloyd-Jones, and also give honor to one who served the Lord and his word tirelessly and devotedly for many years (many tempestuous years) when people needed to hear biblical truth taught faithfully. People still have the same need. We do well to hear Lloyd-Jones' voice calling to us.

Moral Formation according to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics. James W. Thompson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011, 978-0-8010-3902-7, 256 pp., $24.99.

Reviewer: *Caroline Buie, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

James W. Thompson, Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies and associate dean of the Graduate School of Theology at Abilene Christian University, believes that traditional theological discussions use Pauline epistles to focus on the concept of justification by faith, the age-old debate concerning how an ever-loving God redeems mankind. To Thompson, the discussion ends there, often overlooking the main feature of Pauline writing,

namely, Paul's concern for the moral formation of newly budding churches and his goal to present them to God as "blameless" at the parousia (ix). His book is timely since the topic of spiritual formation has become a hot topic in contemporary Christian quarters.

Thompson hopes to dispel several tensions that arise when viewing Paul through a theological lens that only pursues an explanation for justification by faith. He convincingly answers the following questions. How can God, who offers salvation by faith alone, demand ethical behavior based on human initiative (4)? Why does Paul neglect to offer a comprehensive code of conduct (5)? If mankind's sinfulness is so dire, how can he achieve moral formation? Is the believer under the law (6)? Were Paul's ethical demands distinctly Christian, or did he borrow from the ethical cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman world (6)? Does Paul write in response to situational ethics for each church? (7). What is the source and connecting tie of Paul's ethics (9)? How does *agape* love, the Spirit, and law shape its content (11)?

Pastors will benefit from a straightforward presentation on information rarely included in Pauline discussions. He analyzes the ethos of brotherly love reflected in Jewish pseudepigrapha such as Tobit, 4 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, and Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (22–35). Thompson shows that the Jewish ethical ethos nourished and provided the basis for the nascent churches, but that Paul's hope for the church strove to move beyond an ethnic identity such as Israel. Instead he strove to develop a "fictive" family from two vastly different cultural backgrounds that shared the same quality of love that Christ demonstrated on the cross (56, 62).

Thompson also contrasts Pauline moral formation with the ancient Greek understanding of virtue. Greek philosophers relied on knowledge and reason to produce the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice. While these were honorable quests, the Greek hope was to produce *eudaimonia*, self-incurred human flourishing, instead of the Christian hope which produces humility that projects God's glory (7, 59, 62).

Thompson then develops his work through exegetical treatments of ethical instruction in Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles. It is through this exegetical work that Thompson builds his case that Paul's ethics are uniquely Christian, designed to transform two people groups into one loving, forbearing unit, motivated by the cross of Christ for the purpose of promoting God's glory. Moreover, this fictive family is the locus of the Spirit, the vehicle of the power of grace who helps to not only develop virtuous behavior lauded in both the ancient Jewish and Greek cultures, but, in addition, virtues that transcend all earthly definitions (151–158).

Pastors and seminary students will find that this volume offers a unique exegetical perspective since Thompson hovers close to the text, treating each passage as proof for the theological argument that Paul's

interest was mostly concerned with moral formation. However, a more thorough discussion on the role of the Spirit and a comparison of Jesus' ethics were missing and would have added another dimension to his argument and helped the overall theme of spiritual and moral formation. On the other hand, perhaps this is warrant for another volume.

Pastors who hope for help with developing contemporary application from the ancient text will be disappointed. In the introduction, Thompson offers a disclaimer that this volume is not intended to answer every ethical question current society might pose (ix). Indeed, Thompson's intent is to explain Scripture, a necessary step in sermon development.

Overall, this book is one to which students of Scripture will often return for exegetical expertise and insight. Thompson's argument is compelling, his information unique and helpful, and he reminds his readers that Paul's letters maintain a unified, cohesive message of the moral formation that characterizes a new group of people who represent Jesus Christ and who share the quality of *agape* love demonstrated through His death on the cross.

Proclamation and Celebration: Preaching on Christmas, Easter, and Other Festivals. By Susan K. Hedahl. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012, 0-8006-9820-1, 168 pp., $20.00.

Reviewer: *Gregory K. Hollifield, Victory University, Memphis, TN*

Susan K. Hedahl, the Herman G. Stuempfle Chair of Proclamation of the Word at Lutheran Theological Seminary, writes *Proclamation and Celebration* out of a liturgical context primarily for sake of preachers who use the Revised Common Lectionary (hereafter, RCL). The author's stated thesis is "that preaching well the doctrines of the principal festivals, inclusive of their rich history, is essential to theologically sound, yearlong lectionary proclamation of the mysteries of our faith" (3).

The book's "Introduction" defines the "principal festivals" as "the six major festivals that trace the historical genesis and ongoing revelation of God's reign in the world in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The festivals, in chronological order, are Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and Holy Trinity" (1). Hedahl views these festivals as the "hub that creates, inspires, and defines the established church and its pastoral work: theology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, evangelism, and pastoral care" (6). Thus, instead of succumbing to the all-too-common temptations to view Christmas and Easter as unwelcome interruptions to their independently devised preaching calendars, little more than isolated Sundays laden with potential for evangelizing biannual

visitors, or, worse, convenient occasions for turning the worship hour over to the choir, Hedahl would have the reader view all six festivals as a "theological anchor that orients the entire church year" (3) and as assertions of what constitutes orthodox Christianity (4).

"Doctrinal proclamation," defined in the introduction and further clarified in chapter one, is the author's prescription for festival preaching that merely recounts the historical details of the day's selected pericope, engages in pointless story-telling, or settles for "inane, listener-friendly versions of the biblical text or forms of response that are only self-justifying ethical quietism" (17). Such proclamation as called for by Hedahl attempts to connect the contemporary audience with the timeless theological message(s) embedded in each Gospel pericope by pointing out in each the "ongoing revelatory work of the Holy Spirit to humanity concerning God" (13). In short, those attending the festival sermon should not be made to feel that the story is over when the sermon ends but ongoing, that the doctrines of the text remain vital today reminding us of God's presence among us and our place in Him.

The book's remaining chapters (2–7) explore each of the principal festivals by addressing (1) their history, (2) one or more of the Gospel pericopes in the RCL pertaining to each festival, and (3) the intersection of doctrinal and cultural issues addressed in those pericopes. Throughout her analyses Hedahl quotes from numerous sermons across the ages, concentrating especially on those delivered between the first and eighth centuries when many of the church's foundational doctrines were being hammered out. These quotations prove fertile soil for illustrations, sermon titles and ideas, and insight into how preachers across the years have handled doctrines associated with the festivals. Notably absent, and that by design (11), are any homiletical strategies for constructing sermons linked to the doctrines suggested by the RCL's pericopes.

Proclamation and Celebration is a helpful introduction for readers outside the liturgical traditions to the six principal festivals as understood by one from within. Only those sharing in the author's tradition can accurately judge whether her book addresses a glaring need in its festival preaching today. Given the overall historical, biblical, and theological illiteracy of the contemporary Western church, one feels safe in assuming that all preachers might profit from Hedahl's work, especially its historical sections tracing the origins and evolution of each festival. Certainly, the call for doctrinal proclamation is one with which heralds in all traditions can agree. Those readers who turn to the book looking for a collection of practical steps to effective holiday preaching, however, will be sorely disappointed. Likewise, those committed to the arduous task of discerning a pericope's authorial intent in development of a "big idea" sermon will appreciate Hedahl's biblical insights to flavor their preaching, but will shy away from her tendency to

focus on textual details for a superimposed purpose—albeit, a seasonally appropriate doctrinal one.

❧

Preaching Death: The Transformation of Christian Funeral Sermons. By Lucy Bregman. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011, 978-1-60258-320-7, 255 pp., $24.95.

Reviewer: *R. Larry Overstreet, Northwest Baptist Seminary (retired), Winona Lake, IN*

Looking for effective ways to minister to the bereaved, or to communicate God's truth empathically during funeral sermons? If so, this book will not help. On the other hand, if you desire to understand how Mainline American Protestant churches have significantly shifted in their attitudes toward death, dying, and bereavement from the beginning of the 20th century to today, then this book is exactly what you want. Lucy Bregman, professor of religion at Temple University, traces the "momentous shift from what Christians used to say about death, and what they say now" (4).

Bregman argues that prior to the 1950s, American Protestant funerals were in the "death is natural" era. Funerals had the primary purpose to worship God, and funeral sermons emphasized "the transition from this life to the life beyond" (20). Comfort during times of bereavement was found through a Godward focus. She demonstrates that funeral sermons in the first half of the 20th century emphasized four specific themes, each of which focused on preaching to the "future dead," rather than to mourners of the dead. A common theme was that of "heaven as home," with parallels drawn between our earthly home and the better heavenly. Another theme was "heaven as journey," as evidenced, for example, by the widespread use of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar." The theme of "natural immortality" was also common, with universal acceptance that at death the immortal soul continued on in God's presence. The final theme she considers is that of "the Lord's will." Funeral messages emphasized that every death, even untimely deaths of small children, were in God's will.

As Bregman details these themes she shows how a critical change in attitude took place as Americans moved toward "silence and denial." This approach began in the late 1940s, grew in the 1950s and 1960s, and reached its greatest influence in the 1970s, as exemplified in the Hildegarde Dolson murder mystery, *Please Omit Funeral*, which asserts that funerals are barbaric and should be generally avoided. These were the times when people did not want to focus on death. "Walt Disney and Pablo Picasso were so death avoidant that they refused to hear the word 'death' spoken in their presence"

(114). This denial of death was accompanied with "the corresponding suppression of anger and guilt and pain" (205). The purpose of a funeral in such a climate was varied. Clergy generally continued to see it as a time for worship. The family, however, saw it as meeting psychological needs. The wider Christian "community" receded into the background.

These transitions were all influenced by the new theologies developing in the 20th century. Bregman advocates that Barth and Brunner strongly influenced thoughts concerning death. Their ideas culminated in John A. T. Robinson's *In the End God*, which argued that "because the only true focus of Christian eschatological hope is God's universal reign, no message regarding personal death is necessary" (130). Alongside those developments was that of Oscar Cullman who considered death an enemy; and Jesus, who was afraid of death, achieved resurrection which is victory over it. To Cullman, death is dreadful and "we are morally obligated to oppose it, always and everywhere" (144).

With the growth of the pastoral counseling movement, funerals once again changed direction, specifically from the 1990s onward. The death awareness movement stressed that funerals be designed to help people through the various grief stages. This required funerals to "do right by" the deceased which was the best way to "leave everyone with a sense of completion if never happiness" (164). This has led to the "triumph of the biographical," where the funeral's purpose is to remember and commemorate the deceased. The funeral should celebrate the life of the dead person, and look at how the "circle of life" has closed. If any poetry is read at a funeral, it is written specifically to honor the deceased, usually by a family member or friend; it serves as an emotional event. There may be some mention of what comes after death, but that is not the focus of a funeral sermon. Indeed, many contemporary funeral sermons have no Scripture text whatever, only anecdotes about the deceased. Bregman finds this a deficient approach, and suggests that funeral sermons make more use of a "lament" pattern, as exemplified in the Old Testament Psalms.

Bregman's observations explain much of what we see in contemporary funerals, even in evangelical circles, and for that reason this book is worth reading. She observes that a funeral should make "death mean something, [and] that connects us emotionally and spiritually with a full vision of Christian faith" (223).

❧

What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering and the Crisis of Faith. By Thomas G. Long. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 978-0-8028-6514-4, 172 pp., $25.00.

Reviewer: *Blayne Banting, Caronport Community Church, Caronport, SK*

What is a preacher to say in the face of catastrophic evil and suffering in a world that was created "very good"? In the face of the "unfairness" of personal suffering in the lives of congregants, what can the preacher say, if anything at all? Should preachers muffle their innate tendency to say something, even inane, and opt simply for a ministry of caring presence? Veteran homiletician Tom Long suggests an alternative as he addresses the issue of theodicy from a pastoral perspective. Rather than dealing with theodicy from a detached, philosophical perspective, Long delivers "a work of homiletical pastoral care" (xiii).

Long identifies theodicy as a modern issue, using the great earthquake in Lisbon, November 1, 1755, as his benchmark. This geological shift seemed to correlate with similar philosophical shifts that could call into question for the first time the goodness or power of God. He makes a quick survey of the various expressions of the issue of theodicy from Hume onwards, but his main concern is to address belief in a loving, sovereign God in light of evil and suffering. Long introduces the classic and contemporary approaches to theodicy (e.g. Kushner's dualism, process theology, free will, and soul building) as voices in the conversation and finds strengths and weaknesses in them all.

No treatment of theodicy is complete without a treatment of the book of Job, which Long addresses in an extended interlude. His interpretation of Job depends heavily on literary approaches which gives irony pride of place in getting to the message of this ponderous work. His conclusions are quite different from traditional understandings of the book but quite thought-provoking nonetheless.

Long lends his own voice to the conversation in the final chapter. His approach is summed up in the Latin phrase *solvitur ambulando* ("it is solved by walking") (115). Long is eclectic and pastoral in his approach, using the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds in Matthew 13:24-30 as his scriptural guide. He acknowledges that the planting of the "weeds" is the devil's doing, although he identifies Satan as "a symbol of a deep theological truth—namely, that the evil we experience in history is more than the sum of its parts and transcends logical explanation" (134). Our own attempts to rectify the planting of these 'weeds' are futile and indicative of human ignorance and arrogance. Long concludes with a picture of inaugurated eschatological hope where God's loving power is expressed in the seeming powerlessness of the crucifixion and the hidden nature of the Kingdom of God.

Long is a master wordsmith and the book is an invigorating and inspiring read. He does not interact with any characteristically evangelical voices in the conversation and his conclusions regarding the identity of Satan call for other voices to come to the table. However, Long has contributed well to the conversation and encourages us all to add our own contributions. While we may feel we have something to teach him about the identity of

Satan, he may well have something to teach us about the sovereignty of God.

<p style="text-align:center">∞</p>

The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann. By Walter Brueggemann. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011, 978-0-664-23445-4, 366 pp., $30.00, hardback.

Reviewer: *Matthew D. Kim, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA*

Spanning a period of some forty years, *The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann* represents a paragon of sermons preached by a legendary scholar of the Old Testament. Walter Brueggemann taught Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, for many years, and has written numerous books related to biblical studies and the church. In this recently assembled volume, he provides preachers and homileticians with sixty-seven sermons that broach various biblical genres and themes related to the Christian life.

The book opens with a stimulating foreword by Samuel Wells, former Dean of Chapel at Duke Divinity School and a subsequent piece entitled, "Reflections on Walter Brueggemann's Preaching," written by Rebecca J. Kruger Gaudino, one of Brueggemann's former students at Columbia Theological Seminary. Gaudino astutely observes the following about Brueggemann's homiletical craft using his words: "preaching is 'an act of human imagination rooted in divine self-giving' that opens up our lives, granting a spaciousness both joyous and challenging" (xxi). Indeed, as one reads Brueggemann's collection of sermons, he or she will likely come to a similar conclusion that strands of imagination and images play a significant part in his homiletical thought and practice. In fact, in the preface, Brueggemann lays out his conviction about what he believes preaching is: "I understand preaching to be a process of layered imagination (xxiii)" whereby the preacher and listeners embark on a joint exercise of "imagining" the biblical text together.

Each sermon is based on one or more texts from lectionary readings. Readers will quickly notice that his sermon titles are clever and captivating. For example, he titles a sermon on Nicodemus from John 3:1–17, "A Nighttime Gnaw and a New Possibility" and another "The Church with a Middle Name: 'West...'Water and Vegetables'…Minster'" from Daniel 1:3–21 and Romans 12:1–21. Brueggemann seamlessly interweaves biblical ideas from up to four lectionary texts per sermon. It should come as no surprise that his depth of insight with respect to biblical interpretation in these sermons is both rich and provocative. His sermons also display an array of illustrations

from ancient and contemporary cultures and issues in novel ways.

One limitation regarding his sermons is that, in general, due to his evident penchant for imagery and his expansive knowledge of biblical studies, they tend to favor a more academic and "heady" side of sermonic practice and therefore lack some identification with a more rustic, bluecollar employment of language and humor. Similarly, one concern that I extend is that the main idea of his sermons may not always embody the main idea of the Scripture passage(s) at hand. At times, Brueggemann's yearning to communicate cogently with particular images and imagery can overshadow what I believe the original author intended to convey in the central idea of the pericope(s) and passage(s).

A final, general observation is that while collections of sermons are published as tributes and are meant to expose the reader to a wide range of sermons from a distinguished preacher, they are not necessarily meant to be read in one or two sittings. This reviewer's recommendation would be to use this volume as a form of spiritual formation for preachers and homileticians who are seeking to feed their souls and to be refreshed for yet another season of preaching and ministry. Overall, there is much to absorb from Brueggemann's collection of sermons. It represents a stimulating and earnest expression of what preaching can be, from an astute scholar in Old Testament studies.

<div style="text-align:center">✑</div>

Men of One Book: A Comparison of Two Methodist Preachers. By Ian J. Maddock. Eugene: Pickwick, 2011, 978-1-60899-760-2, 256 pp., $30.00.

Reviewer: *John Koessler, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL*

The names of John Wesley and George Whitefield are forever linked as the dynamic duo of the evangelical revival of the eighteenth-century in England and America. In his helpful and scholarly comparison of their preaching, Ian J. Maddock notes that there were also significant differences between these two pulpit giants. Both extended their preaching ministry by resorting to field preaching after some initial reluctance. Maddock notes that Wesley in particular had to overcome "significant personal reservations regarding the propriety of field-preaching" (69). But once this step was taken, each felt commissioned by God to preach in this way.

Despite this shared commitment, Wesley's preaching style differed markedly from his friend and colleague George Whitefield, partly due to differences in their background. Whitefield's sermons were more dramatic, both in tone and in content. This involved impassioned delivery and a preference for biblical narrative. Wesley's approach was less dramatic,

relying more upon content than style for its impact. The difference between them is epitomized in William Parke's comparison of the two evangelists, which Maddock quotes: "Crowds were deeply affected by Wesley, but by his words rather than his manner of utterance, by his appearance rather than any style. He cultivated no acting method" (76). Whitefield employed artistic license and speculative conjecture to bring the Bible's stories to life for his audience (135). He appealed to the senses with his vivid description and acted out the stories in a theatrical style.

Although both men saw themselves as evangelists who followed in the tradition of the apostles, Wesley was an organizer as well as an orator. He saw a need for both planting and watering in his ministry (103). Whitefield understood his ministry to be primarily one of planting. They differed significantly on important points of theology. Both preached salvation oriented sermons, but did not agree in their understanding of original sin, justification by faith and the regenerate life. Maddock notes, "For some it has been tempting to assume that these prominent leaders of evangelical revival understood these doctrines in precisely the same way." Yet he warns that "it cannot be automatically assumed that simply because Wesley and Whitefield used identical theological terminology they were also in theological agreement regarding their definition of these terms" (179).

Although both understood that biblical anthropology and soteriology are inextricably linked, Wesley's anthropology, which Maddock characterizes as being "more elaborate" than Whitefield's, stressed that a measure of free will has been supernaturally restored to every man, together with a "natural light" which is the result of prevenient grace. Whitefield was a Calvinist who emphasized divine sovereignty but did not minimize the importance of human responsibility. The theological differences between them eventually prompted Whitefield to separate from his friend's minstry: "As far as he was concerned, the Bible teaches a monergistic view of salvation, and insofar as Wesley's articulation of salvation introduced a degree of synergism, it amounted to sufficient reason to consider himself theologically justified in parting company with his Oxford spiritual mentor" (195).

Contemporary preachers can learn much from Maddock's balanced treatment of these two leaders. They are proof that when it comes to preaching, it is not true that "one size fits all." There is room for significant differences in style and in personality. Their differences in approach and in doctrine raise important questions about the need for follow up in mass evangelism and the way in which preaching is shaped by theology.

John Wesley and George Whitefield are rightly regarded as giants of the evangelical pulpit. But J. C. Ryle rightly points out that they were "simply men whom God stirred up and brought out to do his work." In this regard they were "just like us" (James 5:17). Those who give attention to Ian Maddock's thoroughly researched treatment of their similarities and

differences are likely to learn something about themselves in the process.

❧

Excellence in Preaching: Studying the Craft of Leading Preachers. By Simon Vibert. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011, ISBN 978-0830838158, 173 pp., $16.00.

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

Simon Vibert is acting principal and director of the School of Preaching at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, and associated with John Stott's "Langham Trainers" which seeks to equip pastors around the world.

This is basically a collection of 8–10-page profiles of a variety of preachers from the U.S. and U.K., almost all of them in Reformed tradition: Tim Keller, John Piper, David Cook, John Ortberg, Rico Tice, Alistair Begg, Mark Driscoll, Mark Dever, etc. The structure makes for easy reading and the style is light. Each chapter/profile concludes with "Lessons for Preachers" containing an assimilable bulleted list of imperatives.

The book begins with "Jesus Christ The Preacher: Setting the Supreme Standard," an assumption that the Son of God is the model for preaching par excellence. I do not disagree. But I would hasten to mention that all we see of Christ's preaching in Scripture are edited snapshots here and there provided by writers who have are propounding their own Spirit-inspired theological agendas. That is to say, whatever we have in Scripture of Christ's preaching (or the preaching of any other, for that matter) is scant evidence, hardly adequate for building a homiletical scaffolding or a hermeneutical paradigm. Considering the Sermon on the Mount, Vibert deals with Jesus' audience (his own followers), theme/content (teaching plus exhortation), structure (bookends, chiams), manner (persuasion with authority and use of rhetorical techniques: syllogism, metaphor, humor, etc.), and movement (beginning, middle, and end) (21–31). The "Lessons for Preachers" in this chapter are: "Don't be afraid to use rhetorical techniques"; "Draw in the congregation through a dialogical approach"; "Speak with authority"; and "Provoke questions" (31). No doubt useful lessons. But I am not convinced Matthew was giving us a set of homiletical/hermeneutical principles upon which to construct our own sermons. Neither am I persuaded that what Jesus did for his ancient audience is necessarily what I am to do with my modern listeners. Just because Jesus used these "Lessons," does it become a mandate for the modern preacher?

From Tim Keller, we are to learn to "Anticipate objections"; "Read thoroughly and widely"; "Create intrigue"; and "Preach for a verdict" (39–40). From John Piper, "Apply Bible truth through the head to the heart"; "If it is true, be passionate about it"; and "Repreach the same passages or

biblical themes until they are clear in your own mind" (49–50). And so on. In the opinion of this reviewer, such a shotgun approach is not conducive to improving readers' homiletical skills. Perhaps a close analysis of a single sermon transcript from each candidate would have served better to highlight their strong points and to teach us all how to evaluate sermons, our own and others'.

Vibert concludes with an ambitious composite portrait of a good preacher, twelve things they should do well: be aware of cultural and philosophical challenges to the gospel; inspire a passion for the glory of God; let the Bible speak with simplicity and freshness; be a Word-and-Spirit preacher; use humor and story; create interest and apply well; preach with spiritual formation in mind; make much of Jesus Christ; preach with urgency; persuade people passionately; teach with directness; preach all of the Bible to all of God's people (152–153).

What I got most out this slim volume was a useful introduction to several U.K.-based preachers: Vaughan Roberts, Simon Ponsonby, Nicky Gumbel, Rico Tice, etc. I made up my mind to catch at least a few of them online one of these days. For most readers of the *Journal,* however, the bite-sized lessons of homiletical wisdom in Vibert's profiles will not be particularly useful.

❧

Expository Listening: A Handbook for Hearing and Doing God's Word. By Ken Ramey. The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2010, 978-1-934952-09-2, 127 pp., $11.99.

Reviewer: *R. Larry Overstreet, Northwest Baptist Seminary (retired), Winona Lake, IN*

Since I have taught principles of listening in classes and workshops for three decades, I was eager to read this book. Favorable comments in its prefatory pages by John MacArthur, Jay Adams, Michael Fabarez, and Donald Whitney made it seem even better. My initial hopes, however, were not realized.

Ramey observes that "Listening to a sermon, really listening—as in thinking, praying, following the argument, concentrating on the meaning and its application to your life—now that's hard work" (xi). The reality is that "really listening" to *any* presentation, whether a sermon, a political speech, or your spouse, is hard work. Ramey asserts that "books on listening to Christian preaching are comparatively almost non-existent" (xii), and further states, "listeners have hardly any resources to train and equip them to become better listeners" (3). A search of Amazon.com, however, reveals

that Ramey completely overlooks a plethora of superb books dealing with listening (many are college textbooks), which can be applied to preaching as well as to other listening situations.

Ramey recalls that in former times "pulpits were erected high above the congregation," and that this lofty "pulpit represented the authority of God's Word ruling over His people" (1). He bemoans that many modern churches have removed the pulpit, or replaced it with a Plexiglas one. To him this shows that the "high and lofty place of preaching has all but vanished from the contemporary church" (1). I wonder how many high and lofty pulpits Jesus or Paul used.

Six chapters follow the Introduction: (1) "Biblical Audiology: A Theology of Listening," (2) "Hearing with Your Heart," (3) "Harrowing Your Heart to Hear," (4) "The Itching Ear Epidemic," (5) "The Discerning Listener," and (6) "Practice What You Hear." The Conclusion is titled, "Listening Like Your Life Depends on It." Each chapter ends with questions for further discussion.

Although chapter 2 uses the parable of the sower (Luke 8:5–8) to stress the importance of hearing, Ramey never deals with actual hindrances to hearing. When a key opportunity arises to present concrete principles of listening, Ramey misses it. Listening texts recognize such hindrances to hearing as: (1) noise (e.g. traffic, crying baby), (2) impairment (physically hard of hearing), (3) fatigue (we hear less when tired), (4) distractions (e.g odors, temperature, movement), (5) and a poor speaker (e.g. poor articulation, volume).

Chapter 3 stresses such things as reading Scripture, praying, confessing sin, reducing media intake, having a humble heart, etc., all of which are spiritually beneficial, but do not directly deal with listening. At one particular point, Ramey identifies that we can listen at more than 400 words per minute, while a person speaks at 100–200 (47). To deal with this "extra time" all he suggests is that a listener should avoid dozing off or daydreaming. Some particular listening barriers, delineated in listening textbooks, that he never identifies are: (1) regarding the topic as uninteresting, (2) criticizing the speaker, (3) allowing negative thoughts to interfere, (4) jumping to conclusions, (5) seeking distractions, (6) semantic barriers, and (7) faking attention.

In chapter 5 Ramey provides a brief exposition of 1 Timothy 1:3–11. The only specific suggestion on how to actually listen, however, is when he says "you can't afford to be a passive listener" (82). He never incorporates the importance of how accurate understanding is essential to effective listening. This requires listening so as to comprehend and evaluate what is heard, and to achieve empathy with the speaker.

Ramey occasionally makes some perplexing statements. He asserts that "the eternal destiny of your soul is hanging in the balance every time

you listen to the Word preached" (93–94). He also says that if "you hear and disobey God's Word, you will go to hell" (110). Is my salvation dependent on total obedience, or on God's grace?

This volume does provide helpful suggestions on having your heart and mind prepared to hear God's Word, and issues a serious challenge for all listeners to put into practice what they hear preached in godly sermons. It falls short, however, as a guide to effective listening.

❧

Playing by the Rules: A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible. By Robert H. Stein. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011, 978-0801033735, xi + 228 pp., $19.99, paper.

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

This is the revised edition of a work that first appeared in 1994 by Stein, the now-retired professor of New Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The title hints at the metaphor of a game that ties the book together, but unfortunately that potentially useful motif crops up only infrequently in the work, mostly in chapter titles; it is not developed to any significant extent. Perhaps the most substantial revision is in this 2011 edition is in the chapters on the genres of the Bible. Besides that, I am not certain much has been changed since its first iteration.

As Stein noted in his "Preface to the First Edition," [a] great debt is owed to E. D. Hirsch, Jr., whose *Validity in Interpretation* has made a lasting impact on my thinking" (x). Many evangelicals share Stein's sentiments with regard to Hirsch, as also do I. His work is magisterial. However, Hirsch wrote quite a bit more than this oft-cited first foray of his into hermeneutics in 1967, and I wish evangelicals would pay more attention to his later productions which, building upon *Validity in Interpretation*, go much further, especially with his perspicacious discussions on what constitutes contemporary application of ancient texts, both religious and legal. Perhaps if we had paid closer heed to these works as well, the state of biblical hermeneutics, particularly as it concerns preaching, would have been a lot more fruitful.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to hermeneutics that deals with the fundamental elements of writing: author, text, and reader. Stein uses the example of Eph 5:18 ("be not drunk with wine") to make the statement that "what Paul consciously willed to say in the past also has implications of which he was not necessarily aware, and those implications are part of the meaning of the text" (19). "Wine" indicates the "principle or pattern of meaning" = alcohol, and so would imply (today) even beverages other than wine, including beer, whiskey, rum, etc. "These implications do not conflict

with his original meaning. On the contrary, they are included in, and are part of, the principle he sought to communicate" (19). Such potential applications could conceivably include an alcoholic libation *X,* yet to be discovered/concocted in the future. All this is vintage Stein!

Chapter 2 deals with the vocabulary of hermeneutics. One item defined is "subject matter" (= "content … talked about in a text, without regard to how it is used by the author to convey meaning" [41]). By this Stein means, at least in part, the event of history *behind* a narrative text. His distinction between such an "event" and the "account of the event" is helpful, though I wish it could have gotten more than two paragraphs worth of space (43). A mere reproduction of events was *not* the intention of the biblical author; rather his goal was a recounting of those events in such a manner as to further his inspired theological agenda. This is not a splitting of hairs; it is this very tendency to pay more attention to the recreating of the events than to the text itself (i.e., the *account* of the events) that has stunted biblical hermeneutics, at least as far as preaching is concerned. Later, Stein does add: "[T]he meaning of such [narrative] texts involves not primarily what happened but rather the *interpretation* of what happened" (87; italics mine). Exactly!

Chapter 3 deals with the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation, encompassing his work of inspiration, the formation of the Bible, and illumination of the interpreter. Chapters 4–14 address the issues of genres in Scripture, "games" for which there are specific "rules." They include exhortations to pay attention to context, to watch for introductions/conclusions and dialogue (in narrative genre), to attend to authorial comments and summaries, to listen for repetitions, parallelisms, figurative nature of prophecy and its "fuller meaning," etc., none of which are unfamiliar to the readers of the *Journal.*

There are a couple of unusual inclusions in this section on genres:—"The Game of Jargon: Idioms," and "The Game of Exaggeration: Overstatement and Hyperbole," that seem to be forcing figures of speech rather arbitrarily into the category of genres.

All in all, I found the first section on General Hermeneutics the most interesting, but that part has hardly changed from the first edition. You might find the latter for far less than $19.99 and, if you do, grab it.

❧

Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology. By Andreas J. Kostenberger and Richard D. Patterson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011, ISBN 9780825430473, 891 pp., $48.00.

Reviewer: *Randal Emery Pelton, Calvary Bible Church, Mount Joy, PA*

Because of the importance of hermeneutics to homiletics, I highly recommend this book to *JEHS* readers. Homiletics professors who have not recently read hermeneutics material will benefit from its insights. The same goes for preachers. Our goal of getting the message right warrants including *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* in our reading.

The authors state their goal: "This book is trying to teach a simple method for interpreting the Bible" (23). Surely a *simple* method would not require 800-plus pages! Readers of this *Journal* will appreciate the admirable goal, but also the reality that Scripture regularly exposes the weaknesses of all our methods. Although never content, we accept the reality of partial interpretations every Sunday. The authors admit that, although the label of "triad" is new, interpreting through a grid of history, literature, and theology is not new (24). They write: "the present volume represents a biblical-theological realization of Vanhoozer's proposal of a 'canonical-linguistic approach'" (24).

What *is* unique to their approach is a reversal of the normal sequence of study. Usual discussions of hermeneutics flow from general (word-studies, syntax analysis, historical setting) to special (genre analysis and canon). The authors write, "we don't start with words; we start with the canon" (25) showing that recent theories concerning the importance of the canon and theology being conveyed through the overall narrative of the Bible captured their attention. I applaud the emphasis given to biblical theology to the interpretation of Scripture.

The book presents seven steps for interpreting the Bible: step 1: preparation; step 2: history; step 3: literature (canon); step 4: literature (genre); step 5: literature (language); step 6: theology; step 7: application and proclamation. A complete outline helps you quickly locate resources for your particular study (see 31–47). Readers will appreciate sample exegesis supplied near the end of chapters 2, 5–8, 10–12, 14, 15, and the ten lessons/sermons in chapter 16 (Application & Proclamation: God's Word Coming To Life). They take seriously the belief "that interpretation is not complete until we apply our interpretative insights to our own lives and those of our congregations" (25). The book is peppered with interpretation at the level of theology and application.

I profited from the primary place given to canonical studies in chapters 3–4. My limited observations show that many of our sermons are heavy on exegetical fragments and light on theology, partly because we fail to interpret preaching portions in light of the entire canon of Scripture. Someone has said that interpretation does not end with exegesis. Despite the hesitancy in many circles to pose a canonical center, the authors provide a Gospel center (210). I came away wondering what kind of Christ-centered hermeneutic/homiletic they would apply.

Over 300 pages (Unit 2, see 233–570) are devoted to genre studies,

much of which is gleaned from the earlier works of Osborne, Fee and Stuart, and others. One weakness of their genre studies is they do not show how genre characteristics help create theological meaning. In their attempt to develop theological messages from genre analysis, it is not clear whether their spiritual lessons reflect the methods taught in the chapter (see 256, 303, and 345 for examples). A key step in their method is the ability to "draw all your findings together and summarize the meaning of your pericope or text. Ensure that this is consistent with authorial intent" (413; also 330 and 444). The authors provide no help in doing that. The section on Guidelines for Interpreting Prophecy on pages 346–358 is extremely helpful, too good to be relegated to the grey pages at the end of a chapter. It would have helped if the sample exegesis from Nahum (344–345) were used as the example in this guidelines section to provide continuity and show the effectiveness of their approach.

The remaining two sections covering language and theology included helpful instruction on conducting proper lexical studies and using a variety of tools for sermon preparation. the book concludes with appendixes related to resources to help readers continue to build their libraries (809–832) and an extensive glossary of terms (833–849).

Don't let the size of this book keep you from benefiting from its insights. Hermeneutical issues abound in our preaching classes and determine much of our preaching. *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* is an excellent resource for both venues.

❦

Mashup Religion: Pop Music and Theological Invention. By John S. McClure. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011, 978-1-60258-357-3, 240 pp., $24.95.

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

McClure, Charles G. Finney Professor of Preaching and Worship at Vanderbilt Divinity School, describes a crisis facing all religious traditions, Christian and non-Christian: recent cultural and social shifts challenge the ability of traditional theological formulations to sustain their significance. By contrast, media (and music in particular) exerts an overwhelming ability to shape popular identity, beliefs, and ethics. "[S]ome theologians use newer technologies to spruce up the presentation of traditional ideas …to help them teach the same ideas they've taught for years …to present and disseminate preconceived ideas," but "they do not use them [new technologies] to aid in the invention of new ideas" (2). Instead, McClure argues that recent technologies foster inventive practices whose developmental method should be incorporated into the modern theological task. He presents the modern

"mashup" technique for song-writing, freely sampling and remixing sounds and melodies, as a paradigm for invention closest to that of the theologian.

Building upon his earlier work, *The Four Codes of Preaching* (2004), McClure asserts that "theological invention is a matter of stylistically layering four central authorities (tracks): Scripture, culture, theology, and reason [and] awareness of these stylistic options opens the door for hybrid configurations that respond pragmatically to different communicative needs and aspirations in our religious situation today" (9). He breaks down the process of theological invention elements according to the six elements in modern mashup composition: the Songwriter; Multitrack Composition and Loop Browsing; Sampling, Remixing and Mashup; the Grain of the Voice; Fan Cultures; and Lyrics. He concludes with two appendices offering case studies of this method, one homiletical and one academic. Footnotes, bibliography, and indices complete the work.

As extended metaphor, McClure draws deeply upon his experience as a musician which underlies his extensive discussions of musical mashup technique in each chapter. His treatment of the analogy between mashup and theological invention, however, varies from chapter to chapter. Some sections are almost entirely devoted to unpacking the details of the musical discussion and sociological analysis; others offer a larger discussion of the corresponding theological method, sometimes with reference to larger hermeneutical and communicational issues.

The author asserts the applicability of method for all religious expression, whether Christian or non-Christian. Consequently, it is not surprising that his model for theological invention assumes authoritative loci equal to a tradition's text(s), contributing to the substance of theological invention. This creates a problem for an evangelical Christian theologian for whom inspired Scripture would assume a preeminent role and authority and for which the other loci would only offer lenses for its derivative applications and its contextual communications.

McClure offers an interesting overview of creative method in a modern music composition technique. This in itself is very helpful for those who know something of the creative process within other disciplines and how mashup technique continues to model the best of the creative process as it has been practiced through the centuries. Many readers, however, may find the various descriptions of mashup process too technical or abstract to sustain the significance of the analogy with theological method.

❧

Engaging Exposition. By Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2011, 978-0-8054-4668-5, 358 pp., $34.99.

Reviewer: *Gary L. Shultz Jr., Baptist Bible Graduate School of Theology, Springfield, MO*

Engaging Exposition is an introductory work aimed at students and pastors, and its goal is to help preachers preach expository sermons that are Christ centered, text driven, and Spirit led. The three authors, all Southern Baptist professors or pastors, rightly stress the need for expository preaching that honors God and leads to changed lives, and they offer this book as a means to that end. The book is divided into three sections: discovery, development, and delivery, or what the authors call the "three dimensional approach to teaching and preaching the Word of God" (5).

The discovery process of preaching involves hermeneutics and exegesis. Most introductory works on expository preaching include at least a chapter on studying the text and discovering the author's intended meaning, but *Engaging Exposition* devotes a third of its pages to this process, and it is space well spent. Without this foundation in place, expository preaching cannot happen, no matter how strong someone's sermon writing skills and delivery abilities might be. This discovery section is an excellent introduction to hermeneutics and exegesis, particularly when it comes to incorporating those disciplines into sermon construction. Bill Curtis uses several visuals and diagrams to aid the preacher in understanding what can sometimes be difficult concepts. He also applies his method to specific texts, making it clear what he is instructing the reader to do.

The discovery section leads right into the development process, or how to actually write a sermon. Daniel Akin addresses every aspect of the sermon writing process, from developing the main idea of the message to leading an invitation at the end of the sermon. Akin acknowledges a strong debt to Ramesh Richard, and essentially offers the same sermon development process found in his *Preparing Expository Sermons*. While the section does a good job outlining that method and introducing the reader to the different parts of a sermons (introductions, illustrations, applications, and conclusions), it seems to suffer from a lack of space in which to develop some important ideas. Each section of the book is about the same length, and while it is great to see a developed exegetical method and a thorough explanation of delivery (which is often relegated to one chapter or an appendix in introductory works), along with a section on sermon development, it is this discovery section that suffers. In an attempt to get as much information into this section as possible, many of the chapters are almost reduced to a series of lists with short explanations of each idea on the list (such as 20 guidelines for using illustrations or eight characteristics of a good introduction). Also, for a book whose title is *Engaging Exposition*, very few pages are actually used to explain how to put that exposition into a sermon (150-153).

The third section is as helpful as the first. One of the strengths of the

book is emphasizing that the sermon preparation process is not done with the completion of the sermon outline. Once a sermon has been developed, it must be delivered in order to actually be a sermon, and in our culture it must be delivered well if it is to be heard. Stephen Rummage takes the reader through all aspects of delivery, even delving into some technical details on how speech is produced. Rummage does a good job emphasizing the need for effectively delivery, a natural style, a good connection with your congregation, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Despite the drawbacks touched on earlier, if I had to give only one volume to someone wanting to know how to preach, I would give them this book. It would be an excellent textbook in an introductory preaching class (particularly at the undergraduate level), and it would also serve well in a local church setting. Its concepts and three-dimensional approach are easily translatable to the classroom. Preachers without the benefit of a well-rounded biblical or seminary education, and even seasoned pastors looking for a refresher on expository preaching would benefit from this book. As an introductory work, there is not much in it that is new (footnotes are abundant, however, and direct the reader interested in further study), but the authors certainly accomplish their goal of equipping preachers with everything necessary to preach Christ honoring and life transforming expository sermons.

<p align="center">❧</p>

And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament. By Fleming Rutledge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 978-0-8028-6606-6, 421 pp, $30.00.

Reviewer: *Kent Spann, Spann Ministries, Grove City, OH*

And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament is a collection of sixty Old Testament sermons by Fleming Rutledge, an Episcopal priest, developed over the course of thirty-five years (1975-2010) of parish and peripatetic ministry. It is not a "how to" book on preaching rather it is a "demonstrate for you" book.

The primary goal of the author is to challenge preachers to preach the Old Testament (2). Early on, she establishes Old Testament preaching as indispensable for the understanding of the New Testament (3). But, she notes, it is critically important to preach the Old Testament *for its own sake* (3), a point made even stronger by her challenge to read the New Testament in light of the Old Testament since it was the latter that shaped the apostolic faith and the destiny of the church.

Another important reason to preach the Old Testament according to Rutledge, is knowing God. She challenges the "Jesus kerygma" (5) that

neglects the God of Israel with whom Jesus lived in intimate communion. Neglecting Old Testament preaching also leads to ignorance by congregations of the prodigious God whom it sets forth (5).

In her introduction, Rutledge lays some groundwork for the sermons to follow. Early on it becomes very evident that this work is aimed primarily at mainline churches (Rutledge is Episcopalian). That being said there is still a strong message for readers of all backgrounds.

If one hopes to gain insight on how to preach from the Old Testament, he or she will be disappointed. There is scant material for the person who wants to become a better Old Testament preacher.

The first sermon, "The Lord Spoke to Abraham" sets the tone for the sermons to follow—unapologetically theocentric. Rutledge bemoans the fact that much of the preaching today is *anthropo*logical rather than *theo*logical (8). Sermons such as "The Evolutionary Ladder" declare the entire Bible is founded upon the words, "Thus says the Lord God" (340). This claim sets the Old and New Testament Scripture apart from all other religions. Those who take the time to read and absorb her sermons will be richly rewarded with a vision of the divine in sermons such as "Does God Need a Name?," "To Know the Living God," "Who Redefines God?," and "The Subject of the Verb."

In "Adam, Where Are You?" she reminds us again of the centrality of God in the Bible as he searches for us. I reveled in her high view of God's work in salvation. In "The Bloody Passageway," God is seen as the one making the covenant with Abraham, while in "Does God Need a Name?," it is God finding us. In most sermons she does an adequate job of exposing man's destitution while magnifying the salvific work of Christ in the New Testament.

Her sermons are not expository in the classic sense; however, they are for the most part firmly anchored in the biblical text(s). If the reader is looking for clearly outlined sermons, this is not the book for him or her. A great strength of the book is how she brings the text to bear on national and denominational life. Being a gifted writer as well as orator, she generously draws from the great works of literature which some preachers will not find useful in their congregations. The weakest part of her sermons is application. I felt like I heard the Word but did not know how to apply the Word. Perhaps it is my Baptist heritage but I felt many times I was taken to the edge of heaven but never shown how to open the door.

My life was definitely enriched by this sermonic work. *And God Spoke to Abraham* is well worth the preacher's time, to know the God of the Old Testament as he is fully revealed in the person of Christ in the New Testament.

Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook Volume 1. By Kent Spann and David Wheeler, editors. Thomas Nelson, 2011, 978-1-4185-4896-4, 536 pp., $24.99.

Reviewer: *Timothy S. Warren, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

This text "is a primer" and "not a substitute for getting into the word and hearing God. It is not an escape from the hard work of sermon preparation" (x). The stated goal of this volume is to provide the busy pastor and/or worship leader with the basic components (texts, outlines, illustrations) for three messages per week for fifty-two weeks, with three fully manuscripted funeral sermons, with more than fifty-two orders of worship that include hymns, Scripture readings, prayers, etc., with a few brief essays on "sheperding" and "heroes of the faith," as well as with registries for dedications, baptisms, funerals, marriages, and sermons preached.

The authors encourage the reader to, "fit it in your gun then shoot it," and "take the material and make it your own. Put it in your works. Speak it in your congregation's language. Fill it with your illustrations. Make your own applications" (x). While preachers have always "borrowed" from others on a regular basis, this reviewer wonders how many novice or busy pastors will indiscriminately adopt the content and style, if not the persona, of one or more of the twenty-nine contributors to this sourcebook. In the process of assimilating another's materials the unguarded pastor could easily "own" these ideas "word for word" and "line for line," preaching them as his own. Readers must "use with care" so that congregations have no reason to wonder, "Who's preaching this week?" and church boards have no reason to inquire, "Is proper credit being given to the original author of this week's sermon?" Instead, every reader will have asked, "Will using this material this way get me fired for 'stealing' someone else's sermon?" It does happen.

That said, pastors and worship leaders will find value in this text. One might study it in order to observe the various contributors' commitments to exposition and/or to critique their styles of preaching or approaches to worship. For example, many of the sermon outlines have far too many "points" and try to cover far too much content for a single sermon. Others demonstrate reasonably developed, yet sufficiently focused and limited amounts of biblical exposition. One might also read through this volume to glean illustrative materials, some of which are quite good. One could possibly scan the pages for sermon ideas or creative sermonic structures.

If used as intended, with thoughtful integrity, this sourcebook may jumpstart many sermons and provide congregations with more biblical, clear, relevant, and interesting preaching and more meaningful worship than is their usual fare.

✍

7 Lessons for New Pastors. By Matthew D. Kim. St. Louis: Chalice, 2012, 978-0-8272-3487-1, 131 pp., $19.99.

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

I am not sure I would have read this book if someone had given it to me at my seminary graduation. I didn't know then what I know now: how much I did not know then. But the book would have done me good.

Matthew Kim's lessons for new ministers cover wisdom and skills few of us master in grad school: (1) be certain of your calling, (2) find the right church, (3) acclimate to the pastor's life, (4) create healthy habits, (5) develop your leadership skills, (6) love your congregation, and (7) expect the unexpected.

Seasoned pastors (who also can profit from this book) will find themselves nodding again and again: "Yes, how true, wish I'd known it back then." Naturally, we will all identify more closely with some lessons than others. My personal favorite is the last, on encountering unexpected situations, people, crises, and—thank God!—unexpected blessings.

Kim, a pastor in suburban Denver when he wrote the book, is past-president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and Assistant Professor of Preaching and Ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I know him to be conscientious and a hard worker, so it is not surprising that he warns of the dangers of workaholism, failure to make time for Sabbath and recreation, neglect of family—all necessary warnings for many novices. He might have said a bit more about the opposite danger, the temptation to laziness that comes with the unstructured time some pastors cannot handle.

Kim is close enough to his first year to remember what it was like, but far enough removed to have perspective that only comes with time. So he is able to illustrate many points with self-deprecating personal experience, but also recommend a better way. His mix of story and exposition makes this slim volume an easy read.

One quibble: Kim cites some authors who make sweeping claims or bolster their case with dubious statistics. Can it really be that a pastor is fired every six minutes in the United States (103)? That would mean that every year one fourth of all congregations dismiss their ministers—over 86,000 pastors fired annually—and would be irreconcilable with the claim cited earlier that 1,500 pastors leave the ministry (*only* 1,500; not all are fired) every month (59). Is it true that "few" pastors ever have fun (62) or that "most" do not have personal friends (68–69)? Perhaps I am extra-sensitive to these examples since I am currently reading *Statistics for Dummies*! But all of

us in ministry would be well advised to make our case without the kind of over-claiming some of Kim's sources engage in. The pastoral problems these authors address are real and they are serious; surely we can be exhorted to pay attention without hearing statistics that make us think, "Now wait a minute!"

There is more good counsel here than anyone is likely to absorb in the first year of ministry. Give a copy to the seminary graduate and suggest rereading it every five years.

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.

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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.

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

Frequency of Publication:

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

Jury Policy:

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

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

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."

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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."

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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.

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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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2004 ___ March 4:1   ___ September 4:2
2005 ___ March 5:1   ___ September 5:2
2006 ___ March 6:1   ___ September 6:2
2007 ___ March 7:1   ___ September 7:2
2008 ___ March 8:1   ___ September 8:2
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