THE JOURNAL OF THE
EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

130 Essex Street
South Hamilton, MA 01982

Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society 13:1 March 2013

THE JOURNAL OF THE EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

March 2013, Vol. 13 No. 1

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

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

Subscriptions and back issues: *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* is published periodically for $25.00 per year. The Journal is published by the Evangelical Homiletics Society. For subscription information, please see the website: ehomiletics.com and for advertising information, please contact Scott M. Gibson, General Editor at sgibson@gcts.edu, 130 Essex Street, South Hamilton, MA 01982.

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

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society
130 Essex Street
South Hamilton, MA 01982
ISSN 1534-7478

ehomiletics.com

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.

PREACHING WITH VARIETY

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

We are "fearfully and wonderfully made," composed the psalmist, shepherd and king David centuries ago in what is numbered Psalm 138:12. The rich textured composition of men and women from every tribe, tongue and nation comprise the vast array of preachers throughout the centuries. Skin tones of various hues, tongues of different sounds and inflections mark these preachers. Multi-ethnic preaching truly is preaching with variety!

The theme for the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society was "Multi-Cultural Preaching." The plenary speaker, Rev. Bryan Loritts, delivered two challenging sessions on this important area of study and practice. The first two articles in this edition of the *Journal* comprise the two plenary addresses Loritts provided for the New Orleans gathering. Readers will be stimulated in their thinking and in their practice as preachers as they benefit from the insights provided by Bryan Loritts on multi-ethnic preaching.

Vic Anderson of Dallas Theological Seminary was the recipient of the 2012 Keith Willhite Award. Chosen by the members of those in attendance at the conference, the annual prize is given to the author of the outstanding paper presented at the conference. The award is in memory of co-founder and past-president, Keith Willhite. In his paper, Anderson examines several areas in which preachers can demonstrate cultural sensitivity in their sermons.

A final article for consideration is by Adrian Lane, a member of the Evangelical Homiletics Society from Australia. In this article Lane argues that good sermon illustrations support the argument and conceptual nature of the sermon. The process of sermon development is enhanced by employing principles and tools. These tools make the collection and use of illustrations vital in the homiletical process.

The sermon included in this edition is by past-president Matthew D. Kim, assistant professor of preaching and ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA. At the conclusion of annual meeting the out-going president traditionally preaches to those in attendance. In this sermon, which Matthew Kim preached at the 2012 gathering in New Orleans, Kim challenges preachers to hold onto the gospel of Jesus Christ, for there is no other gospel. His words will inspire readers to be faithful to preach the full-orbed good news of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Book Review section does not disappoint. The books reviewed allow readers to assess the ideas communicated in the books,

quickens one's thinking in terms of the field of homiletics and provides a listing of books that can be suggested to the libraries of our schools or even purchased for our own libraries. Typically the reviewers of the books are members of the Society.

For most preachers, when we think of "preaching with variety," we tend to consider how to preach various biblical genres. But there is another kind of preaching with variety—the variety of cultural/ethnic homiletics. Gospel preachers from every corner of the globe represent the incredible variety of cultural and ethnic expression. We are all benefitted by this rich, varied and textured reality. This is the reality of the kingdom into which we invite men, women, boys and girls—from every tongue, tribe and nation.

THE MULTI-ETHNIC PREACHER
LECTURE ONE

BRYAN LORITTS
Lead Pastor
Fellowship Memphis

INTRODUCTION

The story is told of the time when Rev. E.P. Scott, a white man, was serving as a missionary to the tribes of Northern India many years ago. He was going through the jungles when all of a sudden he was surrounded by a tribe on a war expedition. They seized him and pointed their spears at his heart. Not knowing what to do he calmly took out his violin, closed his eyes and sang the great hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name," in their native language, expecting at any moment to be run through with a spear and killed. When he finished playing and singing, he opened his eyes to discover tears streaming down their faces. They begged him to tell them of that Name. So he went with them, and labored among these Indians for the next several years, explaining the gospel to them, winning many to Christ. Never underestimate the absolute power of the gospel to cut across racial and ethnic lines, bringing healing.

You've brought me great honor by inviting me to come here these few days to talk about preaching in a multi-ethnic context. I can't tell you how overwhelmed with joy and humbled I am to be here. You've invested a lot to get me here. You've purchased a plane ticket, put me in some nice housing and as far as I know I will receive an honorarium from you with the hopes that I will give you some grand revelation and insights on how to preach effectively in a multi-ethnic church context. Well, let me begin by wowing you: preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected! Whatever I tell you in the course of these two lectures let's agree to not become so contextually driven that we miss the simple astounding message of the cross of Christ! If it worked for E.P. Scott with Indians, that same Gospel will work for you. In the words of that great theologian Ray Charles, "Just make it do what it do."

But there are some lessons that I've learned along the way that I think will prove valuable in us building multi-ethnic churches, and I'd love to share those with you. So if I could give you a table of contents this evening, here's what you can expect tonight: First we're going to see that our present sociological predicament demands that the church of Jesus Christ plants more multi-ethnic churches or she will be irrelevant. Second, we're

going to deal with a significant barrier to the multi-ethnic church and that is the issue of dispositional racism. Thirdly, we're going to learn a key lesson in becoming multi-ethnic, and that is intentionality. Finally, we'll end with three preaching lessons I've learned in preaching to a multi-ethnic community. To help us with reaching the goal, meet me in Matthew 15:21-28.

OUR SOCIOLOGIAL PREDICAMENT

The United States is becoming more and more ethnically diverse. In 2008, the United States Census Bureau projected that, "Minorities, now roughly one-third of the US population, are expected to become the majority in 2042, with the nation projected to be fifty-four percent minority in 2050. By 2023, minorities will comprise more than half of all children." In other words, our nation is headed to be majority minority, where whites will no longer be the dominant ethnicity. The Census Bureau would go onto say:

> The non-Hispanic, single-race white population is projected to be only slightly larger in 2050 (203.3 million) than in 2008 (199.8 million). In fact, this group is projected to lose population in the 2030s and 2040s and comprise forty-six percent of the total population in 2050, down from sixty-six percent in 2008.

Time does not permit me to go into all the details of it, but for now all of the statistical evidence is pointing to the reality that the white population is receding, while the ethnic minorities are increasing. And there's no evidence that this change will slow down or stop altogether in the coming years. The United States is becoming more and more diverse.

THE CHURCH

But is the church keeping up with the rapid acceleration in diversity here in the United States? Sadly, the answer is no. Rodney Woo speaks to the gap between our sociological and ecclesiological realities:

> According to the most recent studies, more than ninety-three percent of all congregations in the United States are not multiracial in their composition. There are more than 300,000 churches or religious congregations in the United States. The definition of a multiracial congregation…is a congregation in which no one racial group is eighty-percent of the congregation.

Here, Woo is not just speaking to the Christian congregations, but to Jewish, Muslim and congregations of all faiths. However, within this broad category the present reality of Christian congregations is clear: In light of the growing trend towards a multi-ethnic nation, the church of Jesus Christ

is lagging far behind. The authors of the book, United by Faith substantiate Woo's finding's, zeroing in on Christian congregations:

> If we define a racially mixed congregation as one in which no one racial group is eighty-percent or more of the congregation, just 7.5 percent of the over 300,000 religious congregations in the United States are racially mixed. For Christian congregations, which form over ninety-percent of congregations in the United States, the percentage that are racially mixed drops to five and a half. Of this small percentage, approximately half of the congregations are mixed only temporarily, during the time they are in transition from one group to another.

Here, with laser like precision the authors show the sad and present reality of the Christian church. Approximately, under three-percent of the churches of Jesus Christ reflects the future eternal multi-ethnic reality that will be displayed in heaven. Soong-Chan Rah pronounces his eulogy on the all white church when he writes:

> The contrast between the large near-empty church buildings at the busy intersection and the crowded smaller church building down the street illustrates the reality of twenty-first century American Christianity- the white churches are in decline while the immigrant, ethnic and multiethnic churches are flourishing.

Sadly, the church of Jesus Christ in the United States is lagging significantly behind. But there's hope.

At Fellowship Memphis we've learned some things along the way and we've had some successes even in the midst of great challenges. I don't think we've arrived, in fact I know we haven't. Gary MacIntosh, in his book, Being the Church in a Multiethnic Community, points out that most multiethnic churches tend to only be multiethnic on Sunday, but during the week, most of those people's relationships are not multiethnic. I've found this to be sadly and devastatingly true in our church.

What we're talking about is sort of like the NFL Pro Bowl. At this game people come from different teams to the one event, and then when the event is over they go back to their former teams, doing life as usual, hoping to make the same event next year. That's our church.

THE ISSUE OF RACE

But why is that? The answer is racism. In fact, as we come to the text we see the issue of racism right here in our passage. Here you have a group of Jews—Jesus and the disciples—in Gentile territory—Tyre and Sidon—and Matthew wants us to understand that they are approached not just by

a woman but by a Canaanite woman. She is a woman who is ethnically different from Jesus, and this is important. This is why Matthew describes her that way. Their dialog is laced with racist innuendo, where Jesus says that he's called only to Israel, and then he uses the word dog to describe her, which was a popular label that Jews used of Gentiles—they called them dogs. I mean, wow, this thing is riddled with racism.

Vishal Mangalwadi, in his book Truth and Transformation, takes some time to talk about the issue of race in our text. Listen to what he says, "The precious Canaanite daughter was oppressed by a demon and needed deliverance. But wasn't there a second demon that oppressed both the mother and the daughter- the demon of racism? This second demon was in the culture that corrupted the disciples. This demon had to be exorcised if the disciples were to become true children of Abraham, willing to take the blessing of the gospel to all the nations...Jesus needed to deliver his disciples from racism because he was making them the light of the world, the salt of the earth for the healing of the nations."

RETHINKING RACISM

"Yeh, but Bryan, come on, is not racism a thing of the past? We have a black president after all, isn't racism dead? Or, better yet, some of you all are thinking, isn't racism just seen in a few nut-jobs who are hardly representative of the masses?" you may ask. I'd like to argue that racism is very much alive, and a lot more pervasive than you and I would like to believe. That most of us in this room right now have deeply embedded in us racist attitudes and thoughts. Tony Evans writes, "The racial problem in America is the asterisk on an otherwise respectable reputation. Whether manifesting itself overtly in conflicts between differing racial and cultural groups, or simply lurking below the surface as a suspicion camouflaging the true depth of the problem, it continues to be the one dominant area of our failure as a nation. In spite of our successes in science, education, medicine, and technology, becoming truly 'one nation under God' continues to elude us."

In order to get at this, we need a definition of racism to hang our hats on, and then I want to point you to several indicator lights that when they show up on the dashboard of our souls, reveal to us deep seated racism that we didn't even know was there. But first of all let me define racism as, "A disposition of superiority that is directly tied to a person's ethnicity." So when we talk about racism, we are talking about ethnic superiority. It is thinking and acting like I am better than because of my ethnicity.

But, this is really important that you get this before we come to our text, racism is not just actions, it is a disposition, it is something that flows out of the heart. We are on solid theological ground here. Remember that our passage falls right on the heels of Jesus' teaching in the opening twenty verses of our chapter where he says it's not what goes into the mouth that

defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth. In other words, Jesus is teaching that sin is not ultimately deeds, but it is a disposition. Sin is not so much what I do with my hands, but it is intrinsically a matter of the heart. What I do flows out of who I am.

And here's our problem when we talk about racism: The image that comes to mind is the KKK and the lynchings, and the violent acts and words. If that's your image of racism of course we're all going to say we're not racist. But this is an unbiblical definition. A racist isn't just the person who who says the slur, or lynches, it's the person who has the thought!

FIVE INDICATOR LIGHTS OF RACISM

Let me give you five indicator lights of racism real quick. These are symptoms that could reveal a racist heart, it doesn't mean you are, but it at least mean that you could be. The first indicator asks, "What do you really think, or what do you really express in your safest moments?" What I mean is you're driving down the street and someone cuts you off, or is driving crazy and you pull up and look over and it's a person whose a different ethnicity? What thoughts do you have? Or when you're with your closest buddies who are of the same ethnicity and something happens related to a different ethnicity, what do you talk about?

I'm a recovering racist, so let me just put it out there. Years ago in California me along with my black roommates had an expression for white people when they would frustrate us, "They think they own the world." We were in Jamba Juice one time standing in line, and a woman who happened to be white just came and got right in front of us and ordered. I'm sure it was harmless, but along with my black friends we turned to each other and mouthed, "They think they own the world." That's racist.

The second indicator light is assuming the worst of the other ethnicity. I've got a black friend of mine who has two earned doctorates, who was invited to preach recently in another city. He told me, "Bryan I got picked up from the airport and pulled up at the hotel, and at the same time I was getting out of the car a woman who happened to be white and not paying attention handed me her bags and asked me to take them up to her room, assuming I worked at this hotel. Assuming I was the help." That's racism. She assumed he couldn't possibly afford to stay there and therefore his presence there meant he was the help.

On the other side, I assume that when I go to a white audience to speak that they think I can just entertain them, and that I'm not smart enough to speak to them. See how I am assuming the worst in them? This reveals a subtle racist heart in me.

The third indicator light is service without brotherhood or sisterhood. Is your only contact with the other ethnicity when you're helping them? Or do you have friendships, true friendships with the other? Be careful, because it could reveal a heart that is subtly saying I am superior and will help you,

but now you can't come over my house or we won't have a true friendship. I can help you, but can't learn from you.

The fourth indicator light is to ask yourself, "What angers you the most?" Tim Keller says that what angers us the most reveals our idols. I think that's true in general, but I also believe it can show us racism in our hearts. You know in the book of Jonah, Jonah is furious with God, but why? It is because God saved the Gentile people in Nineveh whom Jonah didn't like. Why didn't Jonah like them, because they were oppressing his people, the Jews. Jonah's anger revealed his racist heart towards them. Jonah's idol was his ethnicity. If Jonah's true identity was in God he would have rejoiced over their salvation, not have gotten mad. Likewise, I can tell you from personal experience that when I've been furious with the other ethnicity, with white people, it's because my identity has been in my blackness, and not my Christ-ness.

The fifth and final indicator light of racism is, avoidance—you just don't engage. They live in their neighborhoods, we live in ours. They go to their schools, we go to ours. They go to their churches, we go to ours. Jim Crowe is dead institutionally, but it is still very much alive in many of our hearts. Many of us live Jim Crowe by way of life. And watch this, show me a racist person, any racist person, and I will at the same time show you someone who does not have any meaningful relationships with the "other." When you avoid your stereotypes are entrenched and the saplings of racism in our hearts is never seriously challenged.

INTENTIONALITY

Now as we come to our passage I want you to notice what Jesus does in verse 21, because it runs contrary to all of the indicator lights of racism that we just talked about. The text says that Jesus went to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Scholar Frederick Dale Bruner says that this is Gentile land, it is a place that is ethnically different than the Jewish region of Galilee where Jesus and his disciples are from. Jesus grabs his disciples by the hand and they go from East Memphis to the other side of Summer Avenue. How did Jesus and the disciples end up here? They did not end up here by accident, they came here strategically, they came here intentionally! Jesus intentionally goes to the other side of the tracks to deal with the demon of racism.

Listen to me, racism is so embedded in our culture, it is so embedded in our hearts because at the end of the day racism is not a structural issue, it is a sin and a pride issue. And if racism is going to be rooted out of our hearts, out of our homes, out of our community we cannot be passive about it, we have to take intentional steps to deal with it!

In the movie, The Help, we see the power of intentionality. There are two primary white women in the movie, Hilly and Skeeter. Hilly is a racist to the nth degree, no doubt about that. She says things that make a person cringe, and leads a campaign to ensure that the black help uses the bathroom

outside of the house entrenching the racial divide. On the other side of the extreme is another white woman named Skeeter. Skeeter is compassionate towards the black help. She doesn't go along with the plan to have them use separate restrooms, in fact she does everything she can to frustrate Hilly's plans. What's the difference between these two white women? Why is one racist, and the other anti-racist? It's simple. Skeeter is not satisfied with just staying on her side of the tracks. Instead she ventures across her own Summer Avenue and sits at the table of these black ladies, getting to know them and their stories. Like Jesus she takes an intentional trip to Sidon. She's intentional.

When's the last time you went to your Tyre and Sidon? When's the last time you went to the other side of the tracks? When's the last time you went intentionally out of your way to be with and do life with the other? Racism will not flee my heart, or your heart until we take a trip to Tyre and Sidon and get to know the other.

CONCLUSION

I close with Three Preaching Lessons for Multi-Ethnic Preaching. First, I intentionally do not take sides politically. Ethnic diversity breeds political diversity. Second, I reject man-made theological labels, whether it is Reformed or Dispensational, or whatever the label. Third, I preach a holistic gospel that deals with both the spiritual and the sociological.

NOTES

1. These stats are taken from John Piper's book, Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011) where he begins the section by saying, "Consider some projections for the United States made in 2008 by the Census Bureau" (p. 51). In the notes section of his book he cites the Census Bureau statistics from the internet website http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/012496.html (accessed March 19, 2010).
2. Piper, 51.
3. Rodney M. Woo, The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 13.
4. Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, Karen Chai Kim, United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation As an Answer to the Problem of Racism (New York: Oxford, 2004), 131.
5. The reason why the statement in the quote from United by Faith is about "half" of the five and a half percent, is that many of these churches are in neighborhoods that have transitioned ethnically since the church began. So maybe the community was an all or majority white one when the church launched, and now some significant time later it has changed. Unwilling to make the adjustments in the current ethnic realities of the community, the church decides to either

relinquish control of its property and give to another church that represents the new ethnic realities, it sells, or takes part in what some of have called "white flight." For more on this see, United by Faith.

6. Soong-Chan Rah, The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity (Carol Stream: IVP, 2009), 12.
7. See: Gary L. McIntosh, Being the Church in a Multiethnic Community: Why It Matters and How It Works (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing Co., 2012).
8. Vishal Mangalwadi, Truth and Transformation: A Manifesto for Ailing Nations (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2009).

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE IN PREACHING LECTURE TWO: I CORINTHIANS 9:19-23

BRYAN LORITTS
Lead Pastor
Fellowship Memphis

INTRODUCTION

The story of Michael Jackson is the stuff of sheer folklore. Born in the town of Gary, Indiana, Michael's father, Joseph was determined to make he and his brothers the best singing and dancing group around. Joseph was so driven that he would rush home from work, push the living room furniture to the side and stand there with belt in hand while his sons nervously went through the steps. If they dared to miss a dance step, or turn left when they were supposed to turn right, they could expect to experience the anger of their father, for Joseph was obsessed with making sure they got the choreography, the dance steps just right.

If the question on the table becomes, what did Joseph Jackson's anger and obsession produce, on many levels we must deem him a success. The Jackson Five became a legendary singing group, and Michael Jackson became the King of Pop, quite possibly the greatest performer to have ever donned a stage. And yet while Joseph Jackson was a success as a manager we would have to render him a failure as a father, for while he got to Michael's feet, he never got to his heart.

There's an even greater tragedy seen across our churches every Sunday. It is to know that our pulpits are filled with Joseph Jackson's-preachers who are so obsessed with making sure that their hearers do all the steps of the Christian life right, that along the way they never engage the heart. Wielding the bible as if it's a belt you can see these Joseph Jackson's demanding that their parishioners do the right things, or don't do certain things. Stop shackin' up, pay your tithes, come to church, serve in ministry, stop the homosexual living, put down the bottle! On and on it goes! Is there a place for calling a spade a spade, and dealing with sin and exhorting right behaviors? Absolutely. But my beef this morning is that we have so concentrated on the feet that we've never gotten to the heart. Our preaching is way too low.

This is wildly important when we talk about multi-ethnic preaching. Most of us won't have a chance being multi-ethnic preachers because our preaching is too low. And what I've discovered almost immediately is that ethnic diversity breeds theological, political and other kinds of diversity. And one of the great blessings of multi-ethnic preaching is that it's forced me to

figure out what's essential, what's important and what's not. If you preach a Republican Gospel, don't be surprised if your church is, well, Republican. If you preach a middle to upper middle class gospel, don't be surprised if the poor don't come. Some of us our preaching is way too narrow, dare I say unbiblically narrow, because we draw distinctions and lines where the bible does not.

PAUL'S PREACHING

It goes without saying that Paul's ministry was a multi-ethnic one. Just about every church he planted was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. When Paul walked into town his methodology was simple, for he had two questions: 1) Take me to the synagogue, and then 2) Take me to the agora, or the marketplace where the Gentiles hang out. He would preach the gospel in the synagogue and some Jews would come to Christ. Then he would preach in Gentile places like Mars Hill or the Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus, and the gospel would be proclaimed with some Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus Christ. What does Paul do? He doesn't plant a church on the north side of town for the Jews, and then a church on the south side of town for the Gentiles. No, he starts one church, and puts these two groups together, and in essence says now that you've been reconciled to God through the gospel, be reconciled to one another. Love one another. Encourage one another. Do life with one another. But please don't miss the point, what brought these two ethnic groups together was the same gospel.

PREACHING/LIVING

The most effective preaching flows from a life that seeks to live the very truths that I preach, notes Paul! Paul preached an eclectic, multi-ethnic gospel, and yet our text tells us that he didn't just preach a multi-ethnic gospel, but that he lived this multi-ethnic gospel. In this text we see Paul reflecting on his friendships, on those he rolls with. And he says I have Jewish friends. That is, "On Monday's you can find me on the Jewish side of town enjoying a kosher meal." But Paul also says that he has Gentile friends. This is what is meant by the phrase "to those outside the law." In other words Paul says on Tuesday's you might find me on the Gentile side of town with pork juice running down the side of my face eating some great barbeque. This is my crowd. Paul's preaching wasn't just multiethnic, his life was multiethnic, too!

Preacher I want to challenge you. You say God's called you to build a multi-ethnic church. Well, you start going down this road, you have to be willing to not just preach to a multi-ethnic context, but your personal friendships and relationships must reflect this.

THE MULTI-ETHNIC GOSPEL

Now the question on the table is why? Paul why do you hang out with Jews and Gentiles? Paul answers this in verse 23 when he says that he does all this for the sake of the gospel. Paul says that his friendships are diverse because the gospel is diverse. We find scriptural proof for this diverse gospel in John 3:16; I John 2:2; Ephesians 2:13-15; and Revelation 5:9-10.

Let me say it this way. If you serve in a context where there are people who look differently, think differently and vote differently from you, and you have no heart to reach them, to connect with them, then preacher you need to pray that God helps you to understand what the gospel is. The very nature of the gospel is diverse!

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

Now I need to make this point, because it's absolutely crucial that we understand this when we talk about multi-ethnic preaching, and that is there is a difference between ethnicity and culture. Within every ethnicity there are different cultures. Acts 6:1-2 demonstrates this point. Here we see the ethnicity—they're Jews. And yet within this ethnicity we see two different cultures. On the one hand, the Hellenist's who were Jews who had assimilated into Greek culture. They spoke the language, dressed the part and acted Greek. On the other hand, were Jews who refused to assimilate, they're the Hebrews. These were Jews who refused to assimilate, and who saw the Hellenist's as sell-outs, dare I even say, Uncle Tom's.

I have this at our church. We have young black dudes who come to our church with gold teeth, pants sagging from the hood. I mean if I saw them at the ATM at night I would be scared! And on the other hand there are blacks like Dr. McKinney who is a Ph.D., that if you closed your eyes you thought you were listening to Rush Limbaugh in the way he talked and what he said. Both are black but two different cultures.

In fact, sociologists tell us that within every ethnicity there are at least three cultures. They classify this by the notations of C1, C2 and C3. So I want to walk you through this. C1's are those who have assimilated into another culture, typically the majority culture. This is what we would call Carlton Banks from the television show "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." He's a Black guy who is really White. In Acts 6, these are the Hellenist's. On the other extreme are C3's. These are people who have a high ethnicity consciousness, who refuse to do anything that would remotely reflect them embracing another ethnicity or culture. Sticking with the acting theme, this is the actor and rapper Ice Cube. In Acts 6, these are the Hebrews. Finally, in the middle are C2's. These are people who are able to connect across different ethnicities and cultures. They transcend ethnicity in a lot of ways. This would be someone like the actor Denzel Washington. My contention

this is that the most effective multi-ethnic preachers are those who are C2's.

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL

Lest you think that this is a lot of sociological babble, we actually see these categories in the Scriptures in the life of Paul. In Philippians 3, Paul is giving his autobiographical background, and one of the things he points out is that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. What does this mean? This is a very perplexing statement. Quite frankly, what he is saying is that he was a C3. If you know anything about the Pharisees, of which Paul was a part, you know that they were a band of C3's, a "rage against the machine" type people. But then when we come to our text, I Corinthians 9, we see a completely different person, who is yes still keeping his Jewish connections, but then he says he hangs out with Gentiles. In other words, and here is what I want you to see, everything about our passage is C2 language. What transitioned Paul from C2 to C3? The gospel.

Furthermore, and this is especially important for our topic, look at Paul's preaching. The very fact that he can go from the synagogue one moment and be on Mars Hill the next, demonstrates his effectiveness to be used as a gospel preacher to draw people into the kingdom. This tells us that in his preaching Paul was C2.

Multiethnic preaching is challenging. Becoming a C2 preacher is challenging. In my own experience I've seen this transformation take place. At our church most of our AA members come from Church of God in Christ backgrounds. Most of our white members come from Southern Baptist, Presbyterian or Church of Christ churches. We have poor people and very wealthy people—like the family who founded Holiday Inn—and everything in between. This has been the grace of God!

I HAVE BECOME

But how have I been able to speak to these people in a way that connects? The same way Paul did, the way he shows us in our text. The operative phrase in our passage is when Paul says, "I have become." Drink those words in slowly: "I have become." The idea here is getting into another person's world, it is getting into their skin. It is the idea of doing life with and developing relationships with the other. And it is out of this becoming that your preaching will be redemptively stretched!

And here's where, and I want to be real sensitive, but here's where I believe minorities intrinsically are more suited for becoming C2 people and preachers. The reason for this is that if you want to be successful as a minority in this country you have to learn how to relate to white ethnicity and culture. YOU HAVE TO. It typically demands talking a certain way, going to their schools, etc. It's just a fact of life. Now my white brothers I want you to know, that's not a two way street. You do not have to come to

our part of town, go to our schools, or speak like us to be successful. You can stay in your own world and never have to "become." And it is because of this that I believe you are ill equipped to being a C2 kind of person and preaching, but with God's help you can be.

There's hope. My closest friend at the church is the grandson of the founder of Holiday Inn. As you can imagine he grew up privileged, and in a lot of ways rather sheltered. About ten years ago he began to see this and took some drastic steps to "I have become." He enrolled as a student in a black seminary, because he wanted to get a taste of our world. At the same time he began praying that God would give him black friends. He said to me, the second time we met, that I am the answer to his prayers. He has become. Out of his steps and prayers something beautiful has formed among us. All of this was fueled by the gospel.

CONCLUSION

In 1945 *Life Magazine* published a memorable edition that had on its cover people hugging and embracing each other in an excited way. Soldiers hugging soldiers, civilians hugging civilians and soldiers hugging civilians. Seeing this photo you automatically assume that these were long separated friends and lovers who are reunited. But research revealed that these people were complete strangers. So why are they hugging so excitedly and emphatically as if they knew each other for years? Well, you know your history, 1945 marked the end of WWII for us. And these individuals were reacting to the news that we had won, and this news brought complete strangers together. I think you get the point: good news brings people together.

Two thousand years ago there was a greater event, with even greater news. That is because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us we are now reconciled to God, and we should be reconciled to each other. Why plant multi-ethnic churches? Why go through the process of I have become? The good news of Jesus Christ!

NUTS AND BOLTS OF CULTURE-SENSITIVE SERMONS

VIC ANDERSON
Dallas Theological Seminary
Dallas, Texas

ABSTRACT: Every preaching event is affected by the interplay of three distinct cultures: the culture of the preacher, diverse multiple cultures of the listeners, and the culture of the specific local church. Preachers seeking to be audience-focused must engage all three strata of culture and consciously adapt multiple elements of their sermons. These adaptations range from cultural accommodation to cultural confrontation. In this paper, the author draws from the fields of missiology, cultural anthropology, and socio-linguistics as well as from his extensive experience preaching at an international church attended by people from over 40 countries. The paper focuses on five specific areas of sermons where sensitivity to multiple cultures could impact sermon design and delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Homileticians have before them a fascinating array of theoretical questions concerning the relationships of culture to preaching. There are questions about definitions of culture, and whether or not culture is to be viewed as positive, neutral, or negative.[1] There are distinctions between deep culture and surface culture as well as culture's constituent parts, namely, worldview, beliefs, and behaviors.[2] Some attempt to develop methods for analyzing culture, whether diachronically, synchronically, at a macro-level, a micro-level, or congregation-specific level.[3] Others address the relationship of Christianity to culture, that is, when to accommodate culture, when to confront culture, when to transform culture, when to withdraw from culture, and a host of options in between. Such theoretical concerns appear to be gaining importance for preachers and professors of preaching.[4]

This paper acknowledges the fundamental importance of these theoretical issues for the field of homiletics. However, my intention here is to take as a starting point the practical implications of shaping a sermon rather than these theoretical issues. In other words, this essay assumes that the preacher knows something of the culture(s) of his specific audience and is ready to adapt the sermon accordingly. At issue for this preacher is, "What can I adapt?" The short answer to that question is that since every element of logos, ethos, and pathos is judged by the audience, every element of the sermon must be adapted to that audience.[5] While that answer may be true, it provides little guidance for the preacher wrestling with sermon

design as the clock ticks toward Sunday. The following pages draw attention to five points where cultural sensitivity may be reflected in sermon design. These practical suggestions intentionally grapple with the nuts and bolts of modifying sermon details as the preacher is informed by cultural features of the audience. The list of suggestions is far from exhaustive; rather, it is a starting point for moving from audience analysis to specifics of sermon design.

SERMON ADAPTATIONS

1. The Pre-Introduction

Classical rhetoric posits that ethos develops both before and during the speaker's presentation.[6] Prior to the actual start of the sermon, an audience begins the process of judging the speaker. The preacher therefore must determine how the audience will assess him as a good person, an individual worth listening to, and then provide good reasons through the pre-introduction for the audience to assess him positively. This subconscious assessment by the audience depends on how the acher measures up to the listeners' conception of what makes a good preacher.[7] On one hand, the good (ideal) preacher could be positioned as trusted friend and guide or coach. This may include the idea of preacher as informed teacher and even co-learner. On the other hand, the good preacher could be positioned in the audience's mind as a channel for God's voice, a prophetic individual who comes with spiritual power. Of course, there are multiple variations on these two options. The point here is that several elements of the pre-introduction may be impacted based on the answer to this question about the ideal preacher. For example, assuming that another individual introduces the speaker, that person will want to emphasize those elements of the preacher that predispose the audience toward a positive ethos. If the ideal preacher is viewed as a credible teacher, the introduction might mention schools attended, degrees attained, publications, etc. to demonstrate academic credibility and affirm that the preacher is a good individual because of his academic accomplishments. On the other hand, where the ideal preacher is to be seen as having spiritual power and prophetic voice, the introduction to that preacher would not mention academic accomplishments. Doing so may well reduce ethos. Rather, the introduction should emphasize spiritual qualities, perhaps even indicating that God has sent the preacher to this congregation at this time. In this situation, the audience is drawn to a speaker who overcame obstacles to come to them and present a message from God. The audience thinks more highly of this speaker if it can be shown that he is close to God functions as His servant.

Multiple other factors come into play in the pre-introduction. Factors may include whether or not the preacher greets the audience, how long the greeting is, and what is said in the greeting. In some cultures, a short greeting

is considered a rude brushing aside of the audience. In other cultures, a long personal greeting is considered a waste of the listeners' time. They want to hear the teacher's ideas more than feel his spirituality. At issue is the proper way (as culturally defined) for a preacher to establish relationship with the audience. Similar comments could be made about clothing (shirt tail in or out, tie on or off or loosened in a workman-like fashion, jacket on or off, etc.), and shoes (polished versus casual). Even whether one uses a pulpit, music stand, or no stand at all communicates differently from one audience to another.

2. Overall Sermon Design and Style

In this section, we consider a few elements that extend throughout the sermon presentation. Whether or not to structure the sermon inductively or deductively is a function primarily of audience appeal, not structure of the text.[8] A more science-oriented audience may prefer an inductive approach, especially if the speaker has less credibility on a topic and that topic may be opposed by the listeners. African or African-American churches, on the other hand, often have a preference for deductive arrangement, perhaps because of the ease with which vocal audience participation can be included with increased clarity of the deductive arrangement.

Another issue rippling through the sermon deals with approach to the text. Some audiences (more frequently in the West) view the text as far removed from their contemporary lives. There is a large gap to overcome between text and us. Others see a complete collapse of the biblical and contemporary horizons, feeling that the Bible is written directly to them. A preacher who honors cultural distance between text and us by emphasizing, "God spoke to them," (referring to the Israelites. Romans, Corinthians, or other recipient of the Biblical text) runs the risk of alienating an audience that already feels a closeness to God by reading the Bible directly. Likewise, a preacher who collapses Biblical and contemporary horizons by emphasizing, "what God says to us in the Bible" runs the risk of alienating an audience that is attuned to text-us distance. For such an audience, a direct reading of the text devalues biblical history and literary analysis.

A third element in this section relates to style and tone of the sermon. If a preacher knows that an audience values high volume, a quick pace, and an embellished style, the sermon can be designed for these characteristics to recur throughout. Likewise, a contemplative, exploratory tone can be built into sermon design. Kennedy[9] recognizes that some cultures expect formal speech, with its high degree of coding and distancing of the speaker from the audience. Some of the formality may be carried in terms such as "Reverend" (as opposed to pastor, bishop, brother, or priest), "Eucharist" (as opposed to communion or Lord's Table) or "sanctuary" (as opposed to auditorium or worship center). Employing the preferences of an audience and then employing those preferences throughout the sermon helps the preacher

heighten ethos.

Another sermon adaptation related to style comes with accommodation for people who are listening to a sermon that is not delivered in their mother tongue. In these situations, preachers increase ethos (and perhaps clarity as well) by sprinkling in key words in the mother tongue of listeners. For example, many 2nd and 3rd generation Hispanics speak Spanglish, a mixture of English and Spanish. It provides them with a cultural identity distinct from their homeland but connected to it. Advertisers have found that television commercials and print media can be more effective when utilizing this Spanish–English hybrid. Likewise, a preacher might select key words from the text or in an illustration and use the mother tongue language of the listeners. My personal observation is that by using a few Amharic words and phrases at key points in sermons I delivered in Ethiopia, I gained increased interest from and connection with the native Amharic speakers. The preacher moves one step closer to being an insider.

3. Introductions

Opening moments of a sermon normally are designed to arrest attention and surface need. The former goal often is pursued by use of an image whose concrete nature captures the imagination of listeners. The ideal image also provides an easy bridge to the establishment of need or statement of the Main Idea. Such an image also must fit, or at least not offend, the culture of the audience. Consider two examples from real sermons I delivered. In a sermon on hell, I wanted an opening image that would illustrate how people can be deceived in thinking that moving forward is good, even when the movement actually brings them closer to destruction. When the sermon was delivered at a small Bible church in Dallas, I crafted an opening image set in Nazi Germany. In this image, Jews willingly climbed into boxcars that would take them to concentration camps for execution. They eagerly left the ghetto thinking that there was good in front of them, but the good turned out to be destruction in the gas chambers. A few months later I was to preach this sermon at an international church in Ethiopia. In the congregation of 1500 people, I knew that some parishioners would certainly call Germany home and others were Jews by birth. The effects of a holocaust-oriented opening image on those groups of people were unpredictable, and I could not risk alienating these people at the outset of the sermon. So I changed the opening image to one more compatible with life in Ethiopia. The new opening image featured a skit involving a family traveling by train. In this humorous drama, all family members slowly left the train as they heard repeated warnings of a bridge out. The husband ignored the warnings and fell into the ravine. As a skit, the mini-drama was well received, bringing focus on the need in a humorous analogous manner.

A second example of adapting a sermon's image to connect to culture illustrates the pervasiveness of Western media in the non-Western world. In

a recent sermon on Genesis 6, I needed an opening image that would orient the audience to mankind's desire to go beyond his God-given boundaries. After much pondering, I recalled how Buzz Lightyear had just this kind of desire in the movie Toy Story. Buzz sought to be a real Space Ranger, not just a toy in Andy's room. The image was perfect—except for the fact that I would be speaking in Ethiopia, far away from the reach of Pixar animated films. Or so I thought! I consulted with several people from the congregation and was repeatedly told that most people in the international church had seen the film and would connect with the image. I went forward with the Toy Story image, fearful that I would violate cultural sensitivities. Yet, true to my investigation, the congregation welcomed the image enthusiastically and it accomplished the purpose I intended. In this case, adapting the sermon to the culture meant using an image that I originally thought would fail to connect with the audience. Its success was due in part to the reach of Western media through various avenues of distribution around the world.

Perhaps even more critical than in the opening image, sermons must adapt to culture when surfacing need. It is hard to overestimate the importance of cultural sensitivity in this initial touch upon relevance. In this case, the culture under consideration is often the cultures of society in which Christians must express their faith. The preacher must understand how the cultural context of the world impacts members of the congregation and then devise appropriate sermon adaptations for surfacing need. In the previously mentioned sermon from Genesis 6, I had to move from the attention-getting image of Buzz Lightyear to the real life temptations of people to step beyond their God-given positions as human beings. How are people tempted by their worlds to engage in such God-defying activity? Complicating the challenge in this sermon setting was the fact that the audience ranged from traditional animistic Ethiopians to well-educated modernized westerners. The solution came in surfacing need at two extremes related to creation of super-humans. For the animist, I described the compelling lure of going to a medicine man (witch doctor) to invoke the common practice of gaining a special potion or prayer that would cause a child to grow more intelligent or more beautiful than his or her peers. With the assistance of a medicine man, parents could help their child overcome natural limitations. For the westerners in the crowd, this illustration would be fascinating at best and amusing at worst. To surface the same need in this cultural context, I described the lure of genetic engineering. The hope of manipulating DNA is that the process can help us overcome the limitations of our humanity and create super-humans. These examples demonstrate that a similar need extends across cultures but expression of that need must be adapted to cultural specifics. In this case, both cultures experience the lure of overcoming human limitations by stepping beyond God-given boundaries. Yet this temptation is express through consulting a medicine man in one culture and through consulting a genetics specialist in the other.

4. Explanation of the Biblical Text

Every expository sermon devotes some of its airtime to explanation of the Biblical text. Cultural sensitivity demands that preachers adjust both the extent of that explanation and the method of explanation to the characteristics of our church culture. For example, consider a sermon from Ephesians 1 where the word "adoption" is found in the text. In a North American context where adoption is common, little explanation of the practice is needed. The preacher could move quickly into connotations associated with the word picture. If that same text was being addressed to a rural Ethiopian audience, a significant amount of explanation would be needed as the closest equivalent to the concept actually works against the Biblical meaning. In rural Ethiopia, an "adopted" child is called a "bread child," that is, one who works in the family for bread and a place to sleep. On some occasions, adoption becomes a metaphor for legalized child slave labor. What a far cry from the Biblical ideal! A similar phenomenon may occur when Americans try to envision the meaning of "shepherd." In this cultural context, shepherds are virtually nonexistent, resulting in a romanticized image of the gentle shepherd who spends time joyfully carrying and soothing his compliant pet-like sheep. In reality, sheep are dirty, stinky, stubborn, and prone to wandering away from the flock. Shepherds must be strong protectors of sheep, perhaps even driving them to the place they need to be. Congregants who brush up with sheep every day need little explanation. North Americans may need a great deal of assistance for their accurate comprehension.

Preachers also might consider adapting to the culture their methods of explaining the Biblical text. Some church cultures are characterized by an atmosphere of intense Bible study. This is evidenced in a high percentage of congregants carrying Bibles, notebooks, and pens. They are literate and anticipate definitions and cross-referencing. They love connecting Biblical ideas from one part of the Bible to another. In such settings, preachers will want to demonstrate clearly how their ideas are from the text. Whether backing up narrative texts with epistolary units or illustrating non-narrative texts with didactic ones, preachers do well in this cultural context to satisfy audience demands for proofs directly from the broad sweep of scripture. Alternatively, some audiences are less concerned about study of the text and more concerned with experiencing God's presence. In such contexts, preachers need to invest in more connections with contemporary life and argument than with cross-references and definitions. Where literacy is minimal and few people carry Bibles with them, cross-referencing ideas may have little value.

5. Applications

In this final area we examine how cultural sensitivity affects spheres of applications as well as consideration of ethics. Preachers serious about

application naturally begin with spheres close to their own lives. Often it is not far from a preacher's own spheres of application to those of many in his congregation. But as the cultural spheres become different, applicational spheres must as well. In my own life, I may link application to playing golf, eating a family meal, caring for my yard, or sitting contentedly with my dog. These areas have extensive overlap with people in my Dallas church. Each of these areas, however, is unfamiliar to people in the cultural context of an African rural church. Golf, of course, is completely foreign, and many people have never even seen the sport. Tiger Woods is not a media giant everywhere in the world. While most residents of Dallas engage regular battles with fire ants and crab grass to keep their lawns appealing, their African counterparts may have little sense of performing weekly lawn care. A dog may be labeled "man's best friend" in America, but in Ethiopia dogs are bred to be vicious and serve a function of guarding one's property. Such beasts are meant to strike fear in people, not curl up on one's lap or hop in the back seat of the family sedan for a trip to the store. Even the practice of a family meal looks different in cultures where children do not eat at the same time as parents. Of course, examples could be multiplied endlessly. The point is that spheres of application are heavily influenced by culture, and preachers must learn well the cultures where they seek to effectively apply their sermons.

Beyond the sphere of applications, ethics themselves are culturally conditioned.[10] Ethics particularly regarding use of money are strongly conditioned by culture.[11] A brief example is worth considering. North American Christians state their love for truth and their hatred for lying. Deception is nearly always wrong and transparency is normally good. These values would hold true even if it brought emotional pain into a situation. Applications that line up with this cultural value are generally given assent. In Ethiopia, however, there is a long-standing appreciation for proper use of deception. Deception is honored when it is skillfully employed to promote a greater good. As witnessed in the phenomenon of Wax and Gold, wisdom may even be carried forward in a shroud of deception. This value is often at work in the dynamics of relaying bad news to loved ones. Although one may know that a friend's mother has died, the report given will be that she is sick. This aberration from the truth would be considered the properly loving thing to do. Only the closest family member could relay such terrible news about the family matriarch. Clearly, cultural dynamics are at work in circumscribing ethics. A preacher may decide that this kind of practice violates Biblical norms for truth-telling and must be confronted. If so, he will want to approach the application with a full understanding of how the cultural dynamics work. Without that sensitivity, the application could be more destructive than helpful.

CONCLUSION

Culturally-sensitized preaching touches a wide variety of sermon

design issues. The five areas listed above only begin to address some of the design issues. Further, each of the design issues above can be explored more deeply. However, armed even with this brief list of touch-points, preachers can begin to move beyond analysis of culture to actual modification of sermon design. Homileticians are not students of culture so that they might better talk about cultural dynamics. Rather, they are students of church cultures and of broader societal cultures so that their sermons will have the greatest impact possible for the glory of God.

NOTES

1. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 76. See also Victor Anderson "Tuning sermons for different ears: help for sermon design from socio-linguistics." Trinity Journal no. 33 (2012): 11. See also Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers Ministering Cross-Culturally (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1986), 75.
2. Paul G. Hiebert, Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change Reprint, 2nd. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).
3. For a proposal on analyzing congregations as speech communities, see the author's article, "Tuning Sermons for Different Ears: Help for Sermon Design from Socio-linguistics." Anderson 2012.
4. A moment's reflection provides several reasons why concerns over culture are gaining importance. (1) Around the world, impacts of instant communication and increased travel bring rapid change to many cultures, particularly in urban and suburban settings. (2) Preachers increasingly find themselves preaching into many cultures, especially with the explosion of technologies that bring a sermon in one location to a world-wide audience. (3) With the ease of travel, many preachers are addressing widely divergent audiences, often faced with the challenge of adapting a sermon from one audience to another. (4) Professors of preaching find themselves addressing students from multiple countries who will be returning to vastly different cultural contexts. These four dynamics intensify the need to understand how culture impacts preaching.
5. The assumption here is that exegesis is not subject to cultural considerations other than (1) the exegete becoming aware of his or her own cultural biases, and (2) the exegete's commitment to examining the text as situated in specific biblical cultural contexts.
6. Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid, Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999,) 53-65.
7. Victor Anderson, Implicit Rhetorical Theory of Preachers in Wolaitta Ethiopia with Implications for Homiletics Instruction in Theological Education, School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University, La

Mirada, 2008.

8. Hogan and Reid, 123-135, provide four major structural arrangements for sermons. Selection of an arrangement is based on the preacher's perception of how the audience assesses argument. Though the authors do not develop this, it is understood that cultural factors play a role in audience expectations.
9. George A. Kennedy, Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Approach (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
10. Bernard T. Adeney, Strange virtues: Ethics in a multicultural world (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995).
11. David E. Maranz, African Friends and Money Matters (Duncanville: SIL Inernational and International Museum of Cultures, 2001).

THE GOD WHO ILLUSTRATES: DEVELOPING ILLUSTRATIVE HOMILETICAL PRACTICE

ADRIAN LANE
Victoria, Australia

ABSTRACT: God communicates through illustration. This paper, designed for preachers and preachers-in-training, seeks to explore the nature of that illustration and the implications for homiletics. It argues that illustration is far more than a means of supporting argument or concept, but is a means of inherently communicating truth through imagery and story. Rather than being reductionist, good illustration amplifies meaning through multivalence, as in typology. Principles and tools for developing illustrative homiletical practice consonant with the Scriptures are then explored, including the use of reversal and escalation.

PREACHING IN A VISUAL POST-MODERN WORLD?

People often comment that we live in a world full of images—a visual world. Another common observation is that we live in a post-modern world, where one's own experience and story is substantial, if not determinative, and where there is suspicion, if not rejection, of any meta-narrative. Is there, then, any place for authoritative, oral preaching in our visual world? Some consider preaching at best a quaint medium of the past, not unlike gramophone records or black and white movies. Some can't imagine how an invisible God, even if He existed, could intersect with their story.

This article explores the use of illustration in preaching. Illustrations and illustrative language draw heavily upon image and story. Even though preaching is essentially an oral-aural medium—and there are fundamental reasons why this remains crucial[1]—biblical preaching will necessarily contain much visual reference. Moreover, even though preaching is about a God who does make an authoritative call on our lives, it is about a God who makes and tells stories. In fact, He is already deeply involved in our story and is longing to include us even more in his grand and eternal story. Classically, these concepts of imagery and story have been referred to as illustration. They are integral to preaching. Webster's defines an illustration as "an example or instance that helps make something clear."[2] Preachers seek to communicate the word of God clearly: doing this will mean skilful use of illustration.

Two Styles of Preachers

In my experience, most preachers fall into one of two groups. If

you're a preacher, I'll let you make your own self-evaluation. On one hand there are those who love telling stories, who naturally engage an audience. They paint pictures with words. Often these preachers have good experience in children's or youth ministry, or have worked in sales. Their danger as preachers is that, relying on their ability to communicate, they fail to work hard at understanding and communicating the Scriptures carefully. Audiences always enjoy and commend their sermons, but have they heard the word of God? On the other hand, there are those preachers who apply themselves studiously to the Scriptures, garnering and gleaning its truths, but who wrestle with engagement and communication. They realise their sermons lack variety and are wooden, even boring. This is often because their sermons are too propositional, abstract or conceptual. As preachers they are usually looking for help. The good news is that preachers can grow in this area.

The Problem of Privileging Propositions

Occasionally a few in this latter group don't realise they have a problem. They are generally strong propositional thinkers themselves and assume all learn this way.[3] They may consider, consciously or unconsciously, that this is the only way to grow as a Christian and so are committed to training their listeners in a particular process or style of thinking. They may think of illustrations simply as supports to the expression and understanding of ideas. In this perspective illustrations are generally regarded as secondary, or derivative. However, this approach is fraught with dangers. It can privilege concept over identity, the word of the person over the person, and the description of the relationship over the relationship itself. More importantly, this approach doesn't mirror God's.[4]

THE GOD WHO ILLUSTRATES

God is indeed interested in thinking and the things of the mind. He made our minds and He is God of our minds. He loves our minds and He expects us to use and develop them. Significantly, He calls for our transformation by the complete renewal of our minds.[5] Furthermore, God often reveals aspects of himself and his work through careful argument, such as in the detailed reasoning in Romans 1-11 or Hebrews. However, God doesn't limit his revelation to argument. Indeed, the vast bulk of God's revelation is not in this style. Nor do the Scriptures suggest that argument is a "higher" order of revelation than other forms, though, of course, it is sometimes used to interpret and clarify other forms, just as other forms are used to clarify it. "God is love"[6]—a proposition. That love is *demonstrated* materially and in relationship. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."[7] In other words, the incarnation shows, demonstrates and illustrates

God's love. Moreover, God's love is evidenced in the creation and in the whole Biblical story. This story is itself made up of hundreds of stories, miracles, parables, songs, poems, proverbs, dreams and visions. All these genres communicate truth employing illustration. The Psalms and Proverbs are full of illustrations. The prophets are replete with illustration. Each of the parables is an illustration. Miracles usually have an illustrative component. Apocalyptic writing is mostly illustration. Interestingly, even those parts of the Bible which may not appear at first to be illustrative, such as the accounts of Israel's history and its leaders, or the design of the tabernacle, or the law, are often seasoned with illustrative language and are later described as illustrative.[8]

Preaching that unduly focuses on the conceptual is therefore unrepresentative of the Biblical testament. It could even be effectively communicating an alternative perspective, such as asceticism or Gnosticism. God isn't just a God of rational thinking. He makes and delights in things. He makes and delights in a people. He relates. He demonstrates. He illustrates, through image and story. Illustrations, then, are far more substantial than just as props or aids to argument. In the Scriptures, they are the means to a relationship and its mature development. Often they are integral to the outworking of that relationship, such as the plagues in Egypt or the signs in the early church.[9] Often they bring greater understanding of a larger truth, such as the miracles in John.[10] Often they communicate in their own context, but also function as part of a larger truth, as in typology. Sometimes they are in fact the very essence of what they illustrate, as with the incarnation.

The Crucial Importance for Preachers of Understanding Illustration

Understanding the nature of illustrations and working with them well is therefore a key component of the preaching task. At the least it obviously involves understanding and communicating God's use of illustration in the Bible. However, for the contemporary preacher, it is much more than this. It involves developing insight into how God is currently working and demonstrating in his world—including our own lives.[11] And, as people made in the image of God and filled with his gifting Spirit, it involves developing our God-given abilities to similarly illustrate as we communicate "the whole counsel of God."[12] This ability to understand and use illustrations well is so integral to preaching that some have argued that unless one is a good illustrator and storyteller one cannot be a good preacher. The aim of this article is therefore to help preachers intentionally cultivate illustrative homiletical practice – to help them gather together, order, clarify, name and develop much they are no doubt already practising intuitively.

LET'S TRAIN OUR FOCUS

So let's continue with a personal exercise. If you're like me, it's

always tempting to jump past an exercise or give it a cursory overview. But you'll get more out of this article—and hopefully improve the quality of your preaching— by taking the time to stop and sit with the questions. You'll need some means of recording your answers. Give yourself about twenty minutes.

Make a list of the places you have lived, worked and visited. Make a list of some of the memorable events in your life, some of the interesting people you've met, and some of the passions and interests you have. When was your most embarrassing moment? Your most vulnerable?—or at least the moments you'd be prepared to share publicly. When were you most excited, expectant, happy, thankful? When were you most scared, lonely, worried? When were you most tempted, frustrated, angry?

What do you note about yourself from this exercise? Initially, I hope you notice how full and rich your life has been. I hope too you notice how interesting your life has been—though what is familiar and routine may not seem interesting to you because of its very familiarity. I hope too you've glimpsed how you might use some of your experiences illustratively in a sermon. However, let's not run ahead of ourselves. The point of the exercise is not simply to surface material from your experience which might be used in your preaching. Rather, it's to help you develop an illustrative homiletical mindset—where you become more alert to the world around you, more alert to the events and feelings you are experiencing, more alert to your own story, and more alert to making connections between all this and the person, work and word of God.

This exercise also illustrates an ever-present danger in our understanding and use of illustrations, important to note from the outset. While all your answers help me come to know you, in all your variety and richness, the answers are not you. They tell me about you and are integral to who you are, but you not just the sum of these experiences. You are a person. In a similar way, knowing about God and his work helps us come to know Him, but is no substitute for the dynamic friendship God is keen to have with each one of us.[13] Preachers need to pray for and foster in listeners a hunger for knowing God, not just knowing about God.

Illustrations Convey through Experienced Truth

Illustrations help us know God. They convey and clarify truths, understanding and knowledge of God. In contrast to a truth expressed abstractly, illustrations convey *experienced* truth. By this I do not mean truth I personally have experienced, but truth that has an evident experiential component to it. The implications of this are significant and extensive. They point us to a God who creates, sustains, and delights in his creation, notably his people. So important is this creation God sent his Son to die for its redemption and re-creation. This saving work required the incarnation, thus proving the value of the *material*. The incarnation also testifies to the centrality of *relationship*, both in the Trinity and the creation. Christ delighted

in and was nurtured by his relationship with his Father. He also enjoyed and worked in his world, delighting in and honouring his friends. In other words, God is more than just a God of ideas—glorious as that is—but He "became flesh"[14] and is essentially relational. Being made in the image of God we too are essentially relational. Furthermore, we live in a world we generally understand as both material and spiritual. This is our daily experience. This is the world we know. God in his kindness reveals himself to us in these terms. Illustrations will therefore evidence the persons and relationships in the Trinity, as well as all that is in creation, and the relationships in it.

Illustrations Use a Wide Variety of Referents

Illustrations convey experienced truth by means of a *referent*. In some way the truth is like this referent. Referents may be images, metaphors or stories.[15] They may be something material, such as a vine, the tabernacle, water or wine. The referent may be a human action, feeling or thought, such as, "the trees of the field will clap their hands"[16] or "trampling the Son of God underfoot."[17] The referent may be focussed on a person, such as the nature of Melchizedek[18] or the faithfulness of the saints in Hebrews 11. The referent may come from an action or process in the natural world, such as a ewe mothering its lamb or anger being as fire. The referent may be narratival, such as the lessons from the exodus or the exile for later believers.[19] Many of the parables have narratival referents. Paul uses his own experiences as narratival referents.[20] The referent may be a miracle, such as the feeding of the 5000 or the raising of Lazarus. The referent may be God himself, such as how our human relationships ought to reflect the relationships in the Trinity.[21]

Referents may be essential, as in the incarnation, or analogous, as in the lessons from Israel's history. They may be real, as in Peter's vision of the unclean food in Acts 10:12, or they may be imagined, as in the parables. The Bible brims with an overflowing cornucopia of illustrations, using a wonderful range of referents. The tongue is a bit, a rudder, a spark, a fire, a world of evil, a restless evil, full of deadly poison, fresh water, salt water, figs, olives, grapes—all in the one pericope![22] Likewise, Jesus is the word, the light, the lamb and the Son of Man—all in the first chapter of John.

Understanding Illustrations Helps Us Understand the Bible

Since illustrations communicate through experienced truth, they will assist us in our wrestling with the *meaning* of the Biblical text and its *communication*. For example, as I think about what it means for the creation to "wait in eager expectation," yet be "groaning as in the pains of childbirth,"[23] I consider when I too have been expectant. Wrestling with the experience of expectancy and childbirth helps me not only to clarify the meaning of the text but to identify the most appropriate means for conveying its truth. Parents expecting a baby know that the wait, preparation and delivery will

be a mix of excitement, sobriety and pain. They also know that in the joy of new birth, that pain will be put in perspective. In a similar way, the children of God know that the creation, including their own bodies, will ultimately be redeemed, even though the wait, preparation and "delivery" entails suffering. They also know that as they and the creation groan in labour, the Spirit himself intercedes and assists with those groans of imminent delivery. They also know that after this redemption there will be "no more crying or pain."[24] In the meantime, we need to wait in eager expectation, preparing patiently, in certain hope. Exploring and understanding the illustration thus helps us better understand the meaning of the text and the best means for its communication.

Illustrations Aid Identification, Application and Engagement

Since illustrations communicate through experienced truth, they will also enable *identification* and thereby, *application*. Paul's wrestling over the sin in his life, his awareness of his vulnerability and mortality, his longing for his redeemed body and his response to his "thorn in the flesh" are all deeply personal illustrations we can identify with and apply to ourselves.[25] Similarly, the story of how the Spirit has convicted the preacher and led to repentance will often resonate with others, challenging them and modelling a way forward. This use of experienced truth will also assist *engagement* and therefore learning in general. Chiefly this is due to identification and pertinence. It will also be due to inherent interest and variety in communication mode.

Illustrations Involve All the Senses

Since illustrations communicate through experienced truth, they will involve all the senses, both in their expression and content. In terms of expression, verbal illustrations can be anything from a single word to a phrase, a story or even a whole sermon. Illustrations can also be non-verbal, such as a hum or a knock. Many illustrations are visual, such as a visual aid or gesture. When Jesus took "a little child and had him stand beside him"[26] he powerfully used a tangible visual illustration to teach about greatness. No doubt the small boy and his family never forgot the occasion, passing it down the generations! Illustrations can even be olfactory, such as the scent of perfume, or the aroma of cooking meat. Many illustrations involve a combination of senses, such as a movie clip. Even the preacher, as a preacher, serves as a multi-sensory illustration, consciously or not.

DEVELOPING ILLUSTRATIVE HOMILETICAL PRACTICE

How then can preachers grow in their illustrative homiletical practice? What makes a good illustration?

Good Illustrations Convey Truth Clearly

Good illustrations convey truth, and they convey it *clearly*. By their referential nature not every aspect of the referent will line up. Hills cannot clap. The kingdom is not a mustard seed, nor a net. Therefore, the pertinent aspects of the referent must be clear. For example, Jesus makes it clear that the kingdom is like a mustard seed because of its initial small size and its extensive growth, not because it is a hot condiment. The truth conveyed in an illustrative story, for instance, must match the truth the preacher is seeking to communicate. There needs to be a clean, comfortable and enhancing fit. Too many stories in sermons are cluttered with extraneous details. This is sometimes to raise interest and engagement. However, it makes it difficult for the audience to locate the truth. Details need to be rigorously pruned so that only the details pertinent to the truth's communication are included, in appropriate proportion. Listeners can thereby plainly discern the truth conveyed. Of course, sometimes an illustration or story is deliberately mysterious, in order to entice engagement. Yet nonetheless here too, often moreso, only those details pertinent to the communication of its truths are included. There will also be those times when the preacher deliberately veils the truth to certain parties in an audience by means of illustration, as Jesus himself sometimes did in the parables,[27] or, for instance, in settings of persecution. In these circumstances the illustrations are still crafted carefully to convey truth, but with the added purpose of only conveying it to certain listeners.

Nothing must distract in an illustration. Similarly, it must not be justifiably open to misunderstanding. Many illustrations have to be jettisoned, or at least set aside temporarily, because they do not quite fit, even though they may be fascinating images or stories the preacher just can't wait to use! They are like metric nuts on imperial bolts. Even that illustration may need to be jettisoned for an audience unfamiliar with imperial and metric measures. Some illustrations have to be discarded because they are too complex, or raise extraneous issues. Some may be heard as racist or sexist.

A related problem is when the preacher fails to give enough information to convey the truth being expressed. Often during a sermon review I will ask the preacher the purpose of an unclear illustration. The preacher will almost always give an apt reply. Generally, this succinct response needed to be included in the sermon. Unfortunately, because the preacher was so familiar with the truth they were seeking to communicate, not enough material was provided for the audience to grasp it. The preacher presumed it was clear. Naturally, there is a balance between providing too little information and providing too much. Too much information can mean an illustration loses its ongoing interest or mystery, as in an explained joke. But remember—you may have been pondering this illustration for some time, whereas for your audience, this is their first hearing. Audiences will

also differ in terms of their insight and knowledge. In many cases, a clear summative line which may be repeated is called for. James, for example, illustrates how a rich man is like a wild flower. He then summarises his point, "In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business."[28]

Good Illustrations Focus on the Truth

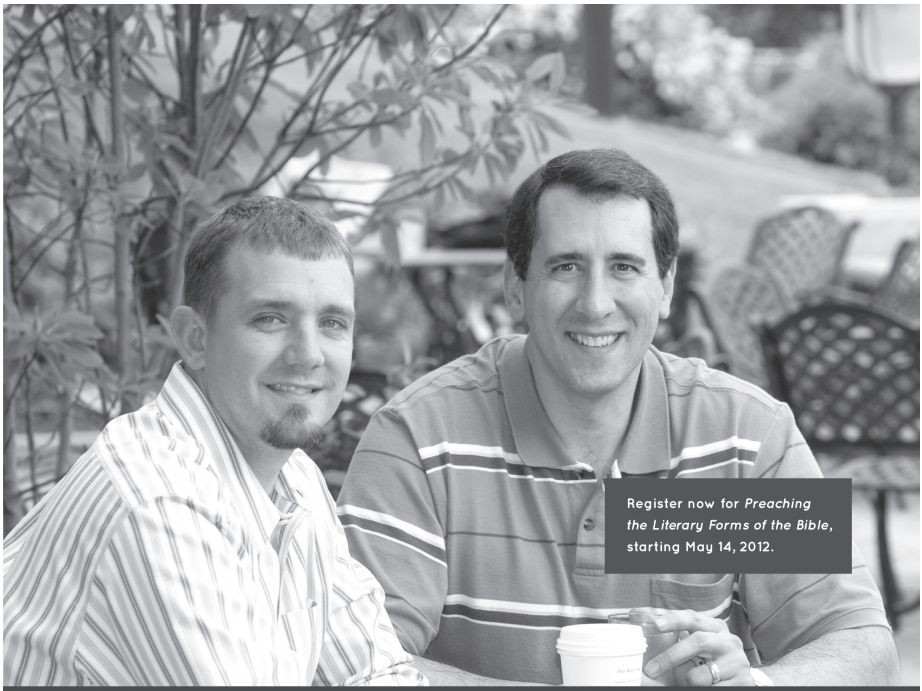
Good illustrations lead the listener to *focus* on the truth being expressed, not its referent. It is all too easy for the referent to "take over". This is a real danger with personal illustrations, powerful stories and movie clips. Listeners enjoy and remember the illustration, but miss the truth being expressed. Even if they grasp the truth for a moment, it is often the referent alone that lingers. Again, a clear summative line, framed, for instance, as "Just as…, so…" will help the focus to move from the referent to the truth conveyed.

Good Illustrations Embed the Truth

Nonetheless, while illustrations convey truth, they do not reduce it. They are not reductionist. When Flannery O'Connor was asked the point of one of her stories, apparently she replied, "If I could answer that, I wouldn't have written the story."[29] In other words, truth is *embedded* in the story, as story. This is a difficult concept for Western minds trained in rational analytical thought to understand and work with. We keep wanting to reduce the illustration or story to a set of propositions.[30] Yet it was not difficult for Jesus' listeners. They often all too quickly understood the truths being conveyed in his stories, parables and miracles, as the Pharisees' responses show.[31] For more sympathetic listeners, these illustrations were internalised, becoming part of their individual and community heritage, memory and identity. The truth, in the form of illustration and story had become core, as illustration and story.

Good Illustrations Amplify the Truth through Multivalence

While illustrations convey truth, they simultaneously *amplify* it. Illustrations amplify the truth conveyed by referencing or resonating with other illustrations and by allowing, to the point of ensuring, their words to work at a number of layers of meaning. This is sometimes termed *multivalence*. Through this means, good illustrations are extraordinarily *evocative*. Listeners are not unused to this, commonly experiencing multivalence in double-entendres, puns and word-plays, in advertising, humour, poetry and children's media, which often has embedded in it layers of meaning for adults.



"I CHOSE THE PREACHING DMIN TRACK AT GORDON-CONWELL FOR THE REPUTATION OF ITS FACULTY. WHAT I'VE GOTTEN HERE HAS BEEN SO MUCH MORE—FACULTY WHO INVEST THEMSELVES IN THEIR STUDENTS AS PERSONAL MENTORS."

Zeke Pipher, D.Min., '08

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT:

GORDON-CONWELL
www.gordonconwell.edu

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM
www.gordonconwell.edu/dmin

CONTACT
1.800.816.1837

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

HAMILTON | BOSTON | CHARLOTTE | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | **ENGAGE** Globally | **LIVE** Biblically

Typology and Biblical Theology

This multivalence is particularly pertinent to typology and the teaching of Biblical Theology. Jesus' illustrative use, for instance, of living water, bread, shepherd and blood references a vast array in his listeners' heritage, all of which contributes to his communicative purpose. He builds on this heritage, expressing it in fresh form and adding to it, thereby bringing heritage-rich new truths while simultaneously giving fuller meaning to earlier references. Similarly, we understand Mary's song of praise at the annunciation far more deeply by understanding the stories of Sarah and Hannah. Similarly, we understand the story of Jesus' rescue of his people far more deeply by understanding the stories of how Joseph, David, Daniel and Esther also rescued their people. This is due to the nature of God's revelation. It is unified. It proceeds from and thus reveals the same God, seeking out relationship. It is progressive and cumulative, with pedagogical purpose, so that it begins with that which is most accessible. Thus, the physicality of the land, covenant and temple in the Old Testament moves to the less material representation in the New. However, the Old Testament is necessary to understand the New Testament. Similarly, understanding the New Testament helps us better understand the Old Testament. Paul's illustrative use of "circumcision of the heart" in Romans 2:29, for instance, helps us better understand the nature of circumcision in the Old Testament. Likewise, Jesus' use of Noah and Lot as illustrations of the coming judgement clarifies our understanding of the Genesis events.[32]

Good illustrations are therefore highly alert to the multiple references and layers of meaning contained therein. They will therefore need to be thoughtfully and carefully crafted. They will usually be the fruit of good time spent in exegesis and setting the text in the context of biblical theology. Interestingly, as preachers immerse themselves in the Scriptures, these multiple references and layers of meaning often arise unconsciously. Care needs to be taken to ensure they are faithful to the text, within its boundaries. Care also needs to be taken to ensure they are not overwhelming, distracting or self-conscious. Often it is these multiple layers of referencing and meaning that serve as the meat in a sermon for the more mature listeners. Preachers who want to feed the mature will therefore work hard at this aspect of their sermons.

Good Illustrations are Interesting: The Extraordinary in the Ordinary, Reversal and Escalation

Good illustrations are *interesting*. There's something out of the ordinary in them. They catch. They're memorable. Who would have thought the kingdom is like a man sowing, a mustard seed, yeast, buried treasure, a pearl, or a net? All these illustrations occur in half a chapter![33] Often they are the extraordinary in the ordinary. Who would have thought that the kingdom

of heaven is like a man sowing seed in a field later sown with weeds?[34] To sow another man's field with weeds is extraordinarily nasty. It is premeditated. It takes time and planning. Who would have thought of Paul, that single older man, as a wet-nurse with a baby; or of the Laodiceans as luke-warm water about to be vomited?[35] Who would have thought that the poor widow who put in two very small copper coins "put in more than all the others"[36] or that the tax-collector was justified? Both these last two illustrations depend on *reversal*. They are just the opposite of what we expect. Similarly, illustrations can be made more interesting and effective through *escalation*: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own?"[37]—a massive, extraordinary, evocative escalation. The parables of the talents and the seed in different soils are also classic examples of escalation.[38] Developing good illustrative homiletical practice therefore means developing the skill to locate the extraordinary in the ordinary and know how to use it to convey truth. It also means developing the skills of identifying and using reversal and escalation.

Good Illustrations Engage

Good illustrations *engage*. They engage because they are interesting. They engage because they are pertinent. They engage by disturbing us, by "upsetting our equilibrium,"[39] raising questions and getting "under our skin." They engage through creating tension, suspense and climax. They engage through good delivery. Most importantly, they engage by involving our *emotions*. We can't wait to see how King David will react to Nathan's courageous challenge by means of illustrative story, replete with escalation and reversal. We can't wait to see what happens to the dishonest steward in the parable when his master discovers his duplicity. We can't help but be seriously disturbed by Jesus' frightening pictures of judgement, such as the pain of the rich man in Hades.[40] And we can't help but be encouraged by the triumphant picture of Christ reigning with his people in the new Jerusalem, as a bridegroom with his bride.[41] Used by the Spirit of God, engaging illustrations convict, teach, warn and sustain.

RESOURCING ILLUSTRATIONS

From the Scriptures

Many illustrations naturally arise *out of the text*. As one exegetes the text and places it in its Biblical context, other illustrative material will arise. Use it! Some texts are so full of images, or their stories so powerful, that to seek further illustrative material is superfluous and a waste. It may even distract or detract from the text's power. The genius of illustrations that arise from the text is that they will interact with and illuminate other parts of the Bible. Obviously this is due to its unity and coherence, given its divine

authorship.

From Our Imaginations and the World

However, illustrations don't need to be limited to those arising from the text and its context. God has given us a wonderful *imagination*. In addition, the prophets, Jesus and the apostles all made good use of what was "at hand," whether it be a mulberry tree, a temple treasury, or an altar "to an unknown God."[42] The *world* is full of illustration. Developing illustrative homiletical practice means developing the skill to use our imaginations and all in the world illustratively. Indeed, training as a preacher will in time mean a whole new perspective on the world. Many preachers find it helpful to develop some system for *recording* illustrative material as it arises in everyday life. This could be anything from a box of papers one uses as a teaser file to an electronic resource with key words and themes bookmarked. Numerous collections of illustrations have been published and plenty are available on-line.[43] Be cautious, however, in using the illustrations of others, as they can lack freshness. They can also be contextually-specific. Audiences may have heard them before, even more than once. The best use for published illustrations is to help train preachers in developing illustrative practice. Generally, published illustrations are engaging, pithy and convey truth well. As you read them, ask yourself why they are effective, or not!

Since illustrations use a referent to communicate truth, referents will need to *reflect and be consonant with the audience's world*. They must relate to men and women, young and old, active and sedentary, educated and uneducated, indoor and outdoor, the world of the arts and the world of the sciences - if these groups are reflected in your listeners. A classic mistake for preachers is to draw all their illustrations from their own world, whether it be the sporting, active, outdoor world of some, the domestic, relational world of others, or the ethical, political world of yet others. As a preacher, one needs to be attuned to the worlds of one's listeners, discerning their experience and how they communicate. Naturally this will mean participating in their worlds: their homes, their "hangouts," their workplaces. It will mean putting yourself in others' shoes: in the shoes of the salesperson working on commission, in the wheelchair of the nursing home resident, in the train with the student commuting to school. It will mean thinking through how to communicate Biblical truths in the vernacular: in language listeners understand, from a world they understand.

From Personal Experience

The freshest illustrations will arise from *personal* experience. Personal illustrations can also model the integration of the text with our own lives. However, preachers need to ensure they don't become the focus. Make God the hero! Wisdom, perspective and balance are required here. An honest

and transparent preacher is usually much appreciated by a congregation, as maturity and a healthy self-understanding in Christ is modelled. This sets a tone in a Christian community and helps build a healthy community. Nonetheless, there are appropriate limits to expressing honesty and transparency. Be careful not to unintentionally feed an unhealthy voyeurism or curiosity. The goal of the sermon has to be kept in mind. Will what is said be helpful, both in the present and in the longer-term? A sermon is a public address. With current technology it can be simultaneously available around the world and recorded for posterity. This new availability of sermons means that preachers now have to bear in mind a global audience who will be listening in very different contexts, geographically, temporally and culturally. When one shares personal illustrations, listeners will think they know you. Some listeners will make assumptions based on the information you give. These assumptions may be unhelpful for one's ongoing ministry and may not be helpful for the life of the congregation, or the wider Christian community.

Be alert to ongoing issues in your own life. It may be your conditions of employment, a conflict, or grief. Be slow to use these as illustrations before sufficiently resolving and assessing the circumstances. Time and distance usually give greater perspective, whereas unresolved emotions such as anger or bitterness can skew or even sabotage an illustration. As in any relationship, there is an appropriate timeliness for the sharing of self as the relationship develops. Congregations will usually find it odd if you share deeply personal material early on, or if they learn about all the major events in your life in your first few sermons. Wait for the pertinent text and bring out your treasures with appropriate measure.

Respecting Others

Many illustrations involve others, notably those with whom the preacher regularly interacts, such as family and church members. If your illustration identifies others, it is best if you can seek permission to use it. This shows respect, involves them in the preaching task and indicates your discretion and consideration. Asking is not always possible or appropriate. Remember the commands to "show proper respect to everyone" and to "honour one another above yourselves."[44] Even if the illustration is in the public domain it may not be helpful to use it. It may be better to compose an analogous story. Always be aware, however, as to whom an audience may construe or presume is the subject of an illustration.

USING ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE SERMON

Crafted and Taken to Heart

Writing out an illustration in full forces the preacher to discern what is essential to communicating its truth. It will help crispen and sharpen it. If it is a longer illustration, such as a story, it will give the preacher a sense of its movement and length. Have the key words and themes been appropriately introduced, notably the multivalent words and themes? Is the language interesting and varied? Is the emotional flow engaging, yet sensitive? Is the truth clear? When it comes to preaching, however, the illustration must be so well-known that it can be spoken without notes. If a story has to be read, the preacher doesn't know it well enough. Reading a personal story is especially bizarre—as though the preacher can't remember their own life! Longer illustrations will generally need to be signalled by a change of pace, mood, or introductory words.

A useful technique is to reference an earlier illustration or story, adding new layers of meaning into the illustration as the sermon develops. This is what the Bible so effectively does with typology. Another useful technique is to delay the completion of an illustration. This adds to engagement and gives opportunity for the discussion and amplification of key themes, so that the illustration's fulfilment is embedded with even greater meaning.

Accurate

Preachers need to indicate the *veracity* of illustrations. Make it clear whether or not the illustration is true. Never give the impression a story is true unless you can verify this. Your integrity and the integrity of your preaching ministry are at stake. I well remember a sermon where the preacher spoke about a conversation with a relative. Members of the congregation mentioned the story to the relative, who indicated it was not true. Immediately the preacher lost credibility and the leaders of the congregation needed to address a serious pastoral breach. All the preacher needed to say was, "Imagine if…" or "It would be like…"

Similarly, limit the detail of an illustration to matters you are certain about. Don't pretend to be an expert. Invariably there will be listeners who know more about football, Paris, geology, or whatever is your referent! A mistake in the detail causes the knowledgeable listener to doubt the veracity of the rest of the sermon. On the other hand, inviting help from competent listeners about illustrations engages them in the sermon and often helps the preacher to strengthen the quality of the illustration.

Humorous?

Some preachers spend considerable time working hard to include

humour in their sermon, in order to facilitate engagement. My experience is that a more efficient and safer approach is to allow humour to arise naturally out of one's illustrations. Many audiences appreciate preachers who tell stories "against themselves," who can laugh at themselves. I have a number of personal illustrations which at first I didn't consider humorous, such as when my family home cracked apart as it slid metres down the hill due to wet clay movement, or when I rescued—naked—a drowning teenager. Congregations laughed at their telling, so I made greater use of their humorous aspects. However, I also had to work harder to ensure the truth in the illustration was not overshadowed. An audience's response to humour varies with a great range of factors. Even if the humour is not outwardly acknowledged—there may simply be a smile on the inside—allowing humour to arise out of illustrations has the benefit that, should the humour seem to fail, the illustration remains pertinent and effective.

Affectively Alert

Illustrations have an affective or emotional component. Be alert to their intensity. A few low-key illustrations from a range of worlds at the beginning of a sermon can serve well to gather, focus and motivate. Maintaining engagement after a particularly moving illustration is not easy. In this situation, changing the illustration's location to the climax of the sermon may be the way forward. Sometimes illustrations trigger strong emotional responses. Preachers need to be sensitive and considerate in these circumstances, working hard to "read" their audience's response and stay in tune with the Spirit of God. The gospel will, of course, meet with a range of emotional responses. Preachers should not be surprised or afraid of this. Simultaneously, however, preachers need to ensure they are not manipulative, and that the affect communicated is congruent with the text.

Careful in Jest

There is a long and worthy tradition in preaching of the "jester" role. Here the preacher says hard things by way of a lighter illustration or story. A key ingredient is irony. A good example is indeed Nathan's story of the robbed peasant before King David.[45] But beware! This role requires spiritual discernment and skill. It can all too easily move into sarcasm, negativity or inverted pride. The true jester speaks with a holy fear, in deep love and honour.[46] Jesting can unnecessarily offend and be easily misunderstood. The true jester seeks not to offend, but to be heard by respecting the listener, minimising confrontation, and speaking truth "with a slant."[47]

NOTES

1. The central reason for this, I believe, is relationships come into being and are developed through words. Words start something. They bring

life. Speaking to someone acknowledges their presence and dignity. Consider the difficulty of developing a relationship with someone to whom you haven't spoken, or with whom you cannot communicate. Non-verbal communication, such as visuals, can communicate much but is open to misunderstanding and is often dependent on what has already been established through words. Visuals are often static or closed. Words provide the dynamic means for an ongoing relationship, including the means to clarify what the communicator is seeking to convey. This is evidenced in the creation, where God brings an interpretive clarity, naming the relationship between the creation and the word through words, and in his initiating and developing his relationship with us through words (Heb 1:1-3,10-12; Rom 10:14-17). Furthermore, although God plainly speaks through the written word for those with the facility to read it, he continues to gift his people with oral communicators to bring and nurture new life and to establish and mature churches for his witness and glory. For further comment on orality in a visual world and its implications for preaching, see Adrian Lane, "Training for the Sound of the Sermon: Orality and the Use of an Oral Text in Oral Format," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 6:2 (September 2006): 77-94.

2. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th Edition)* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1993), 578.
3. I am not using propositional in a strict philosophical sense, but rather to refer to a certain style of thinking, communicating and acting that is based and weighted strongly on concept and argument. In order to focus on homiletical issues, unfortunately it is not possible in this context to sufficiently discuss larger related philosophical themes.
4. This perspective may be an inadvertent consequence of the discipline of theology and theological education more generally, where time is rightly spent in thinking through and distinguishing between theological concepts. However, the Christian faith is obviously not essentially a theological construct or a system of ideas.
5. Rom 12:2.
6. 1 Jn 4:8,16b.
7. 1 Jn 4:9. Similarly, Jesus demonstrates the "full extent of his love" by illustrative actions in John 13:1.
8. For example, the law is used as an illustration in Heb 10:1. It is "only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves." Similarly, we later discover that the original arrangements and pattern for the tabernacle and temple are illustrative "of what is in heaven" (Heb 8:5). See also Heb 8:2; 9:8-10 and 1 Cor 10:11.
9. Ex 10:1-2; Acts 5:12-16.
10. I use truth, understanding and knowledge in its fullest relational sense, as in Jn 14:6-7 and 1 Jn 5:6.

11. This was a constant ministry of the Old Testament prophets. In a similar way, Peter had to interpret his vision of the unclean food (Acts 10:12-13) and Paul his vision of the Macedonian man (Acts 16:9). Here, God's servants were prompted to move from illustration to interpretation by means of his wider revelation, in the context of his contemporary work with his people.
12. Acts 20:27 (RSV).
13. Jn 15:14-17; James 2:23.
14. Jn 1:14.
15. Some, such as Lord, gather all illustrations into the category of imagery. While this approach simplifies, it is not always amenable to distinctive analysis. See Jennifer Lord, *Finding Language and Imagery: Words for Holy Speech* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 13.
16. Is 55:12.
17. Heb 10:29.
18. Heb 6:20-7:28.
19. See, for example, 1 Cor 10:1-22; 1 Pt 2:9-12.
20. For example, Phil 3:4-8; 2 Cor 12:7-10.
21. For example, Phil 2:5-7; 1 Cor 11:3.
22. Jas 3:1-12.
23. See Rom 8:18-27 and Gal 4:19. Similarly, Jn 16:20-22.
24. Rev 21:4.
25. Rom 7:14-25; 2 Cor 4:7; 5:2; 12:7-10.
26. Lk 9:47.
27. Lk 8:10.
28. Jas 1:11.
29. Reference untraceable to date.
30. In many ways, this is yet another attempt to sit over, rather than under, the text.
31. See, for example, Lk 20:19.
32. Lk 17:26-33.
33. Mt 13:24,31,33,44,45,47.
34. Mt 13:25.
35. 1 Thess 2:7; Rev 3:16.
36. Lk 21:2-3.
37. Mt 7:3.
38. For a more extensive discussion of narrative and its elements that contribute to engaging preaching, see Adrian Lane, "Please! No More Boring Sermons: An Introduction to the Application of Narrative to Homiletics" in Keith Weller, ed., "*Please! No More Boring Sermons" Preaching for Australians – Contemporary Insights and Practical Aspects* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2007), 79-92. Also available at www.preaching.org.au
39. See Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form (Expanded Edition)* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 2001),

particularly 28-38.

40. Lk 16:19-31.
41. Rev 21:1-4.
42. Lk 17:6; 21:1-4; Acts 17:24.
43. See, for example, Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Timeless Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Hendrickson: Peabody, 2004); Craig Brian Larson and Phyllis Ten Elshof, eds., *1001 Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) and www.preaching.org.
44. 1 Pet 2:17; Rom 12:10.
45. 2 Samuel 12:1-4.
46. Tim Keller's sermon, *David and Bathsheba* (23 August 2009) artfully exposits Nathan's respect for David as Nathan adopts the jester role. Available at www.redeemer.com.
47. With reference to "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant," Emily Dickinson, Poem 1129 in Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: Boston, 1960).

NO OTHER GOSPEL

MATTHEW D. KIM
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
South Hamilton, MA

Galatians 1:6-10

During my three years as a M.Div. student at Gordon-Conwell, I worshipped regularly in various chapel services. One time I recall listening to a preacher who delivered a sermon on the gospel. Sadly, I can't remember the preacher's name or the Scripture text from that morning. But, what I can't forget is God's question that he asked me: Matt, will you always preach the gospel? In the quiet of my heart, I responded with something bold, something Simon Peteresque: "God, even if there are no members in my church other than my own family, I will never preach a gospel other than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Little did I anticipate the various trials in ministry that would face me down the road!

There's been a resurgence of interest in recent years concerning the nature of the gospel. You can find a plethora of paperbacks and e-books today on Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble with titles such as *What is the Gospel?*, *The Hole in our Gospel*, or even *The Naked Gospel*. Now, I would never think to juxtapose those two words, naked and gospel, but what do I know? It seems that even among evangelical Christians the message of the gospel requires clarification.

Even in the Apostle Paul's day, much confusion abounded regarding the gospel. In fact, Paul specifically writes to the churches in Galatia about their confusion with what the gospel really is. Our Scripture text this morning comes from Galatians 1:6-10. Please follow along in your Bibles. It reads in the New International Version:

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Paul reminds the Galatian Christians that there is no gospel other than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know from Acts 14 that Paul

labored and suffered immensely in the region of Galatia while preaching the gospel and helping to establish some of the churches. For example, in Lystra, an angry group of Jews stoned Paul and left him for dead outside of the city gate. The very next day he shot back up and preached in Derbe with Barnabas and later made his way back to several churches to encourage believers to remain faithful to the gospel. So, when we arrive at verses 6 and 7, it's not surprising that Paul is completely astonished, speechless, and even quite frustrated that the Galatian converts are rejecting the gospel so quickly. Obviously, Paul had heard what was happening in the Galatian churches and felt compelled to address the problem.

A few years back I went to Korea for my brother's wedding. There, I met a relative who handed me a gift which happened to be a lady's handbag. Noticing my puzzled countenance, the family member said, "Matt, this present is for your wife. I'd like for you to bring this to her. I hope she likes it." Relieved that the gift wasn't for me, I thanked her and later examined the purse with a good hard look because of its exquisiteness. The label on the purse read Louis Vuitton. Beautiful shiny black leather and gold trim adorned the purse. It appeared to be very expensive. So I decided to explore this purse further and searched for it on the Louis Vuitton Web site. To my amazement, the purse retailed for $2000.00. My jaw dropped. I called my wife and told her about this newly found fortune. I blurted out, "Honey, I'm calling because you received a gift. It's a Louis Vuitton purse. Guess how much it runs for?" She replied, "Really? I have no idea." I proudly crowed, "2 grand!" She was stunned. In the quietness of my heart I took the liberty to scheme the impending sale of her new gift and dreamed about what our pastor's family could do with $2,000.00. After our conversation ended, I misguidedly scrutinized the purse even further. As I perused the inside, I noticed that the spelling of Louis Vuitton on the gold buttons didn't match the ones on the outside. The inner buttons read, "Loois Vuiton." With utter embarrassment and disbelief, disappointment flowed through my veins. I had been duped. It was a complete knock off. It was a fake Louis Vuitton purse. How could I bare the shame of telling Sarah?

In verse 7, false teachers were similarly spreading a fake gospel from the one Paul preached which was really no gospel at all. As we read later on in the letter to the Galatians, we infer that this different gospel related to not to one's saving faith in the person and work of Christ alone but in a form of works righteousness by observing Old Testament laws such as circumcision, food restrictions and the Sabbath. Since Paul loved these new believers so much, he couldn't sit on his hands and allow them to trust in a different gospel which was really no gospel at all. The only true gospel is found in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As you're well aware, many different or false gospels are being preached today. As preachers and those preparing others for ministry, we mustn't be naïve to think that these false gospels are not influencing Christians. More than others, there is one false gospel that has a spiritual

stronghold in evangelical Christianity. That false gospel is the prosperity gospel also known as the health and wealth gospel.

Years ago there was a great buzz about this particular book. At the time, my parents were faithful members of a conservative, evangelical church outside of Chicago. I remember one Sunday my mom called to inform me of a new book called *The Prayer of Jabez.* Her pastor encouraged everyone in the church to read it so that God would bless them if they prayed Jabez's prayer. Later that week, I went to the Seminary mail room and found that my dear mother had sent me a copy. You know that the story of Jabez is found in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 where it says Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. And he prays audaciously to the Lord: "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.

Not surprisingly, this book became a *New York Times* bestseller and sold more than 9 million copies. The false premise of the prosperity gospel is that God exists to make our lives more comfortable, easier, healthier, and wealthier and free from pain with little or no commitment on our part. Obviously, this is not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a different gospel which is no gospel at all. In the same way, Paul makes it resoundingly clear that these gospels circulating in the Galatian church are really not gospels either. There is no other gospel than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul continues and he explains the consequences for those who preach a different gospel verse 8.

Paul exclaims that those who preach another gospel will be condemned. He writes: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

Paul repeats the same message twice: anyone who preaches a false gospel will be condemned eternally. When Paul repeats himself we know better than to ignore his instructions. Do we see the severity and harshness of those who preach a false gospel? In other words, they will be eternally separated from God because they're preaching a gospel that cannot save. The consequence of preaching a different gospel is that it will lead others astray and it will lead to eternal condemnation.

As preaching professors and preachers, the temptation lurks all around us to dilute or modify the gospel. As Paul writes to his ministry mentee Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-3, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

When I was a pastor in Denver, I occasionally watched the Day Star network on television. It's a local station that broadcasts sermons from large

churches and well-known pastors. Through listening to these preachers, I learn a thing or two about communication and I also get to hear what many pastors of large congregations are preaching. Not all but many of these pastors of sizable churches are preaching a distorted gospel.

One time the preacher was telling a story about an occasion where he was shopping at Walmart. Prior to entering the parking lot, he prayed to God that God would provide him with the best possible parking spot because he was exhausted and didn't feel like walking too far that day. As soon as he entered the parking lot, God freed up the parking spot next to the handicap zone. You can't get a spot better than that. And he went on to convey how God's ultimate joy is in making our life more prosperous, wealthy, happy, healthy, and comfortable. The crowd erupted with joy!

Paul's stern warning revealed in verses 8-9 is that God eternally condemns those who preach a different gospel. False gospels cannot save us because they are untrue. But, I believe another reason exists as to why God eternally condemns those who preach a false gospel. That is, false gospels make God out to be a liar. When preachers promise the people of God that God exists to be our servant and genie who will make our lives better and give us everything we want, what happens when things don't go our way and when we don't receive what we asked for? What happens when we lose our job, our home, our health, our spouse, and even our children? In our eyes, God becomes a liar. He becomes the one who disappoints us. He becomes the one who fails us. When we preach a false version of the gospel we damage God's reputation, the people are led astray from the truth, and Paul says we will be eternally condemned. Finally, Paul closes our Scripture text with a pastoral challenge in verse 10. It reads: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

We preach the gospel that pleases God not men. Only the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ pleases God. Paul was not in the business of trying to please people or win their approval. Notice he says very emphatically in the second half of verse 10, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

At my church, I preached many sermons that both encouraged and challenged the congregation regarding their understanding of what the gospel is and their level of commitment to Christ. Oftentimes they didn't appreciate my firmness. For instance, during meals with my church members some would ask these types of questions: "Pastor Matt, isn't there any way you can lighten up on your sermons? Does the gospel really demand complete obedience and surrender to Christ?"

Not only do people want to modify the gospel, pastors today have enormous pressure to grow the church numerically. When I was in seminary, I had no idea what type of church God would send me to. After I completed my Ph.D. in homiletics at the University of Edinburgh, I thought I was something special. I was expecting or at least hoping that God would send

me to a church of respectable size. That is, I stupidly told God that I wanted to pastor a church of 200+ adults. This wasn't God's plan, however. He had something different and better in mind. He wasn't going to let little Matthew D. Kim tell him what to do. So, he sent my wife and me to a struggling seven-year-old church plant in Denver, Colorado, where the church did not have its own facility and where the congregation was made up of about 35 adults and 20 children at the time. God told me: "I want you to love them and preach the gospel to them."

The unspoken expectation was that this young, energetic pastor with a Ph.D. in preaching would grow the church rapidly. Although the church grew significantly by God's grace in the first two years, our attendance stagnated in my final four years there. As the numeric growth curtailed, I could see the increasing disappointment on the faces of my leaders. I had failed them.

How do we respond to others' expectations? We have a massive temptation to please people wherever we go. Satan will remind pastors that our congregants pay our salaries and that if we don't grow this church we're going to be replaced. Satan's desire is for us to give in and preach a different gospel to lure the people in. Our leadership may hope that we will decrease the petitions for discipleship. People in the church may tell us that we're taking the gospel too seriously. We may feel the pressure of growing the church when comparing ourselves to other local churches that seem to be bursting at the seams. And yet even amidst these human pressures and expectations, Paul reminds us that there is no gospel other than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and only the preaching of this gospel pleases God.

Peter and Grace were faithful members of my church. Their youngest son who was 1.5 at the time was diagnosed with a rare genetic immune disorder called HLH. It's a disease where the body attacks itself. In the final stages eventually organs begin to fail. Jonah was getting treatments throughout the summer and he was preparing to receive a bone-marrow transplant which is the only hope to defeat HLH. In November 2010, his health deteriorated rapidly and on December 21st HLH took Jonah's life. In the week leading up to his passing, I remember sitting with Peter in the hospital. He still had hope that God would save Jonah's life. But on the day of Jonah's death, Peter felt a strong conviction that this was indeed the end. Jonah died that afternoon. After Peter held Jonah in his arms and kissed his face, he laid him on the hospital bed and began to play his favorite song by Casting Crowns, "Praise You in this Storm." He and Grace raised their arms to the heavens as they sang this song to the Lord. The attending nurse and I stood in the hallway speechless as we watched Peter and Grace worship God.

The following Thanksgiving I asked Peter to share his testimony regarding the emotional and spiritual health of his family. He shared how in the hospital room where Jonah passed away he got a small glimpse of what it was like for God to watch his son Jesus die on the cross. And the gospel

never became more real to him than on that day. Today he's committed more than ever to Christ and he gets through each day because of his hope in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. On that day, Peter shared the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with our congregation and I believe that God was pleased with him. There is no gospel other than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and only the preaching of this gospel pleases God.

Years from now people in the church may want us to lighten up and not take the gospel so seriously. We may become weary and discouraged, because our church attendance is in decline. We may be tempted to preach a false gospel to please itching ears. You're not going to remember me. You may not remember this Scripture text. But please remember this simple but profound truth: There is no gospel other than the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and only the preaching of this gospel pleases God.

BOOK REVIEWS

Saying It Well: Touching Others With Our Words. Charles R. Swindoll. New York: FaithWords, 2012. 978-0892968312268, pp. $23.99.

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

Prolific author, master preacher, and world-traveled public speaker Chuck Swindoll has finally written a book about communication. While Swindoll aims at public speaking and preaching (with the latter receiving the lion's share of instruction), he also has speakers themselves in the crosshairs—the calling, preparation, and character of the communicator. Topics relating to ethos take up more than a third of the book because Swindoll says rightly, "Since God made YOU, He expects the message that you communicate to flow out of YOU and no one else" (xiv). "Each insight or principle or suggestion [of the book] must be fitted into YOUR style and YOUR way of expressing yourself when YOU speak or preach" (xv). He richly illustrates that claim with his own story. In fact, this book is as much autobiography as handbook for public speakers.

As a handbook, this book is best suited for beginners or for pastors who want a refresher. It will also be of interest to those interested in Dr. Swindoll himself—his story, convictions, and personal method for preparing sermons. Like the handbooks of ancient rhetoric, this book is a pragmatic primer based on real-life experience. Because that experience is Swindoll's—one of the best preachers in the English speaking world—it is advice worth heeding. Topics include: calling, preparing, praying, illustrating, laughing, and applying. An appendix reproduces Swindoll's actual sermon notes, typed and then marked by hand. The approach Swindoll takes, the practical advice that grows out of and is illustrated by his own experience, has few parallels in homiletical literature, and it has the strengths and weaknesses you might expect from such an approach. One strength of the book is the attention-holding power of narrative as the reader travels with Chuck to Okinawa as a young Marine to Dallas Theological Seminary to various churches around the country; and weakness is that as a handbook it lacks detail on *why* techniques "work" either theologically or rhetorically. But such a criticism is like reproaching a bicycle because it cannot fly. It wasn't designed to do that, and it fulfills its own purposes quite well.

My image of "aiming" and "crosshairs" does not imply that Swindoll is harsh. No, he is encouraging, pastoral, warm, and joyful. He writes as he preaches and as he lives—with winsome sincerity and humor, as a devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture: the Transforming Power of the Well-Spoken Word. By Jeffrey D. Arthurs. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012. 978-0-8254-4219-3, 137 pp. + DVD, $19.99.

Reviewer: *Reg Grant, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

In *Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture,* Jeffrey Arthurs articulates his purpose ("vision" in his words) in the introduction: "My vision is to increase the quantity and quality of Scripture reading in church services" (11). Arthurs's training in oral interpretation, and his years of experience as a professor of communication and preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, as dean of the chapel, and as an elder in his church where he leads the Scripture reading team, have equipped him to make a significant contribution to the discipline of the public reading of Scripture.

This helpful handbook comprises seven chapters, an addendum containing four sample scripts for multiple readers, each of which includes Arthurs's rationale for blocking and voicing the scripts as he did, and a well-done DVD (about 35 minutes) which illustrates the public reading of Scripture.

Each of the book's chapters develops the metaphor of a feast to which all are invited to share in the nourishment provided in the word of God. Chapter 1 builds a foundation for public reading based on a five-fold argument that is biblically and theologically accurate, historically compelling, and incisive. Chapter 2 encourages the reader to prepare carefully prior to reading. Arthurs gives attention in this chapter to the need for spiritual and emotional preparation of the reader, as well as the more mechanical, but equally necessary, need to prepare the script and setting. In chapter 3, Arthurs addresses one of the most challenging aspects of public reading: establishing a culture that values oral interpretation of the Bible. Such a culture grows through leadership development and vision casting. Arthurs does a good job of laying out some practical guidelines for helping to develop a culture that welcomes, and anticipates the public reading of God's word.

Chapter 4 covers the non-verbal mechanics of effective public reading, including gesture, posture, movement, facial expression, eye contact, and proxemics (the use of space). This is a meat-and-potatoes chapter to which the reader will return time and gain for practical advice on effective delivery. In chapter 5, Arthurs draws on his working knowledge of the vocal techniques involved in effective public reading. He emphasizes projection (think intensity and diction more than volume), phrasing, pace, pause, pitch, and punch (volume). In chapter 6, Arthurs provides several creative suggestions that will add variety to the reading program for the local church. Of all the chapters, I wish this one were expanded. Arthurs has good ideas,

and this chapter made me wish for a more extensive catalogue of options.

The book is very good, but it is made even better by the DVD. The DVD does not follow the outline of the book, but invites us to consider some of the practical challenges to effective reading, as well as good reading technique. Arthurs's illustrations of effective reading and his anecdotes are instructive, as well as entertaining. He is equally comfortable at communicating form *and* content. Many of his illustrations (e.g., appropriate gesturing, distracting mannerisms, posture) are equally applicable to preaching. The concluding brief demonstrations of solo and group readings successfully illustrate the techniques from the book.

Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture is the product of a devoted and gifted student and reader of God's word. Arthurs offers practical insights born of decades of discipline and prayerful dedication to honoring Scripture through public reading. This book will be a welcome addition to your "bread and butter" ministry texts, and will be a blessing to you, the reader, as well as to your congregation. Apply these principles and witness, firsthand, an increase in the quality of public reading of Scripture. The quantity is sure to follow.

Give Them Christ: Preaching His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Return. By Stephen Seamands. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012. 978-0-8308-3467-9, 192 pp., $15.00, paper.

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

Give Them Christ is a welcome addition to recent homiletical thought on christological preaching. Stephen Seamands, professor of Christian doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary, offers preachers and homileticians a fruitful and inspirational resource on preaching the doctrine of Christ specifically targeting his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming.

In eight neatly defined chapters, Seamands systematically discusses the mystery and significance of preaching Christ in today's world. He introduces his impetus for writing the book with the story a spirited exchange between Martin Luther and his spiritual leader, Von Staupitz. Feeling the pressure to curtail Luther's protest, Von Staupitz bemoans, "'But Martin, if we get rid of all these things—the saints, the pilgrimages, the images, the relics and the holy days, what will happen?' Luther is quiet for a moment. Then, looking firmly and intently at his superior, he declares, 'Why, Sir, we'll give them Christ. Yes, we'll give them Christ'" (10).

Seamands's clarion call is for preachers regularly to give our listeners Christ in their sermons so that Jesus becomes supreme in Christian doctrine

and practice. He writes: "For only when our preaching of the significance of what Christ has accomplished for us is coupled with a passionate love in us for Jesus himself, will our congregations be convinced, transformed and renewed" (182). For Seamands, christological truth will not stimulate life transformation and application unless Christians become genuine "lovers of Christ."

Two chapters stand out that provide fodder for homiletical reflection. First, in chapter 4, "Preaching the Cross: Social Evil, Victory, Dying with Christ," Seamands opens our eyes to the nature of Jesus' death on the cross and its ramifications for addressing societal evil. By this, Seamands argues that the cross deals not merely with sin on an individual basis but also confronts sin within "impersonal, cultural, political, economic, intellectual and religious forces as well" (79). This insightful observation leads Seamands to ask preachers the following: "How does the cross address the problem of social evil and the spiritual forces behind it?" (81). It is a timely reminder that preachers are to confront systemic evils in addition to individual sin. Second, in chapter 7, Seamands draws our attention to a seldom addressed aspect in today's sermons that concerns Christ's ascension. Many preachers are at a loss for words when it comes to Jesus' ascension. However, Seamands unveils crucial elements in Jesus' ascension that can be preached by focusing on "Christ's exalted place at God's right hand" (140-41), how believers are "raised to new life in Christ" (141-43), and how Jesus "stands in the gap" (153-57) on our behalf, among others.

With theological depth and apposite illustrative material, *Give Them Christ*, is a useful volume on five defining truths regarding Christ's life and work. My primary critique is that the book's subtitle is misleading. Preaching is not the primary subject of this book. Rather, it is more accurately a theological consideration of the life and work of Christ which reminds preachers of the types of themes their sermons can and should address more frequently. If you are hoping to find practical guidance on preaching Christ, you will be thirsty for more.

Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles. By Graeme Goldsworthy. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012. 978-0830839698, 250 pp., $20.00 paper.

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

Goldsworthy, formerly lecturer at Moore Theological College in Sydney, has produced a number of thoughtful works on hermeneutics and biblical theology. This one is likely a summary of his life's work thus far; it opens with a delightful, and somewhat autobiographical, historical preface; as well, it contains an excellent historical overview of biblical theology, albeit

from a redemptive-historical viewpoint (76–110).

Here's what Goldsworthy thinks of biblical theology: "The immediate appeal of biblical theology to preachers, teachers and ordinary Christians is that it provides a 'big picture' that makes sense out of the bewildering bulk and variety of the biblical literature. It seeks to view the whole scene … from the heights—to mount up with eagles' wings and allow God to show us his one mighty plan from creation to new creation" (19). In this, his very first sentence of the book, Goldsworthy is absolutely right: nothing like biblical theology to depict the broad tapestry of God's work, the "big picture." But that immediately raises a caution for the preacher (and let me emphasize here that this reviewer speaks exclusively from a preaching standpoint): this species of interpreter, while certainly acknowledging the value of "big pictures," usually works with "miniatures"—the pericope, the unit slice of text preached to and encountered by God's people week by week. While large canvases help portray the magnificence of divine work across the span of biblical time, it is the thrusts of the smaller panels that yield specific guidelines for life change in this manner and that, in this particular area and that, in this way and that.

Soon thereafter, Goldsworthy assumes that the only other option to biblical theology is the consideration of the Bible as "a mass of unconnected stories and other bits of writing" (19). That is surely a straw man. Going pericope by pericope, week by week, as preachers are wont to do, can, most certainly, reveal the larger story *seriatim.* That is what *lectio continua* is all about, after all. But, for Goldsworthy, any other reading of the Bible "easily becomes the search for today's personal word from God, which is often far from what the text, within its context, is really saying" (29). While I'm sure there are preachers guilty of this kind of "narcissistic engagement," to say that such culpability is the only alternative to preaching biblical theology is going too far. Those who do not see it this way—particularly those who dare to use OT characters as examples, tend "to sever the text in question from the centrality of Christ and to lead to moralism, even legalism" (30). Strong words!

"Biblical theology … is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to every other text in the Bible. It is the study of the matrix of divine revelation in the Bible as a whole. … Biblical theology, then, is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and his gospel" (40). And "[b]roadly speaking, it is the task of biblical theology to understand the historically contextualized theology" (48). That is fair enough, except that for preaching, this approach tends to be reductionistic: there is something *behind the text* that is the kernel, and the interpreter's role is to eliminate the historical/contextual husk. There isn't, and it is not. The text is what must be attended to and preached, not anything *behind* it.

And then Goldsworthy takes over 75 pages to outline and describe this salvation history (56–75, 111–169). I have oft wondered why this backbone of a timeline was not presented in a crisp and succinct fashion in the Bible

itself. While I would not deny the existence of such a timeline, or that it is derivable from the biblical text, or even that is essential for understanding the broader work of God in history, I would register a protest at the level of its importance to preaching. I think it is more critical that preachers—again, my focus is on preachers and preaching—emphasize pericopes and their theological function for sanctification (i.e., what authors are *doing* with what they say in those pericopes), so that the people of God may be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), bit by bit, pericope by pericope, sermon by sermon, for the glory of God.

The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word. By Walter Brueggemann. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. 978-0-8006-9897-3, 160 pp., $25.00.

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

Walter Brueggemann initially brought forth the concept of prophetic imagination in his book *The Prophetic Imagination* published in 1978. In various ways, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination* is an addendum to that original work. He launches the current discussion on prophetic preaching with these words: "It is my hope, in what follows, to make a credible connection between the material of 'prophetic utterance' in the Old Testament itself and the actual practice of 'prophetic preaching' that is mandated in the actual work of pastors who are located in worshipping congregations" (1). Brueggemann maintains that prophetic preaching occurs when preachers are "deeply embedded in the YHWH narrative" (4), and also when they are flexible to encounter and engage current realities in light of these prophetic narratives (31).

Throughout this book, Brueggemann weaves his primary thesis which is as follows: "Prophetic preaching is an effort to imagine the world as though YHWH, the creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom we Christians name as Father, Son, and Spirit, is a real character and a defining agent in the world" (23). By this, Brueggemann encourages preachers to think of YHWH in a creative, non-traditional manner whereby the process of prophetic imagination opens up space to consider alternate forms from what he calls "dominant imagination." Prophetic imagination challenges "dominant imagination" which is a "totalizing claim that does not permit any reality or any claim outside of its regime and certainly does not welcome any rival claim. This judgment can be tested by asking any would-be prophetic preacher to identify the topics that cannot be mentioned in church" (27).

Rather, through blending insights from biblical interpretation and

American cultural critique in light of the tragic events of 9/11, he dreams of prophetic preaching as the ability to process loss, relinquish previously held entitlements and embrace the current and future realities of the way things are and will be, respectively. Brueggemann writes: "The God of Israel *lingers over loss*, *grieves over loss*, and finds *impetus for new possibility* in the loss when it is fully embraced" (96). He appears suspicious of prophetic preaching that stymies the creative process, particularly as it relates to God's desire and ability to create new possibilities out of dire past and present circumstances.

I conclude this review with some observations. First, Brueggemann's language and views on YHWH reflect the current positions of Progressive Christianity and stretch beyond the limits of customary evangelical language and view of who God is. Second, while each chapter offers provocative hermeneutical insights into prophetic texts and builds a case for Brueggemann's concept of prophetic imagination, the book often reads like a running commentary on select passages that deal with Old Testament prophecy. Third, Brueggemann makes clear connections between contemporary challenges and prophetic preaching. However, he fails to connect the task of prophetic imagination with the pastoral office and congregational life by not lucidly articulating how preachers can preach prophetic sermons for congregations today. This volume is heavily theoretical and presents few practical tools on how one can practice "preaching an emancipating word" which is what he had set out to accomplish.

The Renewed Homiletic. Edited by O. Wesley Allen, Jr. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. 978-0-8006-9656-6, 141 pp., $15.29.

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

The fruit branded "New Homiletic" grew out of the rich, scholarly soil of the Academy of Homiletics during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s in response to the failure of modernistic (deductive, propositional) approaches to preaching, the rise of postmodernity and the "New Hermeneutic," an increasing appreciation of the Bible as narrative, and a rediscovered comprehension of the power of orality. The five "Venerables" that led this important transition consisted of David Buttrick, Fred B. Craddock, Eugene L. Lowry, Henry H. Mitchell, and Charles L. Rice. Richard L. Eslinger's 1987, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletical Method*, highlighted the emerging literature of this informal but influential movement that was labeled the "New Homiletic" by David James Randolph in a 1965 presentation at the Academy of Homiletics. As editor Wesley Allen notes, "Forty years after its inception, the inductive, narrative, experiential approaches to proclamation that the New Homiletic introduced are common pulpit fare" (1).

In the fall of 2007, Allen hosted the five spokesmen at Lexington

Theological Seminary where, for the first time ever, the five shared the lectern in a conference aimed at reviewing their own contribution to the New Homiletic, reflecting upon how they presently view their work in the light of current contexts, and recommending future developments for a "Re*new*ed Homiletic." In an introductory chapter by the editor, Allen summarizes the history and components of the New Homiletic and introduces the five participants. Each ensuing chapter follows with a review-reflect-recommend essay by each author, which is followed by responses from two current homiletics scholars. Richard Eslinger's "Afterword" rehearses the major themes and anticipates future "unfoldings" of a renewed homiletic—a chapter that is far too brief. A DVD included with the book features a sermon by each of the five preacher-scholars. These sermons were preached in local congregations in Lexington, Kentucky, on the same Sunday morning as the conference.

Like Eslinger's *A New Hearing* and Paul Scott Wilson's *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*, this brief but insightful review of and reflection on the significant literature in recent homiletics, by the authors themselves, is must reading for any serious preacher or teacher of preaching. Even those who have previously read these authors' seminal texts will find substance and perspective here. When authors interpret themselves and then reflect on their work decades later, we are forced to interpret ourselves and reflect on our own preaching theories and practices. Some of the lectures are more organized than others, but all are insightful. The responses are much more uneven. Some of the responders seem to have had their own agendas while others more faithfully followed their task of building off the papers as they were presented. While the recorded sermons were intended as examples of the theories each preacher propounded, this reviewer was disappointed by the lack of connection between theory and practice. In addition, the quality of the recordings is what one might expect from persons who are skeptical of the value of electronic media on preaching.

A final note: while this reviewer deeply appreciates *The Renewed Homiletic*, as well as most of the theory of the "New Homiletic," and encourages serious preachers to be aware of this body of literature, I cannot help but chuckle to myself at how myopic we homileticians can be. When Wesley Allen writes, "So the shift represented by the New Homiletic can be summarized in terms of a focus on the hearer, the use of inductive, narrative sermonic forms, and the centrality of imagistic, storied language to create an experience of the gospel" (9), I am certain he understands, as should we all, that these summative statements are not new, but rather rediscovered ancient rhetoric, wisely and appropriately applied to preaching today.

Preach: Theology Meets Practice. By Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 978-1-4336-7317-7, pp. 212, $14.99.

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

What do pastors talk about when they get together? If the pastors are Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, they talk about preaching. In *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*, Dever and Gilbert offer readers an opportunity to listen in on a wide ranging discussion about the nature of preaching, its importance and its challenges. In the introduction the authors promise to be "highly practical," "highly specific," and assure readers that the advice they give will be drawn from their own practice (1). For the most part, they deliver on this promise. The book is simply written and moves easily from the theology of preaching to the specifics of practice. The final portion includes two sample sermons, one from each of the authors.

Dever and Gilbert describe the book as "a conversation between mentor and mentee, between a teacher and his longtime student who's just setting out on his maiden voyage" (3). This is both a strength and a weakness. The book's conversational tone creates a comfortable atmosphere for discussing the nuts and bolts of preaching. The authors are frank in their assertions. But at times the writing style feels artificial. Readers will welcome the book's practical emphasis. Dever and Gilbert offer concrete suggestions regarding some of the most basic aspects of the preaching task, such as choosing a text, doing the work of exegesis, selecting illustrations, and delivering the sermon. Yet the authors do not really say anything that has not already been said elsewhere. At times they do not say enough to be truly helpful.

One of the most laudable features of this book is the fact that the authors take time to establish a theological foundation for preaching before turning to the nuts and bolts of practice. The first four chapters address fundamental theological questions about the nature and purpose of biblical proclamation. Dever and Gilbert argue that expository preaching should be the center of the church's main public service (45). This theological emphasis is a much needed improvement over many homiletics texts, which often treat the sermon as if it were little more than a speech about the Bible. The two sample sermons included at the end of the book also depart from the norm by including comments from the two authors interspersed throughout the text of the messages (think of the feature on your favorite DVD which lets you watch the movie while listening to comments by the film's director).

This conversation is worth hearing. Young expositors will discover the outlines of a basic foundation for preaching that is both theological and practical. Experienced preachers will appreciate its frank reminder of the importance and sacred nature of the preaching task.

Inspirational Preaching. Edited by Craig Brian Larson. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2012. 978-1-59856-859-2, 163 pp., $ 14.95.
Prophetic Preaching. Edited by Craig Brian Larson. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2012. 978-1-59856-704-5, 150 pp., $ 14.95.

Reviewer: *Greg R. Scharf, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL*

These are two (of four) volumes in the series, *The Preacher's Toolbox: Communicating God's Word with Power.* Both share a foreword by Craig Brian Larson who alerts the reader to the purpose they have in common—to convey wisdom from seasoned preachers who may not be from our "tribe." The wisdom is drawn from the "vault" of monthly articles or interviews published since 1999 in PreachingToday.com. Matt Woodley writes not only the introduction to each volume but a helpful précis of each article or interview. The list of contributors is impressive: John Piper, Haddon Robinson, John Ortberg, Bryan Wilkerson, Lee Eclov, Gordon MacDonald, Jeffrey Arthurs (interview), Skye Jethani, Michael Quicke, Gary Fenton, Scott Chapman, John Koessler, John Woodley, Richard Hansen, Mark Batterson, and Paul Borden (interview) on inspirational preaching, and Francis Chan, Mark Buchanan (interview), James MacDonald, Bryan Loritts, Ortberg, Larson, Eclov, Mark Driscoll, Timothy Keller (interview), John Koessler, Lyle Dorsett (interview), Andrew C. Thompson, Anne Graham Lotz, and Kenneth Ulmer on prophetic preaching. Some wrote more than one article; there nineteen on inspirational preaching and fifteen on prophetic preaching in two parts—the *calling* and the *craft* of prophetic preaching. Each article is followed by a short description of the role and writings of the author or interviewee. Neither volume has an index.

These two books are written for a popular readership. They do what they set out to do; they offer wisdom, though wise readers will detect a few frankly embarrassing assertions and unjustified generalizations or conclusions to which all of us as preachers occasionally fall prey. Readers should not expect new ground to be covered. Some of the articles in one volume could have been placed in the other. The reminders are worthwhile, the perspectives are fresh, and, given their near-oral style, make for quick and easy reading for readers of this *Journal*. I found Larson, Koessler, Keller, Ortberg, Dorsett, and Chapman most helpful.

These are the sorts of volumes that a preacher dissatisfied with his own preaching might read for helpful homiletical tips, examples, illustrations and correctives, and for challenge and for inspiration. When presented with a "test all things" (1 Thess. 5:21) sort of caution, these are also the sort of non-threatening books a concerned elder or church chairman might pass along to a young preacher to keep him or her thinking homiletically.

Better Be A Good Sermon: Preaching For Special Occasions And Contexts. By Keith Weller and Adrian Lane, Victoria, Australia: Acorn, 2011. 978-0-9082-8487-0, 304 pp., $34.99.

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

My brother is a master mechanic. He has a huge toolbox with drawers full of shiny open-end wrenches—fifty or sixty of them. When he needs to fasten a 10mm bolt, he has a 10mm wrench. When he needs to tighten a 15mm bolt, he has a 15mm wrench. When I need to tighten a bolt, I dig out my adjustable wrench. With my one tool, I can approach any size bolt (note: my brother is twitching right now).

This preaching book is an adjustable wrench—it covers almost everything. Its main focus is on the special challenges of preaching on special occasions, when the sermon "better be good," but it was intended to be a one-volume resource. Structurally there are seventeen chapters that focus on how to preach effectively on various special occasions, followed by eighteen selected sermon manuscripts that were actually preached on various special occasions. Each chapter was written by a different preacher, and the sample sermons were sermons they had actually preached. The advice is sound and practical.

For example, in the chapter about preaching at a baptism, Michael Dasey frankly admits one of the vexing dilemmas facing pastors, the presence of "the committed church family to the completely unchurched" (18). Dasey goes on to suggest we face this preaching challenge with this helpful advice, "In my judgment it is good to tune into the happy and communal nature of baptisms" (21).

In the chapter on preaching at funerals, Richard Trist acknowledges what all preachers know: "Funerals are times of high emotional stress, not only for the family and friends . . . but also for the minister as he or she deals with their own emotions which may be triggered by the event" (34). He goes on to make many helpful suggestions, one of them is to keep the sermon short.

In the chapter on preaching at Christmas, Geoff Smith points out six factors that make Christmas different from other special occasions; the weather, the busyness of people, the reality that regulars will be absent, the matching reality that there will be many visitors, the pressure of preaching to all these visitors so as not to embarrass the ones who brought them, and the happy truth that for many pastors, vacation is just on the other side of Christmas. Again, the ring of authenticity—Smith has been there and done that.

The chapter on preaching in times of crisis was exceptionally helpful. Foster suggests that a crisis sermon must accomplish three things. First, it must provide an opportunity for the listeners to express their grief (to lament) (87). Second, it must "name the monster," providing words that

help listeners to identify what they are feeling (87). Third, the crisis sermon should include theological affirmation: our God is able to help us face any fear, need, or danger (87). This is the sort of potent simplicity that is obvious only after it is articulated.

The book, though helpful, was not perfect. I had a sense that a few of the chapters were over-reaching a bit. If the point of the book was to offer wisdom on how to preach effectively on special occasions, the chapters on how to preach to different audiences were less helpful, mostly because they were not on point. I affirm the need for audience analysis, but the focus of the book was special *occasions*, not special *people*. This slight but telling difference was ironically highlighted in two adjacent chapters. Chapter 15, *Preaching in a Multicultural Context* devolved to a description of different sermon styles and mostly unsupported opinions on what might be helpful in a multicultural setting. But, chapter 16, *Preaching in a Multicultural Parish* was full of practical, field-tested wisdom on how to preach to diverse audiences.

The second half of the book, the sermon manuscripts, was less helpful. The eighteen sermons were very "Anglican." Often well thought out and carefully constructed, they seemed meant to be read. Although the editors carefully identified who, where and when the sermon was preached, I would have enjoyed a bit more context; perhaps a description of the site or situation, more about the audience, maybe even an assessment of how the sermon was received.

This book is a good general resource and will help preachers to face the challenge of special occasion preaching more effectively.

Preaching Creation: The Environment and the Pulpit. By John C. Holbert. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011. 978-1-61097-379-3, 113 pp., $15.00.

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

Environmentalism is a hot-button issue that John C. Holbert, Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, believes the church ignores to her own ultimate destruction, along with the rest of God's good creation. Not everyone will agree with Holbert's science, especially his position on the deleterious effects of global warming upon the environment, nor his heremeneutics, especially his ready acceptance of the documentary hypothesis, a "Second Isaiah," or the post-Pauline authorship of Ephesians and Colossians. Readers of this *Journal* will also find troubling his conception of a sermon, in printed form at least, as a homily of less than a thousand words. Nevertheless, his book has its merits.

Holbert writes in delightful prose on those places in Scripture where God's concern for, and man's relationship, to the cosmos present

themselves—most notably, Genesis 1; Psalms 19 and 148; Job 38–42; brief pericopes from Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah; Proverbs 8 and 9, detailing Lady Wisdom's celebration of and relation to God's creation; Colossians 1; Jesus' commentary on the lilies and birds in Matthew 6; and John's description of a new heaven and earth in Revelation 21–22, to be understood as what comes down every day to those who will receive. At times his work proves insightful, as when musing on Colossians 1, he describes how ancient municipalities commissioned sculptors to create statues without heads as a cost-cutting measure in a world where authority changed hands so rapidly (71). At other times his remarks prove disconcerting, as when he suggests that God was speaking to what he had already created, not within the council of the Trinity, when he said, "Let us make man in our image" (12).

Unlike the position of the National Association of Evangelicals on "creation care" that views man as a "steward" of God's creation, Holbert calls for a greater "humility" and interprets Genesis 2:15 to make man a "servant" or "partner" of creation (16–17). He carries the idea of partnership over to the Psalter, envisaging all creation as a multitude of voices in one grand choir. It was for this entire choir that Jesus died—plants as well as people, crickets as much as kids. The task of the redeemed is thus not only to win the lost but to save the planet.

Readers from conservative backgrounds will find food for thought here, but little that will drastically change how they preach on environmental concerns. If, however, the book causes the reader at least to rethink how the environment is to be viewed, I believe its author would find that a great consolation.

From Story Interpretation to Sermon Crafting: A Structured-Repetition Approach for Exegesis and Sermon Crafting of Old Testament Narratives. Charles R. Dickson. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011. 978-1610972741, 250 pp., $29.00.

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

Dickson is Associate Pastor at Blomvlei Road Baptist Church, and a part-time lecturer at Cape Town Baptist Seminary. His goal is to utilize current advances in literary interpretation of OT narratives to preaching. Essentially, Dickson's method may be summarized thus: The text is broken down into narrative units, and a "main point" is formulated for each, after attending to the structure and repetitions in the story. These points are then integrated into one single "exegetical idea" for the whole text, following which one comes up with a "theological idea," and then "the preaching idea is formulated using the theological idea and writing it in language that is situation specific and contemporary" (25–28, 153). The skeletal structure of

this paradigm is not new: exegesis to theology to preaching has been widely accepted in homiletical circles for the last several decades, as readers of this *Journal* are well aware.

However, my concern with such an approach—Dickson's or others'—is the tendency towards reductionism. A text once reduced to its exegetical idea can then be conveniently disposed of, for the preacher only has to work with that idea, converting it sequentially into theological and preaching ideas. It appears then that what is being preached is the reduced idea, not the text itself with all its power, potency, and pathos. One is reminded of Craddock's pungent criticism of this modus operandi: "[T]he minister boils off all the water and then preaches the stain in the bottom of the cup" (*Preaching*, 123). Dickson confesses as much: "In a sense, the process involves *decomposing* the narrative, *getting back to the basic idea which is the basis of the story*" (154; emphases mine). This reverse-engineering approach implies that God should just have given us a list of those "basic ideas," rather than a commodious volume of arcane poetry, sentimental narratives, and weird prophecies.

There are numerous examples of Dickson's method in his book. However, the move from structure analysis to discerning the significance of such structures is lacking. I kept asking, "So what?" to many of Dickson's astute observations of literary shaping of narrative texts. So what if Gen 25:20–26 is structured chiastically with its centerpiece being the oracle of God explaining the struggle in Rebekah's womb? (80–81). And so what if Gen 25:19–34 has a structure that alternates between narration and discourse (92–94)? A third time, Gen 25:20–26 is structured a bit differently from the previous two instances (103–107), but again, so what? In a fourth iteration (147–52), Dickson provides a number of "main points," one for each portion of the text, 25:19–21, 22–23, 24–28, and 24–34. For instance, the main point of 25:19–21 is "Isaac waited and prayed earnestly to the Lord for twenty years before sons were born to him." So? Finally, in a fifth attempt at the same text (157–60), we have an "exegetical idea" ("The threat to the Abrahamic promissory-covenant was fulfilled"), a "theological idea" ("The promise of God to his people may at times seem under threat, but he is in control and will fulfill his promises"), and the "preaching idea" ("God is committed to your personal, and our corporate, spiritual and material wellbeing and integrity, despite the circumstances"). Does one really need "structured-repetition" to arrive at these conclusions which, to me, are merely summaries of the events *behind the text,* not really an expression of what the author is *doing* with what he is saying? I also found Dickson's handling of the same text *five* times, each time somewhat differently, rather confusing.

All this to say, while I am in agreement that "structure is fundamental and indispensable for meaning in communication" (101), I remain unconvinced that "structured-repetition," at least as demonstrated in this work, is a sufficient hermeneutic for OT narrative interpretation for preaching. Nonetheless, Dickson has provided a sturdy account of OT narrative structure

and will surely stimulate further thought on how best one can employ these perspicacious observations to get at what the author is *doing* with what he is saying. This, I believe, is the right track for preachers to be on. We're just not at the destination yet.

Mark: A Theological Commentary for Preachers. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books (2012), 978-1-61097-419-6, xxviii + 397 pp., $47.00.

Reviewer: *Ben Walton, Preaching*Works, *Canyon Lake, CA*

[note to typesetter: *Preaching*Works is a joint word with the first half in italics and the second in Roman]

Abraham Kuruvilla has written a valuable commentary for preachers who take sermon application seriously. Its focus is pericopal theology, a term that Kuruvilla coins in his dissertation. The purpose of pericopal theology is to bring the authoritative theological message of a well-selected preaching text to bear on its auditors. Preachers identify it when they discover what the biblical author "is *doing* . . . with what he is saying" (xiii). This insight may seem unspectacular, but it serves to correct the common hermeneutical error—most serious in the interpretation of non-epistolary literature—of simply turning what the "text is saying" (its exegetical idea) into theological and homiletical ideas.

Kuruvilla identifies twenty-five pericopes within Mark's tripartite macrostructure and divides the book into three sections: "Discernment of Jesus' Person" (1:1–8:26), "Acceptance of Jesus' Mission" (8:27–10:52), and "Faithfulness to Jesus" (11:1–16:8). In his pericope-by-pericope analysis, Kuruvilla situates each pericope in its surrounding context, offers preliminary insights, and provides a theological outline. Next, he divides the pericope into subunits, each with their own theological focus sentence, exegetical summary, translation, and notes. The notes contain deeper analysis with an eye toward validating each subunit's theological focus sentence. He concludes his discussion of each pericope with a sermon focus sentence, homiletical imperative, and the bones of two possible sermon outlines. Suggestions for concrete application are limited by design. This consistent and systematic approach makes it easy for readers to follow and use the commentary.

The commentary achieves its noble aims, but quibbles exist. The boundaries of Kuruvilla's pericopes are atypical and more akin to small sections, containing two to five cohesive rhetorical units. Some may find it difficult to preach these larger units well. Fortunately, he provides a theological focus sentence and notes for his subunits—which are complete form-critical units—and informs his readers that these units, too, are legitimate preaching texts. Also, the commentary might have been even easier to utilize had he

referred to his pericopes by their Scripture reference, rather than by number (e.g., "Review of Pericope 11," "Theological Focus 12.2," and "Notes 12.2.3").

Kuruvilla is to be commended for this volume. It is a reliable and user-friendly guide that helps preachers to grasp the central theological message of a passage, to sift the Gospel's pericopal theology from the mass of exegetical data. Kuruvilla's theological sensitivity, enhanced by his penchant for discerning significant *intra*textual clues, makes this commentary an excellent supplement to other scholarly resources. It deserves a prominent place in the pastor's study, and would make a worthwhile text in Bible exposition classes or in preaching courses that cover the Gospel of Mark.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

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

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

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

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

Purpose:

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

Vision:

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

General Editor:

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

Book Review Editor:

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

Managing Editor:

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

Editorial Board:

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

Frequency of Publication:

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

Jury Policy:

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

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

Submission Guidelines

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

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

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

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

   a. From a book:

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

   b. From a periodical:

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

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

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

to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

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

Abbreviations

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

Captalization

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

Direct Quotes

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

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

Headings

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

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

Notes

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

Submission and Correspondence

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

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

Copyright Permission

Copyright is waived where reproduction of material from this Journal is required for classroom use by students. Please contact the General Editor for other inquires regarding copyright permission.

Advertising and Subscriptions

Please contact Scott M. Gibson, General Editor, for all advertising inquiries (sgibson@gcts.edu). For all subscription inquiries contact Shawn Radford (secr.treasurer@ehomiletics.com). Subscription to the Journal is $35.00 per year plus $5.00 shipping. Back issues can be requested by contacting the General Editor.

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

Subscription

___ Please enter my subscription for one year. I have enclosed $35.00 ($30.00 for over seas airmail).

___ Please send a gift subscription to the friend named below. I have enclosed $35.00 ($40.00 for over seas airmail).

___ Please send me_____ copies of this issue. I have enclosed $5.00 each for the first twenty copies and $3.00 for each copy thereafter.

___ Please send me copies of the following issues:

2001 ___ December 1:1		
2002 ___ June 2:1	___ December 2:2	
2003 ___ June 3:1	___ December 3:2	
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	
2009 ___ March 9:1	___ September 9.2	
2010 ___ March 10:1	___ September 10:1	
2011 ___ March 11:1	___ September 11:2	
2012 ___ March 12:1	___ September 12:2	

I have enclosed $6.00 each for the first twenty copies and $4.00 for each copy thereafter.

Name/Institution: _____

Address: _____

State/Province: _____

Zip/Postal Code: _____

Please send the completed form and check
(made payable to "The Evangelical Homiletics Society,"
noting on the memo line "JEHS") to
EHS Secretary-Treasurer
130 Essex Street
South Hamilton, MA 01982

Or subscribe, renew or order online at ehomiletics.com

Thank you for your subscription.

To join the Evangelical Homiletics Society, please consult our website:
ehomiletics.com