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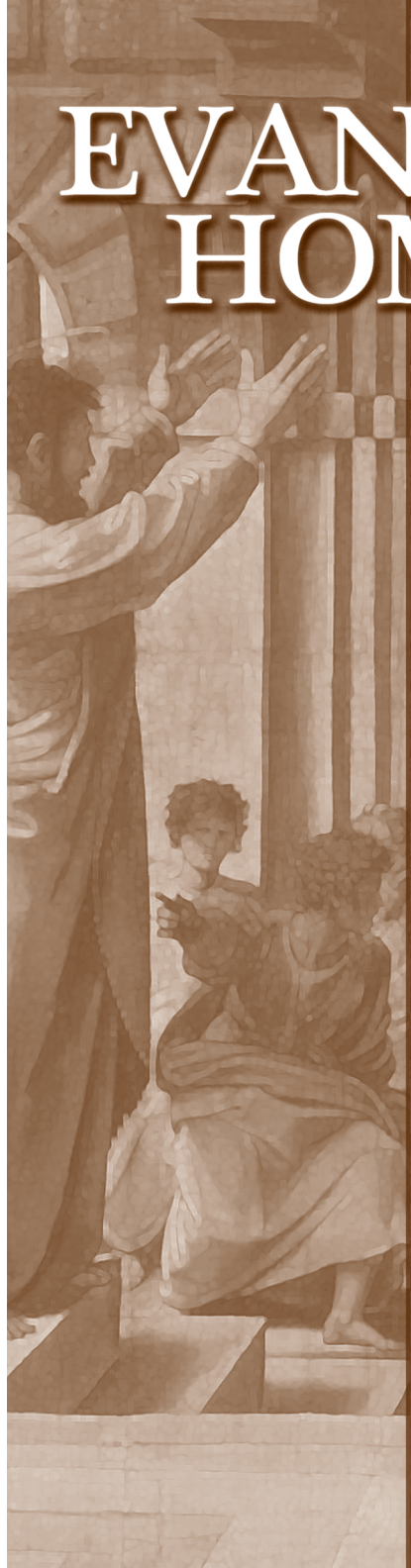

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Manuscripts: Though most articles and book reviews are assigned, submissions are welcome. They must by typed and double-spaced. All articles will be juried to determine suitability for publication. Please send articles to the General Editor, Scott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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE GOOD OF PREACHING

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

We are heralds of the Good News—the gracious redemptive act of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins, enables us to live changed lives, fulfilled lives, maturing lives, and eternal lives with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This Good News is the good of preaching. This is our task. This is our calling. For those of us who preach, who teach preaching—homiletics—our goal is to help men and women and boys and girls to come to terms with Christ and live lives that mature in him. Paul puts it this way when he writes to Titus:

> Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.
>
> At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.[1]

Preachers have the authority—by virtue of God's authoritative word—to preach confidently and to instruct listeners to do good. In this edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* two articles are reprinted from earlier editions: one article from 2004 by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., on the authority of the preacher to make the point of the text to his or her listeners. The other article from our second year of publication (2002) is by Wayne E. Shaw who explores the place of the Evangelical Homiletics Society as one of balance and soundness—hermeneutically sound, theologically based, structurally astute, incarnationally grounded, aesthetically creative, and sociologically attuned.

The third article by Jose G. Izguirre, III, explores the good of preaching in a "culture within a culture" context. Izguirre challenges preachers to consider the "bumpy-line" of multi-cultural/multi-generational preaching in the Mexican American context, all the while acknowledging the third generation's cultural duality.

The fourth article by Stephen Tu raises the question, "What makes a sermon good?" Tu examines the role of the sermon in the lives of one's listeners and challenges preachers to consider the implications for the sermon as demonstrated in sermon content and design. A helpful tool is provided enabling preachers to evaluate the principles discussed in the article.

A prayer, "A Minister's Preaching," from *The Valley of Vision* is included prior to the sermon by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.[2] This prayer reflects the preacher's desire to do the good that God has called every preacher to do through the task of preaching.

The sermon, "Preaching! Our Privilege and God's Power" by Charles Haddon Spurgeon captures his heart for doing good through preaching. Spurgeon's energy and pastoral style is seen in the stirring words of this sermon. Preaching is a privilege, a privilege to communicate the good word and work of Christ to those who have not heard it before and to encourage those who know Christ to grow in him.

The sermon is followed by a fine collection of book reviews. The reviewers provide insights that help us to consider the books published specifically in the field of homiletics or books that have bearing on the task of preaching—theologically, biblically or practically. Readers will be enriched by the reviews.

We are recipients of the Good News. We preach the Good News. We preach with the authority of the Bible. We are preachers of the Gospel. We trust God to do his good work in us and in the lives of those who sit under the authority of God's Word. As a professional society, we endeavor to be stewards of this Gospel, of this good gift. We strive to encourage preachers and teachers to steward their calling as preachers and "to devote themselves to doing what is good."

NOTES

1. Titus 3:1-8 (NIV).
2. Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision: A collection of Puritan prayers and devotions* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975).

THE MODERN AVERSION FROM AUTHORIAL INTENTIONALITY AND FROM "MAKING POINTS" IN A SERMON

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ABSTRACT: The meaning of the text is obscured when preachers do not take into consideration the meaning the author intended. This article explores the homiletical implications of experience over authorial intent.

INTRODUCTION

Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* provides us with one of the most down to earth places to begin our discussion of determining what anyone means when they speak, much less to determine what the Bible means when it speaks. The oft-repeated story goes like this:

> "…..There's glory for you!" [said Humpty Dumpty].
> "I don't know what you mean by `glory'," Alice said.
> Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't – till I tell You. I mean't 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"
> "But `glory' doesn't mean a `nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.
> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is master – that's all."
> Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. "They've a temper, some of them – particularly verbs – however, I can manage the whole lot! Impenetrability! That's what I say!"
> "Would you tell me, please," said Alice, "what that means?"
> "Now you talk like a reasonable child," said Humpty Dumpty,

> looking very much pleased . "I meant by `impenetrability' that we have had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't intend to stop here all the rest of your life."
> "That's a great deal to make one word mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.
> "When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty Dumpty, "I always pay it extra."[1]

I. THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Given the huge success of the views of postmodernism, many of our Christian laity (not to mention our Christian scholars!) fall into the same type of multi-valence assigned to the meanings of Scripture as did Humpty Dumpty. For we need today exactly what Alice needed to cool Humpty Dumpty's arrogant relativism.

Here is the basic point: The meaning of any literary work must be determined by the author of that work. This was the thesis of E.D. Hirsch's startling contribution in 1967 in which he claimed that the meaning of a work was "determined" by its author, not by its readers or by some new combination of the two. Hirsch advised:

> Verbal meaning is what ever someone has willed to convey by a particular sequence of linguistic sings and which can be conveyed (shared) by means of linguistic signs.[2]

The price that Humpty Dumpty must pay is that poor Alice is lost and left without any sense or meaning of what is being said. But that is the price which we as modern exegetes of Scripture must pay if we are going to insist that meaning is only personal, subjective, and in addition to that, it is constantly changing. In other words, if I am only going to hear what a text "means to me" and "what turns me on," regardless if I can locate that meaning explicitly in the text or not, then the price I must pay is that communication will become impossible for me and all others who share my theory of meaning. Not only will God's word grow silent, but so will everything else in the creation grow silent until the only thing that remains and exists for sure according to my way of living and thinking is me and myself – a solipsism that locks me in to my lonely self!

II. EVANGELICAL PRAXIS AND THEORY

Evangelicals must not think that they are exempt from this postmodern disease, for all too often it shows up in such wonderful settings as a small group Bible Study. Now this never happened among any of the evangelicals you know, but just think of what takes place among believers

in Jesus Christ. (Somehow it always seems better to attribute this problem to others rather than to ourselves!)

Let me play out for you a typical evangelical small group Bible Study – not here, remember, but in other places far away from us (!) that we now share as a prayer request for you to consider. First, the group must get into a circle – they always seem to do do, so there must be a verse in the Bible that exhorts us to do that! The leader of the group sits in the chair the most distant from the door – that is how you know who is going to lead this session. Now, to be sure, it is called a Study, but the truth is that few, if any, really have the time to put any study into this Scriptural text. Therefore, it is best if none of the group studies, including the leader, so it will be all the more democratic!!

"What shall we study?" asks the leader in as cheerful and hopeful a voice as possible. No one would ever suggest the Oooollldddd Testament, since that has since been transcended by the New, according to the best popular wisdom available, so someone ventures the name of Mark's gospel. "Good," encourages the leader, "Let's all find Mark – say Mark 4: 35 - 41"

After allowing five or more minutes to pass as everyone learns how to use the table of contents in their Bibles, for an increasing number of Christians have very little acquaintance with the Bible, the leader brightly begins with these words: "Let us read around the circle, each taking a verse, but allowing us time to say what each one of us gets out of each verse.

Then, turning to his or her right (95% of the times it goes to the right first of all, since many are right-handed), the leader urges, "Sally, would you read verse one." Sally does so with only three mistakes, which is not bad given our high view of inspiration. As she finishes, the leader with great fervor and excitement exclaims, "Who gets anything out of this text? Does this turn you on? What's your bag? Tell me what you got out of this verse?"

A period of one or two minutes of silence ensues. This is the time for evangelical humility. But then everyone knows who will speak first. Jim just can't let silences continue. He always was a mother's helper and once again he plunges in to help the leader. While he is gifted with words, it does not appear that his mouth and his brain or completed wired together. He starts to say, "Well, I don't know about you, but -- what I get out of this is that the disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee just like all of us are in this "boat" of the Church and we too are getting drenched with the storms of life. There is all this stuff falling on us: big spending, big government, taxes, and the like. And I think we all ought to put in our oar to help the "boat," i.e., the Church get to the other side of this storm we all face."

Now while Jim is declaring all of this, heads start to bob up and down around the circle meaning that they either agree or they wish Jim would hurry up and end this test of everyone's endurance. So, what is the leader going to say? He can't say in today's political correctness, "Wow, that reeketh!" (to attempt to use the Old English of the King James Version). Nor can he say, "Fabulous, that is terrific," for both would be a lie. So he says

instead, "That's ….interesting!" Who said Hegel would never get into the common thought of the people. Never mind the thesis or antithesis, just go for the synthesis!

But the leader must ask, "Who else gets anything out of this verse?" A timid answer comes opposite to where Jim is sitting, "Well, I didn't *exactly* get what Jim got out of it. I got something totally different. I thought the "boat" was our safety net and that no matter how tough the storm, we can ride it out if only Jesus would come along walking on the water as he does in another passage. That's what it means to me." And the leader declared that that too was interesting."

But where is the author in all of this? And which of all the meanings that will or can be set forth are "valid"? Is there any place for truth in this whole discussion? Or is it too antiquarian to raise that point in a post-modern culture?

Part of our problem is that "meaning" in English can have so many different senses: Meaning can refer to the *referent*, which identifies the person, object or subject being discussed. Meaning can also refer to *value*, such as "this course means more to me than I can tell you." Meaning also can be *entailment*, "this means war." Meaning can refer as well to *significance*, which names a relationship between what the author meant and another contemporary situation, person or idea. Finally, as used here, meaning is *intention*, which is the stable object of knowledge intended by the author in his or her particular grouping of words in a text.

When this debate over whether we will follow the author of a text or the reader of that text to the situation of preaching the word of God, some very interesting things begin to appear. For example, if we were to ask how this post-modern switch to the reader as the decider of what is or is not being communicated, or even the possibility that something other than what the author meant now is what it means for me, really affects the field of preaching and homiletics. The assumption by many contemporary readers of the Bible is that the each of us sets our own meaning agenda. Since the number of meanings for any text, according to this post-modern view, is almost infinite, or at least as multiple as the number of people who read it. No one can claim that any one of those meanings is authoritative or the valid meaning that God wished us to receive. Truth is in the eye of the reader and not in the meaning intended by the author as found in the use of words found in that text!

III. THE BIRTH OF THE NEW HOMILETIC

The birth of the "new homiletic," as it soon began to be labeled, in 1971 probably began with Fred B. Craddock's book *As One Without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching*. His point was that so-called discursive, deductive, or propositional preaching that elicited "points" from the text was dead; it should be replaced by a more inductive approach that created an

"experience" in the listener.

Seven years later Craddock gave us *Overhearing the Gospel*, which placed the audience rather than the text as the driving force in a sermon. As David L. Allen put it,[3] "The sermon [according to this new view] is a communication event in which the audience, with the help of the preacher, creates or discovers `meaning' and is led to a new way of seeing the world which the gospel creates."[5] This conclusion was likewise endorsed by Tom Long[4] who stated that in the past preaching had sought to offer meaning in a propositional way, but that today the audience and the preacher together create the experience of meaning. The result has been a low view of Biblical authority coupled with a rejection of propositional communication from God.

For instance, over the past several decades, narrative was thought to be the universal experience of human existence, so a rush was on for narrative preaching, narrative theology, and narrative hermeneutics. Unfortunately for this use of narrative, it was a narrative that bracketed out the question of whether this event ever happened or not: its historicality was stripped from its story. This later move was the work of Hans Frei in his monumental work, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. We were urged to enter the world of the narrative in the Bible by our own world and our own experience rather than the world of the time of the author and his text.

The shift that Craddock had signaled was continued by David Buttrick in his *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*.[6] The goal of preaching was not to make clear what God had communicated to the prophets and apostles who had claimed they had stood in his council to hear his truth, but instead it was to evoke an experience in the listener that was newly created by this dynamic and interaction between the preacher and the listener with the text merely providing the catalyst that provoked this experience.

The alleged overthrow of the tyranny of the text of Scripture in favor of a post-modern evocation of a creative new meaning for the text has been declared a done deed according to many, but not by those who still want to hear a word from God. Is there no more "Thus says the Lord" for a generation where God has rarely broken the silence according to some? Is God able to act, but unable to speak? Can we not connect the text with its referents to the past with all of its historical and cultural allusions and yet still have room for a contemporary application to our times? Cannot the revelation of God be at once propositional and personal without its being reduced merely to static declarations of deductive content that remain dead and inert without contemporary relevance?

Our conclusion circles back to where we began: in order to interpret the text, we must come to terms with what the author meant by what he had written in the text. Meaning cannot be vested in a text abstracted from its author, a narrative that is divorced from its history or its canon, or left to an interpreter's projections that are autocratically inserted over the text of Scripture. Meaning must be attached to the author's own truth-intention

as signaled by his use of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Scripture was meant to be understood by those who read it. It also wanted us to come to know what God desired us to know about himself and his will. All that helps this process ought to be welcomed.

Scripture can be put in terms that Alice can understand. The Church must not assume the autocratic posture of Humpty Dumpty – even if we always do pay extra when we make the words do a lot of work. Verbal meanings will always be connected with authorial truth-intention or we will indeed pay extra for refusing to agree – communication itself will cease. And there will be no word from God for a waiting generation.

IV. THE MODERN AVERSION FROM "MAKING POINTS" IN SERMONS

With the new emphasis on giving prior attention to the various genre from which a sermon takes its text, as already seen, there has been a tendency to downplay propositions and points in sermons in favor of simply telling the story, or letting the unique literary form stand alone without any direct attempts to apply that text or to give it a contemporary application. Can this be raised up as the new standard for preaching?

In my most recent book, I came to this conclusion:

> I have no trouble affirming that there is as a wide a breadth of preaching. As there are literary types in Scripture. I am not so sure, however, that using all of those various types will in every case lead us away from "making points," or from didactic aspects of the ministry. After all, all Scripture, argued Paul, was given for a number of different purposes (2 Tim. 3: 14 – 17), but all contribute to either introducing us to faith in Christ or building us up and challenging all of us to grow as believers.[7]

This problem of making contemporary applications is particularly important when it comes to preaching from the Old Testament. Can we continue to use the Old Testament in our modern times, or should we, if we use it at all, limit our references to that part of the canon by letting it stay in the literary wraps in which it was originally given with no attempt to elicit principals, truths, teachings, applications, or contemporary relevancies from these old texts and multiple genres?

William L. Holladay graphically stated this problem:

> Does God communicate to us through these old words, and if so, how are we to hear that communication? Can we untie the boat marked "Isaiah" from its moorings in the eighth century B.C. and take it down the lake to a mooring in the twentieth [or the twenty-first] century A.D. and still recognize it as "Isaiah"? How might this

be done?[8]

But that is precisely what must be done! The way it is to be done is to give priority to the literary form in which it is found as the key to understanding what it was that the author was attempting to say. Next, we must rely on the author's use of that genre, grammar, syntax and context to guide us to the message that was being relayed from the God who had spoken to that author. All other substitutes will only leave our ship marooned on the shoals of subjectivity and uncertainty.

While there are numerous methods in which the teaching of a passage can be brought to light, it is not an option for the preacher to bypass this step. The gospel cannot be created *de novo*. Of course the text can simply be repeated or restated in modern terms, but can one call that repetition or restatement preaching? Is that nothing more than a reading of the text?

CONCLUSION

While there are excesses to be avoided in over-principalizing the text, the goal of focusing in on the point or the big idea that the text is trying to make is not a homiletical luxury; it is endemic to the task assigned to us. Only by adopting some form of the new homiletic with its post-modern base will we then give up the task as preachers of "making points."

NOTES

1. This citation from Lewis Carroll appears in a number of hermeneutics books. For example, E. D. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 51-52; Perry B. Yoder, *Toward Understanding the Bible* (Faith and Life Press, Newton, KS: 1978), 1; and James D. Strauss, "Hermeneutics, Intentionality and Authoritative Scripture, *A Journal for Christian Studies* 6 (1986-87): 39-40.
2. E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1967), 31.
3. For the general thrust of what immediately follows, I am indebted to the fine essay by David L. Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads: The New Homiletic and Biblical Authority," *Preaching* 18 (September–October, 2002): 32.
4. Allen pointed to Robert Reed, Jeffrey Bullock and David Fleer, "Preaching as the Creation of an Experience: The Not-So-Rational Revolution of the New Homiletic," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 18:1 (1995): 1-9.
5. Thomas Long, "And How Shall They Hear? The Listener in Contemporary Preaching," *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred B. Craddock* eds. G.R. O'Day and T. Long (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 167–188.

6. David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).
7. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Preaching and Teaching From the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 84.
8. William L. Holladay, *Long Ago God Spoke: How Christians May Hear the Old Testament Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 186.

REFLECTIONS ON HOMILETICAL BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES FOR EVANGELICALS

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INTRODUCTION

When I attended the annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society for the first time in October 2001, a friend whom I had met years ago at the Academy of Homiletics greeted me with, "I wondered how long it would take you to leave them and join us." Then after a moment's reflection, he added, "Or are you planning to attend both groups?" To which I replied, "Yes. Both groups."

That sentiment may turn off some members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society (and perhaps some in the Academy of Homiletics), but both groups have contributed to my ministry in different ways. They are both made up of members who desire to teach preaching supremely well, and I resonate with that. It does mean, however, that with so many varied viewpoints represented, one has to reflect critically—weighing assumptions and choosing carefully what to assimilate into one's homiletical system.

I have been a part of the Academy of Homiletics for well over two decades, and I have seen it grow from a few dozen members to nearly 400. After serving a lengthy term as treasurer, I was elected president during the silver anniversary year, and I was able to voice my concern for world mission with the theme, "Preaching and Globalization." The Academy's warm camaraderie is unique among professional organizations. I have been welcomed, nurtured, challenged, disturbed, and loved by them; and that is appropriate in that diverse group. Anyone who knows homiletical literature is aware of the contribution that members of the Academy of Homiletics have made to our discipline in the last twenty-five years.

Prior to attending my first annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, I had known the organization only through its papers from past years. I was curious whether the Evangelical Homiletics Society as a whole was as reactionary as some of the papers suggested. Instead, I found openness to new ideas, stimulating plenary sessions and workshops, and warm fellowship without any evidence of an "old boy's club" that plagues some organizations. I immediately felt accepted. The meeting was well planned, the plenary sessions were profitable, and the workshops were well attended (though the program was so tightly packed that I went on overload before it was over).

Sometime during the meeting I was asked to write an article about my reflections on our discipline over the last three decades. After a great deal of thought, I chose the title, "Reflections on Homiletical Balance and Boundaries for Evangelicals." Balance and boundaries are important in relation to each other because, without boundaries, balance can mean riding the fence on pivotal issues, but boundaries without balance can be arbitrary, overly narrow, and myopic. By "evangelicals" I mean those with a high view of Scripture who hold that the Bible is the written word of God. Within this framework the following are reflections on some ideas that have mused me in thirty-seven years of teaching homiletics and fifty-one years of preaching the Good News.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGICAL BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

We preachers need both a theology of preaching and a theology to preach. We need to know what we are doing when we preach and what to say when we do it. The following themes have provided both balance and boundaries for me. I begin with preaching.

To preach the word of God is to declare Christ as the living word from the Bible as the inscripturated word. We encounter the living Christ through that proclamation. God is our authority and the Bible is his authoritative revelation of his person and his will for our lives. Any note of authority in our message comes from our personal relationship with him and our commitment to his truth revealed in Scripture.

Christian preaching is Christological. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" and has committed to us "the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19). It also has a kerygmatic core rooted in the mighty acts of God in Christ out of which everything Christian flows. The center of that core is this: "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 3, 4).

Connected to that Christological, kerygmatic core are bedrock biblical doctrines. We are to preach, for example, what the Bible teaches about God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—creation, the fall, sin, salvation, the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper, the ministry of all believers, and the final triumph of God over evil in every form. What else is there to preach that will last if we do not preach Christian doctrine? Christian conduct flows out of this new life in Christ, seasoned with grace, and guided by the nurturing disciplines of Scripture, prayer, and commitment to the church as God's community of faith.

Romans is a classic example of how this works itself out. After a brief summary of the kerygma (1:1-17), Paul discusses its doctrinal implications (1:18-11:36), and based on that kerygmatic and doctrinal foundation, he instructs the church how to live as the Christian community in the world (12:1-16:27).

In summary: Done well, preaching doctrinally gives substance and size to the sermon and relates it to vital life issues with what James S. Stewart called "The Romance of Orthodoxy."

THE IMPORTANCE OF HERMENEUTICAL BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

Preaching is a hermeneutical act. If it takes the Bible seriously, it interprets a biblical text or idea for our here-and-now situation. My term for this process is *hermiletics*—to emphasize the essential unity of the move from text to sermon (not *homineutics*—to begin with a random sermon idea and then scavenge for an unsuspecting proof-text).

The new homiletic has taught us to ask what a biblical text is doing as well as what it is saying. It recognizes that the text already comes to us consciously shaped for effective communication by the writer, not as a shapeless lump waiting to be formed by us into something meaningful. Recent emphasis on literary genres has brought a fresh sensitivity to our interpretation of preaching texts.

Before we can proclaim what it means for us today, however, we must discover what the writer meant to convey to his readers. Interpreting the Bible always involves the triad of text, writer, and reader. Granted, we as readers always read the text through culturally conditioned lenses, and we have much to gain by learning all we can about the life and times of the writer, but if we believe that the Bible is God's written word and that ultimately he is its Author, we must make every effort to let the intent of the text win each time we encounter it.

In summary: The purpose of preaching is to resurrect the biblical text, not to crucify it on a cross of our own making.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCARNATIONAL BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

Unlike their older counterparts, contemporary books on homiletics give slight attention to the life and ministry of the preacher. We seem to have left that task to the writers of devotional literature, church leadership, and pastoral theology. But we dare not neglect it because, as Phillips Brooks reminds us, authentic preaching is always divine truth through human personality.

Christian character and professional competency are essentials for Christian leaders who preach effectively. Our devotional life (especially our prayerful interaction with Scripture) and our practice of the fruit of the Spirit as we interact with people help us to preach incarnationally and strengthen us for the rigors of our calling.

Accountability to a mentor in seminary and beyond can prepare us to reflect biblically and theologically on the many issues that confront us in the church today. There is no homiletical substitute for our learning to think theologically about all areas of the preacher's life and calling.

In the preaching room of our seminary is a pew donated by my first congregation. Above it is a plaque reminding us that we have a *bench of preaching* on which sit the professors of Bible, theology, church history, homiletics, and pastoral theology. Every one of them is vital to preaching. Homileticians need to integrate these disciplines into the preaching task, and seminaries need to view the role of homiletics as a bench, not a chair.

In summary: we are both *preacher* and *preachment*. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach wherever you go. When necessary, use words."

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURAL BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

The last thirty years have witnessed a homiletical revolution labeled the *New Homiletic*. Most of its guns have been aimed at the traditional deductive sermon with its central idea sentence supported by main points. The new homiletic claims to borrow from Aristotle's *Poetic* more than his *Rhetoric* and to draw its sermon shapes from the literary forms of the various biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments rather than from Greek and Roman rhetoric. Chief among these forms have been the inductive sermon popularized by Fred B. Craddock, the narrative sermon represented by Eugene Lowry's homiletical plot, David Buttrick's moves rather than points within a unit of Scripture, and the interactive style of African-American preaching.

This homiletical revolution possesses many strengths. It advocates examining the biblical text carefully as the basis for sermonizing. It emphasizes that there is no one right way to structure a sermon—certainly not by using a narrow, arbitrary homiletic. It stresses the particularities of a text before attempting to generalize. It treats seriously the form as well as the content of the biblical text, stressing that the shape of the text is rarely ever neutral. It recognizes that homiletics is theological as well as rhetorical—a balance of form and content. It takes seriously what it means to communicate the values of the biblical text to a mass media, TV and video, sound bite audience. It also frees the preacher from a homiletical straightjacket to explore new and creative ways of structuring and preaching sermons. The strengths and practitioners of the new homiletic are many.

However, the new homiletic has been around long enough to reveal some of its weaknesses. It began as a method to hold the interest of a biblically literate audience; but over the last thirty years our congregations have shifted from hearers well versed in the Bible to many who have little or no biblical knowledge. Much of our preaching today needs to teach our congregations how to put essential Christian truth into practice, while at the same time, communicating effectively in a variety of ways.

Contemporary homiletical methods are appropriate in-so-far-as their hermeneutical assumptions are consistent with the Bible as the written word of God. However, some homileticians today are writing from the relativistic assumptions of the new hermeneutic. Further, the current

over-emphasis on narrative texts for preaching ignores the fact that major sections of the Bible are non-narrative. Without the clarity and context of the non-narrative passages, messages based on the narrative passages are often ambiguous and can be as one dimensional as some traditional sermons. Further, the contemporary emphasis on the particularity of a biblical passage often ignores the unity of the Bible, and a preoccupation with the forms of biblical genre can detract from the meaning of the passage. Also, done well, contemporary sermons that are informed by the new homiletic take more work to prepare, not less.

In summary: Contemporary methods can enrich and add variety to our preaching, but only as they are consistent with the Bible as the written word of God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AESTHETIC BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

It was a boon to homileticians when biblical scholars began to emphasize the literary genres of the Bible. The genres and sub-genres often suggest how biblical texts can best be preached. The literary form of the text with its characters, plot, mood, movement, and beauty has a richness and power of its own to move and motivate us. For example, since approximately two-thirds of the Bible is narrative in form, it makes good sense to learn all we can from the literary emphasis of the passage in addition to its historical background and grammatical intent.

Our preaching should engage both the left and right sides of our brain. In fact, without the left side, we could not even talk rationally about the creative, artistic side. Engaging both is necessary for good preaching. The aesthetic emphasis goes too far, however, when it fails to balance the ideational with the creative, the rational with the relational, and the historical with the literary and rhetorical.

In summary: Aesthetics should be the servant of the sermon, not its master.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGICAL BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

Our sociological sensitivity to the dynamics and cultural mores of the societies reflected in the biblical text and in our contemporary congregations will help us to preach with richer insight. It will also help us to decide whether our sermon should be prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, or a mixture.

We cannot avoid reading the Scriptures through culturally colored glasses; however, to deconstruct the biblical text and to reconstruct it to suit our own purposes comes close to practicing classical heresy. We must always be sensitive to contemporary cultural mores, but our core commitment must be to God's intended message in Scripture. For example, in order to carry out our Lord's Great Commission mandate, we must practice good missiology in our congregational life, including our pulpits. We need to think like a

missionary, utilizing theological, linguistic, cultural, ideological, and relational tools in order to be effective.

In summary: To be effective we must contextualize our message wherever we preach without being syncretistic.

CONCLUSION

This is the legacy I want to leave my students and my colleagues: Be balanced in your preaching within the sound exegetical boundaries of Scripture. Strive for sermons that are hermeneutically sound, theologically based, structurally astute, incarnationally grounded, aesthetically creative, and sociologically attuned.

Preach the Word of God—the Living Word as he is revealed in the Written Word—always preach the Word—always. "When necessary, use words."

PREACHING TO A "CULTURE WITHIN A CULTURE": SHAPING RHETORICAL STRATEGIES TARGETING GENERATIONS OF MEXICAN-AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT: Traditional understandings of assimilation render latter generations (3rd generation and following) of immigrant groups almost completely liberated from the cultural praxis of their country of origin. As a result, these persons are generally regarded as "Americanized." However, among Mexican American immigrants, contemporary research suggests that assimilation no longer completely severs ties between latter generations and their mother country. Rather, complete assimilation is delayed, producing individuals with hybrid or "hyphenated" cultural identities. While appropriating "American" ideals and practices, assimilated Mexican Americans often maintain distinctly Mexican values and traditions. Consequently, the liminal identity of latter generations produces a unique preaching audience with its own communicational needs. The following paper proposes multicultural preaching *as* multi-generational preaching in that preaching to latter generations of Mexican Americans still requires a multicultural approach. When shaping their rhetorical preaching strategies, contemporary preachers should consider the cultural liminality of these latter generations of Mexican Americans.

INTRODUCTION

In the Southwestern United States, church ministries generally target Mexican American immigrants when engaging in multi-cultural ministry. In order to minister effectively to these immigrants, churches typically choose preachers who can use the Spanish language as the connecting bridge between themselves and their audience. This, of course, is reasonable considering that Spanish is the primary language of the foreign-born (i.e., first-generation) that constitute roughly nine million of the total Mexican American population.[1] Although Spanish can be a legitimate means to crossing the cultural chasm in which first-generation (and to an extent second-generation) Mexican Americans lie on the opposite end, the *exclusive* use of Spanish as a rhetorical strategy targeting Mexican Americans, regrettably, neglects an audience within that congregation: third-generation

Mexican Americans.[2]

However, this neglect cannot be remedied by a simple translation strategy, that is, speaking the message in a language other than Spanish. Contemporary research on the assimilation (or acculturation)[3] of these individuals suggests that the process of assimilation places this latter generation of the Mexican American audience in a cultural position *sui generis*. The third-generation digresses from their Mexican heritage but does not stray too far from it, forming a distinctive culture that resembles the parental generation despite the assimilation of the new home culture. The impact that assimilation has had on the third-generation necessitates a paradigm shift in sermon design that goes beyond language use and accounts for the unexpected cultural identity the third-generation possesses. Thus, this paper proposes that optimal preaching strategies targeting a Mexican American audience must approach multi-cultural preaching as *multi-generational* preaching. The following paper first discusses the type of assimilation that Mexican Americans are currently undergoing in the United States. Second, the cultural categorization of the third-generation shall be pursued. Finally, the paper suggests a rhetorical strategy for sermon design that maximizes the persuasive potential of a sermon delivered in the presence of third-generation Mexican Americans.

A NEW KIND OF ASSIMILATION PROCESS

Typical of all new arrivals to the United States, Mexican immigrants undergo the assimilation process throughout their stay in this country. Traditionally this process by which the immigrant population resembles the dominant culture more and more throughout its generations has been understood as a "straight line" leading to "Americanization." Beginning with the first-generation, each generation adopts the dominant culture (e.g., language, dress, worldview, mannerisms, etc.) such that, by the third-generation, the immigrant population is indistinguishable from native citizens.[4] The immigrant population's cultural progression moves directly from the country of origin's culture to that of the new home country without digression or delay with each generation. In this understanding of assimilation, the home country's culture, in a sense, overwhelms the immigrant's native cultural praxis. Eventually, immigrants abandon their cultural frameworks in favor of that of the dominant culture, replacing the "old" with the "new."

Contemporary Mexican Americans, however, defy the traditional model of assimilation. Rather than following a straight path towards Americanization, Mexican immigrants experience a "bumpy-line" process whereby complete Americanization is either delayed or avoided. The current global context encourages generations of immigrants to shift back and forth from each culture, in essence, to take "one step forward, two steps back" in the process of acculturation by enabling them to perform

"cultural maintenance."[5] Immigrant populations evade Americanization by keeping an abundance of cultural markers that they might not have kept otherwise under "straight-line" assimilation.[6] For instance, third-generation Mexican Americans maintain their Spanish surnames, as well as identifiable, ethnic traits inherited through their parents—markers that persist because of decreased pressure to marry exogamously.[7] They maintain the Spanish language in some form (usually in the form of "code-switching" or "Spanglish") and practice the religion of their parents (usually Catholic).[8] The third-generation may even retain the morality of their parents as well, expressing it in their perceptions of sexuality, marriage, and satisfaction with life.[9] Meanwhile, Americanization's force, though diminished, continues. The third-generation adopts many "American" cultural features: they are more likely to speak English primarily, graduate from high school or university, and identify themselves as "American" rather than "Mexican."[10] Cultural maintenance slows down Americanization's ingression to a perceptible creep. The decisive influence that cultural maintenance has had on the acculturation of latter generations suggests that contemporary Mexicans immigrating to the United States may never follow the path of "traditional" assimilation again

Thus, these latter generations of Mexican-Americans avoid complete and comprehensive Americanization. Recognizing that contemporary third-generation Mexican Americans perform "cultural maintenance" to prevent the replacement of their Mexican culture: How might preachers identify or categorize them for the purpose of shaping an audience-sensitive rhetorical strategy? Without the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture, as was present in the recent past, Mexicans are encouraged to "have their cake and eat it too."[11] They enjoy the privileges of United State citizenship, the benefits of living in a developed country, and the opportunities of relative economic stability without having to relinquish what might be called their "Mexican-ness." The third-generation *lives* American but still might *look* Mexican. So, which is he/she?

THE "CULTURE" OF A SUBCULTURE

Although categorizing third-generation Mexican Americans as either Mexican or American may seem like a helpful endeavor for the present purpose of sermon design, with regard to the third-generation, bifurcating their unique identity raises more problems than solutions. That is, the attempt to preach to third-generation Mexican Americans as *either* Mexican *or* American fails to acknowledge the results of bumpy-line assimilation. Such categorization runs the risk of fabricating an audience that is opaque at best or illusory at worst, since third-generation Mexican Americans do not appropriate either culture fully. So, perhaps the question should be transformed from an "either/or" question to a "both/and" statement. Instead of viewing the third-generation as either Mexican or American, preachers

might be better justified to treat the third-generation as both Mexican *and* American. Allowing for cultural duality equips the preacher to craft a targeted sermon. The preacher is much more likely to design a sermon that is appropriate to his audience (avoiding the proverbial riddle of fitting a square peg into a round hole), thereby enhancing the sermon.[12] What is necessary, then, is not a *categorization* of the third-generation Mexican American, but an *understanding* of the third-generation's unique culture.

We may define culture as the collective store of beliefs, worldviews, social structures, identification patterns and their expression through actions and use of artifacts, then the third-generation Mexican American's culture is not quite Mexican or American.[13] Third-generation individuals are liminal, navigating between the culture of their parents and the majority culture. Their resistance to complete assimilation results in a cultural "in-between-ness,"[14] whereby the third-generation "deftly and effectively navigate[s] different racial terrains and [is] considered an 'insider' in more than one [culture]."[15] Their cultural identity is fluid, adjustable, and lacks rigid character. Third-generation Mexican Americans dodge the issue of categorical identification altogether. This subgroup, instead, shifts its cultural affinities back and forth from context to context. The third-generation's cultural dexterity is evidenced in situations such as a university setting, where a Mexican American might be encouraged to express their "American-ness" (e.g., speak English only). Similarly, a primarily Mexican context, such as a family gathering with several generations of Mexican Americans present, might displace American-ness in favor of Mexican cultural expression (e.g., speaking Spanish primarily).

Context seems to be the determinative factor in the third-generation's choice of cultural expression. However, these expressions cannot occur *prior* to the presence of an existing cultural store, for it is this store that produces any particular cultural manifestation. Johnson explains, "It is important to note that the culture does not refer to what people *actually do*, but to the *ideas* they share about what they do and the material objects that they use (italics mine)."[16] The existence of "ideas" gives rise to particular cultural articulations. This latter generation, therefore, expresses their cultural liminality, or quite simply *their* culture, in their expression of American culture, Mexican culture, or both. Their ideological store, so to speak, manifests a culture that is a hybrid that has enough of each culture to *identify with* Mexican-ness or American-ness, but not enough to *be categorized as* Mexican or American, however those may be defined. Indeed, third-generation Mexicans assume the role of cultural chameleons. Chameleons appear to *be* their context; nevertheless they are always *distinguishable* from their context, regardless of how well they might resemble it.

The impact of bumpy-line assimilation cannot be overestimated. In its inability to Americanize Mexican Americans completely by the third-generation, the result places a unique burden on the third-generation to learn how to handle their unique cultural repository. Vasquez explains, "Racial liminality is a complicated position: it requires people to do work

constructing their identities. For some this leads to crises, while for others it leads to opportunities. These processes are dynamic, are based on social context, and are reshaped over the lifespan."[17] And the third-generation knows it. They are not oblivious to the fact that their unique cultural make-up distinguishes them and quite possibly ostracizes them from American *and* Mexican culture. As one participant in Vasquez' study candidly admitted, "I have no identity. I'm in between. I don't fit here and I don't fit in either culture."[18] Their "in-between-ness" cultivates a sense of displacement, a reality of their bi-national cultural matrix. Indeed, the burden arises from their very lack of *complete* assimilation. Without "straight-line" acculturation, the third-generation exists at a perpetual fork in the road, having to decide, at each contextual juncture, with which culture they will align. The third-generation's culture *is* "in-between."

STYLINZING THE SERMON FOR THE THIRD-GENERATION

If the third-generation's culture should properly be considered a unique hybrid of both their Mexican heritage and their American home, resulting in a unique audience with distinct needs and character, then sermon design is affected in both "what to preach" (i.e., sermonic content) and "how to preach" (i.e., sermonic delivery). Unfortunately, space limits a thorough discussion of both of these issues. Therefore, the final section of this paper shall focus primarily on a brief treatment of *how to say* the sermon in the presence of third-generation Mexican Americans. That is, the emphasis shall be on the issue of sermonic *style*.

Preliminary Considerations

Before proceeding with the "how" of this paper, allow me to say a few words about *style* and why this author has chosen to emphasize "how to preach" rather than "what to preach." First, the numerous preaching manuals that have been written by expert homileticians tend to devote overwhelming attention to the discovery and development of the "proposition" of the text, its "central idea," or its "big idea." Of course, this is reasonable, as it is the authoritative, theological backing of the preacher's message.[19] However, the task of designing the sermon's *style* generally receives scant attention. That is, these manuals neglect a thorough discussion of word-choice, metaphor, enthymeme construction, memes, idioms, axioms, similes, etc., and how these figures relate to *style* that is appropriate to message and audience. Most preaching handbooks limit an explanation of *stylistic* decisions to *clarity*. For example, Robinson, who devotes about fifty-percent of his seminal manual *Biblical Preaching* to the "big idea," only devotes one chapter to the question of *style*, for a total of about seven-percent of his manual.[20] In his chapter on *style*, Robinson's primary concerns are "clarity" and "vividness." In no way to demean Robinson's work, it is difficult to accept that these should be the

sole concerns in developing the *style* of the sermon, since the perspicuity of the Bible and the surplus of modern Bible translations in the United States essentially "do the work" for the preacher. If clarity and vividness are to be the preacher's primary concerns, then homiletics classes might better serve them by teaching how to *read* the text rather than by teaching them how to *preach*.[21]

Second, a reconsideration of *style* and its sermonic function is necessary because of its immeasurable impact during sermon delivery. In a sense, *style* serves as the sermon's medium, putting clothing on an otherwise naked sermon proposition. In McLuhanesque fashion, Craddock goes so far as to say that the *style* of the sermon *is* the sermon.[22] *Style* generates the sermon; it dispenses the sermon; it communicates the sermon. The preacher's *style* links the "world in front of the [biblical] text," to the sermonic "world" which the preacher delivers to the audience as a means to walking with the Holy One.[23] Moreover, it is as vital to a sermon's success as determining the text and sermon's "central proposition." Simply presenting the content of the biblical text does not provide optimal persuasive potential. Aristotle declares, "For it is *not sufficient* to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how to say it…(italics mine)."[24] By tackling the question of "how to preach" to third-generation Mexican Americans, it is hoped that this author can, at the very least, demonstrate how a consideration of *style* is a legitimate and essential step in sermon design needed to increase the persuasive potential of a sermon.

Finally, this paper assumes one central and crucial proposition: *All* of the Scriptures are relevant across *all* cultural boundaries. As such, determining "topics" or "themes" that might be relevant for a particular culture (or in this case generation) is unnecessary since those determinations cannot be otherwise. Furthermore, by assuming that *all* scriptural themes are relevant for the third-generation, sermons avoid the risk of caricaturing biblical truth, a risk that can become a watershed for biblical misrepresentations. Liberation theology, while legitimate in limited contexts, has enjoyed widespread popularity among Latin American groups because of its "relevance" in assuaging histories of oppression against Hispanic groups. Unfortunately, attempting to preach "liberation" solely skews the nature of the Bible, and, consequently, the nature of God. In an effort to avoid this caricature, the present discussion shall focus on the manner in which the sermon should be presented rather than narrowing the comprehensive nature of the Bible to collections of selected "relevant" themes for third-generation Mexican Americans.

Identification With Not Identification Of

As was stated previously, third-generation Mexican Americans bear a unique cultural identity. Bumpy-line assimilation renders this latter generation in a state of cultural ambidexterity. Depending on their context,

they may express whatever cultural repository they desire. In order to design a sermon with optimal persuasive potential, the preacher must recognize the third-generation's unique cultural position. Once the preacher recognizes the third-generation's duality, then he can decide on a rhetoric that will guide his sermonic style. Despite the superfluity of available rhetorics (e.g., Aristotle's, Cicero's, Whately's, Richards', etc.), one philosopher's theory in particular empathizes with the present need. Kenneth Burke's philosophy of rhetoric directs rhetors towards "identification" as a transcending rhetorical "motive" or goal in the speech, namely, with the aim of "identifying" two discrete characters with one another as it were. This rhetorical purpose actually matches the contemporary rhetorical strategies employed by other fields targeting the Mexican American audience (e.g., marketing and politics).[25] In an effort not to "recreate the wheel," it seems appropriate to take what these fields are doing and apply their strategies for the present homiletical purpose.

Kenneth Burke specifies "identification" as a rhetorical motive that "moves" an audience towards adopting specific actions (although for Burke, more precisely, it is likely an *attitude* that will eventually result in a free-will action).[26] In the rhetor's aim to "identify" two discrete elements, he attempts to con-substantiate them through some unifying or "identifying" marker. Burke explains, "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B…In being identified with B, A is 'substantially one' with a person other than himself (italics his)."[27] Through his message, the rhetor provides a framework by which the audience finds common ground between themselves and a symbol (i.e., an action, belief, person, etc.) that the rhetor intends. If the rhetor's audience can "identify with" the symbol, then there is an increased potential for persuasion. As Burke describes, "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his (italics Burke's)."[28] Identification is the instrumentality of persuasion.

Burke's work suggests that identification *of* the third-generation has significantly less persuasive power in sermon design than identification *with* them as an audience. Analysis of the third-generation's unique character is essential, not only for the mere task of knowing *to whom* the preacher is speaking. It is foundational to understanding *with whom* to identify the sermon. The sermon, in principle, is the symbol with which the third-generation must identify if they are to appropriate the proposition that the preacher intends. If the preacher can construct his sermon in such a way that his message is a verbal expression of what the third-generation Mexican American is in person, then there is an opportunity for the third-generation to become consubstantial with the sermon, its ideas, application, and, consequently, its underlying theology. If the third-generation Mexican American can *identify with* the sermon, then there is an increased chance for the third-generation to *apply* the sermon, which is the preacher's ultimate

rhetorical motive.

The Shape the Sermon Takes

There are at least two ways that the preacher can shape his *style* when preaching to third-generation Mexican Americans. The essential feature in these *stylistic* choices is the reflection of the "in-between" culture of third-generation individuals. Still, how much or what *style* constitutes "in-between?" Admittedly, this is a difficult question to answer. Yet, a possible solution might be to perform the same "cultural maintenance" that the third-generation performs to keep their Mexican-ness. In other words, in order for preachers to create a sermon with "in-between" flavor, it is likely that the preacher has only to shift attention to *maintaining* Mexican-ness in a sermon much like the third-generation does to maintain their Mexican-ness during the assimilation process. Since the preacher's tendency will be either to assume straight-line assimilation or none at all, supplying the sermon with *some* Mexican quality acknowledges bumpy-line assimilation and the role that cultural maintenance has in limiting Americanization's effects. Thus, the preacher does not *Americanize* or *Mexicanize* his sermon. He allows both to shape the sermon's identity.

This "maintenance" can be done in two ways—although certainly not limited to these two ways. First, the preacher can utilize Spanish language to his advantage. As was stated previously, third-generation Mexican Americans speak primarily English, meanwhile maintaining Spanish, either in customary or "Spanglish" form. By maintaining the Spanish language in either form, the third-generation signals their intimacy with their Mexican culture since, "Spanish in the United States, … [signifies] informality and intimacy to members of the ethnic group."[29] Therefore, since the consideration of the present paper is "how to say" the sermon and not "what to say," employing Spanish in the sermon is a relatively "easy" way to *stylize* the sermon. Of course, an objection to this suggestion is that "easy" is indeed "relative." However, the present paper does not intend that Spanish should be employed throughout the entire sermon. Recent research suggests that an extended use of Spanish will deter latter generations of Mexican Americans rather than persuade.[30] "Easy" should be construed to mean the translation of words, phrases, or even a conflation of English and Spanish, which can be done simply by perusing a dictionary or performing an Internet search. For instance, if a preacher were to preach the following proposition in a sermon, *Belief in Christ results in becoming a member of the family of God*, then a linguistically sensitive *stylization* of the sermon proposition might be, *Belief in Christ results in becoming a member of the familia of God*. Observe that in the above statement what is conformed to Mexican-ness is a crucial term of the theological proposition, such that through this change, a push towards "in-between" is being expressed. Of course, one could extend the *stylization* to "*familia de Dios*" in order to add an even fuller Spanish essence to the phrase

(a subjective decision to be sure). However, translation of the sole, crucial term infuses the proposition with enough Mexican quality to be a "mix."

To be clear, this extension is not necessary, and preachers should not translate the entire sermon. By altering select words or as many words as are available to the preacher, the goal of the *style* is to present an *appreciation* for the Mexican culture that is still present and integral to the third-generation Mexican American's identity, not necessarily an *exhibition* of Mexican culture. Maintaining Spanish in the wording of propositions, idioms, metaphors, and other linguistic figures merely demonstrates to the audience that the preacher recognizes the third-generation's unique cultural make-up. Speaking in *some* Spanish rather than *all* Spanish in the sermon signals recognition of the dual cultural identity of the third-generation.

A second strategy that preachers can employ is to embed cultural practices within the sermon as the context in which theology is applied. Mexican practices and artifacts are expressions of the third-generation's Mexican cultural store. By embedding these within the sermon, the preacher exhibits his awareness of "Mexican-ness" of that repository. The preacher may choose to have these serve in an illustrative section of the sermon or, perhaps, in the application section. In undergirding his sermon with these cultural indicators, the preacher can once more, shape his sermon to be "in-between," matching his audience for the purpose of "identification" that leads to persuasion. By identifying the *sermon* with the audience, the preacher creates an opportunity for persuasion to occur.

For example, in a message about the Lord's Supper and the communion of the saints recorded in 1 Corinthians 11, the preacher may include features of Mexican family meals with which the audience may identify, such as specific types of food (e.g., tortillas, refried beans, fried rice), activities (e.g., piñata games), or family structures (e.g., men sit together, women sit together, etc.) to communicate his message. These features of Mexican meals contextualize the message for the third-generation audience in such a way that they are able to observe the compatibility of their culture and the theology of the passage. With the help of the preacher, the audience identifies their "world" with the "world" of the sermonic world with the end result of possible persuasion.[31]

CONCLUSION

Contemporary preaching to Mexican American audiences can increase persuasive potential by approaching multi-cultural preaching as *multi-generational* preaching. Bumpy-line assimilation renders third-generation Mexican Americans in a unique cultural position that cannot adequately be addressed in a rhetorical strategy that focuses on the features of only one culture (Mexican or American). Preachers can maximize their sermon's persuasive potential by accounting for the third-generation's cultural "in-between-ness," thus shaping their sermons to *identify with* the

hybrid-culture that third-generation Mexican Americans embody. Most importantly, by acknowledging the third-generation's cultural duality, the preacher demonstrates to his listening audience that their liminal identity can be a context in which walking with God is possible.

NOTES

1. Pew Hispanic Center, "Table 6. Detailed Hispanic Origin," under "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2008," http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets/factsheet.php?FactsheetID=58 (accessed March 2, 2011).
2. Native-born Mexican Americans outnumber their parents almost two to one. In particular, third-generation Mexican Americans comprise almost half of the 17 million native-born Mexican Americans in the United States. Ibid.
3. For the purposes of this paper, assimilation and acculturation will be used synonymously, see Alan G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A Users Guide to Sociological Language*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), under the heading, "cultural contact."
4. For a list of cultural factors that have traditionally contributed to the assimilation of immigrants in the United States, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 184-85.
5. Jessica M. Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations: Immigrant Families, Racial Realities* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 4.
6. Telles and Ortiz observe that it is the maintenance of these types of markers that maintain the viability of that particular culture. Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 185.
7. Laird W. Bergad and Herbert S. Klein, *Hispanics in the United States: A Demographic, Social, and Economic History, 1980-2005* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 398.
8. Culture is often tightly wound with that culture's "religion" denominationally conceived. In the case of Mexican-Americans, the culture's major religion is Catholic. Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations,* 44.
9. Pew Hispanic Center, "Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America, 2009," http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/117.pdf (accessed October 11, 2010).
10. Pew Hispanic Center, "Between Two Worlds."
11. Space limits a thorough discussion of the political, sociological, and technological factors contributing to the third-generation's ability to delay the Americanization process. Huntington details a multiplicity of factors that have contributed to the weakening of assimilation's process. See Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's Identity*, 184-85.

12. I have chosen to focus on the sermon itself in this paper. However, acknowledging the duality of the third-generation Mexican American enhances *the preacher* as well. Preparing a sermon that is appropriate to the audience is in itself an ethical appeal, an invaluable, rhetorical proof necessary for increasing the chances of persuasion.
13. Johnson, under the heading, "culture," 73.
14. See also Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations*, 200-201.
15. Vasquez, 200-201.
16. Johnson, 74.
17. Vasquez, 196-201.
18. Vasquez, 201.
19. Timothy S. Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:592 (October-December 1991): 476-78.
20. Robinson also includes a short discussion of the use of "transitions" (although these might be better subsumed under the "clarity" heading) and a "direct and personal style" where he explains that, "The feeling of good preaching is that you are talking to and with your hearers." Despite the importance of a "direct and personal style" to "good preaching," Robinson spends very little time discussing it (only five paragraphs total!). Incidentally, labeling "direct and personal style" as "good preaching" is, in itself, a stylistic maneuver that increases the chances that the *reader* will be persuaded, a strategy that demonstrates the latent power of *style* independent of word count. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 183-199.
21. Craddock's statement regarding the necessity of *stylistic* choices is even more forceful, "Were matters of imaginative language and description not vital to preaching we could simply print the theme sentence of the message in the order of worship and eliminate the sermon." Despite his high estimation of *style*, Craddock spends about the same amount of time detailing *style* in his book as Robinson does in his. Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 194.
22. Of course, he is not categorically equating *style* with the sermon. However, Craddock prioritizes the consideration of *style* in sermon design such that, "Lively language, clear description, and fitting illustrative materials *are* the sermon…let it be emphasized again that we are concerned not with priorities in terms of what is more or less important but with sequence in the preparation process (italics his)." Ibid. For a recent treatment of the rhetorical dimensions of style as an entity, see Barry Brummett, *The Rhetoric of Style* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).
23. For an explanation of the concept of the Bible's "world in front of the text" and how the preacher may discover it see, Abraham Kuruvilla,

Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

24. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, edited by J. H. Freese, Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0060%3Abook%3D3%3Achapter%3D1%3Asection%3D2.
25. For a brief survey of examples of these rhetorical strategies see, José G. Izaguirre, III "Preaching to the Next Generation of Hispanic Americans in the Southwest: Applying Aristotle's Three Proofs to Third-Generation Mexican Americans," (master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2011).
26. Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 50.
27. Burke, 20-21.
28. Burke, 55.
29. Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 187.
30. "These more linguistically assimilated Hispanics are more likely than those less linguistically assimilated…to be *offended* by Spanish-language." Scott Koslow, Prem N. Shamdasani, Ellen E. Touchstone, "Exploring Language Effects in Ethnic Advertising: A Sociolinguistic Perspective," *The Journal of Consumer Research* 20, no. 4 (March 1994): 577-78, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489760 (accessed May 31, 2011).
31. Indeed, identifying a product with the third-generations Mexican cultural store is the strategy currently being employed by marketers. A wine making company based out of California has done a fascinating job taking wine (a drink that is normally not a part of Mexican culture) and *identifying* it with Mexican-ness. This identification has resulted in increased wine drinking among latter generations of Mexicans. See, Laurel Wentz, "Beringer Bets on Hispanic Market as Wine Growth Category: Hispanic Consumption Greatly Outpacing General Market Growth," Advertising Age, Hispanic, http://adage.com/article/hispanic-marketing/wine-beringer-bets-hispanic-market-growth-category/145848/ (accessed July 31, 2011).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SERMON GOOD?

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ABSTRACT: This paper argues that a good sermon must be both aesthetically good as a literary composition, and serve well the purpose of the sermon: to help hearers pursue holiness. Growth in holiness happens as people behold the glory of God, which is seen most brilliantly in redemption, and consummated fully in the Beatific Vision. The implications of this conclusion apply to sermon content, design, and language, and may be used to construct a heuristic for sermon assessment. The heuristic developed at the end of this paper may then be used to aid in the improvement of our sermon compositions.

INTRODUCTION

Many preachers struggle with responding to positive feedback following a particularly inspiring sermon. "Praise the Lord," is a common refrain, often accompanied by a "Thanks for the encouragement" or "God is good." I was recently forwarded an e-mail describing one such pastor-congregant exchange:

> After church, a woman shook the pastor's hand at the door and went on and on in her praise.
>
> "That sermon," she exclaimed, "was one of the most wonderful I've ever heard."
>
> The humble pastor couldn't accept such a great compliment. "Oh, it really wasn't me," he said, "It was all the Lord."
>
> "Oh, no," she quickly assured him, "it wasn't *that* good."

It is not uncommon for preachers to feel that way about their own sermons, at least on occasion. "It wasn't *that* good. It could have been better." Just what makes a good sermon good? The question (rarely asked, apparently) is simple enough, yet finding consensus on the answer has not proved as easy a task.

FIRST THINGS FIRST, OR DELIMITING THE QUESTION

For starters, we need to clarify what we mean by the word "sermon."

We cannot say what makes a good sermon good if we do not get this straight. For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to distinguish between "sermon" and "preaching." Often these terms are conflated—used interchangeably—or at least closely equated with one another: one may be subsumed into the understood meaning of the other, for instance. This is not helpful.

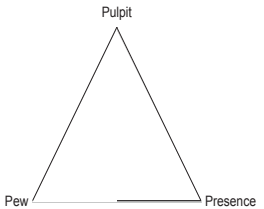
It is better to understand the term "preaching" as encompassing the entire event wherein a messenger proclaims a message to a group of listeners (often in a liturgical and ecclesiastical context), in the presence of God. In other words, "preaching" refers to everything that takes place in the "moment" of proclamation. Romans 10:14–15 contains a description of what I have in mind:

> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!"

"Preaching" involves a messenger ("someone"), a message ("the good news"), hearers ("they" who "hear"), and the Triune God (not explicitly mentioned in this text, but clearly implied, as it is he who makes saving faith possible; see 1 Cor. 12:3).[1]

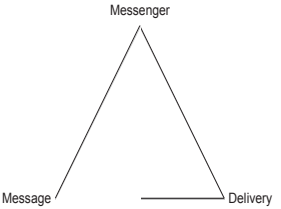
These four components of preaching can be arranged triadically, so that preaching is viewed as an activity consisting of (1) pulpit, (2) pew, and (3) the presence of God. (In this paradigm, only the pulpit is within the direct control of the preacher.)[2]

Figure 1. Triad of Preaching



The "pulpit" can be further segmented triadically into (1a) messenger, (1b) message, and (1c) transmission or delivery of the message.

Figure 2. Triad of the Pulpit



When we consider what makes a sermon good we are interested only in (1b), the message. When people like the woman in the e-mail I received call a "sermon" good, what they almost always mean (assuming their sincerity) is that they experienced the entire preaching experience as good. This is a subjective evaluation, involving a complex dance between pulpit (messenger, message, delivery), pew (individual, community, liturgical context), and the presence of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

Were we to ask, "What makes good preaching good?" we would, therefore, have to consider each of those three elements separately. This involves asking preliminary questions like, "What makes for a good listener of preaching?" "What does good delivery consist in?" "What makes a good preacher?" and the question this paper is interested in exploring, "What makes a good sermon good?" That is, when we consider the sermon as a specific literary composition, belonging to a particular genre of literature, and distinct from its visual-oral-aural delivery and reception, what makes a good one good?[3]

What makes any good thing good?

According to Nicholas Wolterstorff an artifact is a good artifact "if it serves its purpose effectively and then in addition proves good and satisfying to use for [that] purpose."[4] A chair is a good chair, for instance, if it serves the purpose of chairs effectively—namely, it supports the weight of a person seated—and then, in addition, proves good and satisfying to use for that purpose—it not only supports a person's weight, but it is comfortable to sit in, it does not hurt your back, and so forth.

We may say, then, that a sermon is a good sermon if it serves the purpose of sermons effectively, and then, in addition, proves good and satisfying to use for that purpose. Two questions arise. First, *what is the purpose of the sermon?* And second, *what does it mean for a sermon to prove good and satisfying to use for its purpose?* Consider the second question first. Wolterstorff's discussion of the hymn in corporate worship is informative here. He argues that a hymn's purpose is "to enable a congregation to offer praise to God"[5] and "if [it] is to prove good and satisfying to use for praising God, it must be aesthetically good. . . . There is no such thing as a

good artifact—a good shovel, a good wheelbarrow, a good house—which is aesthetically poor."[6] Thus, whatever the purpose of the sermon, it must, if it is to be a good sermon, be aesthetically good (as a literary composition), in addition to serving its purpose effectively. We will consider the aesthetics of the sermon (that is, sermon composition) at length, later in this paper, but let us note initially that objections of the sort that question whether a sermon should aspire to be a work of art are misguided. A sermon is a literary composition: it is, by its very nature, an artwork. The issue is not whether a sermon should be an artwork or not, but whether it is an aesthetically good artwork or an aesthetically poor one.

For a sermon to be a good sermon, then, it must be aesthetically good, but it must first serve the purpose of sermons effectively. What is that purpose? Since the sermon exists for the sake of preaching (and not private, silent reading, for instance), its purpose must be to advance the purpose of preaching. What, then, is preaching's purpose?

The purpose of preaching

According to the Apostle Paul the goal of preaching is "everyone mature [*teleion* (*telos*)] in Christ" (Col. 1:28), a goal so high and deep and broad as to encompass the evangelism of non-believers and the edification of Christians. We may express this goal in different, though synonymous, terms: Christian maturity, discipleship,[7] holistic renewal (Rom. 12:2),[8] perfect Christlikeness, and still others. While such perfection—complete sanctification—will never be attained this side of heaven, preaching, nevertheless, aims to move people in a Godward direction. "Everyone mature in Christ" is another way of saying growth in holiness, or progressive sanctification, that reaches its consummation in eternal glorification. We preach that our hearers "will be conformed to the image of [God's] Son" (Rom. 8:29), with the expectation that when he returns, Jesus "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Sanctification is preaching's purpose because it is Christ's purpose.

> Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor [*endoxos*], without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25–27).

Growth in holiness is a process whereby believers are progressively transformed (or transfigured) into the image of Christ (Rom. 12:2, *metamorphoō*). This transformation happens "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18), and is fully realized in the Beatific Vision (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4). (This, by the way, is not inconsistent at all with the Westminster Divines' summary of our chief end, namely, to glorify God and

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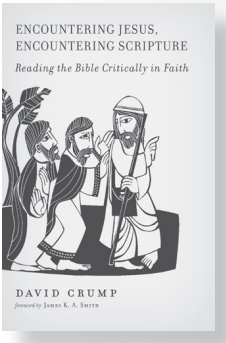

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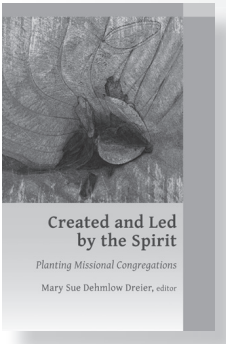

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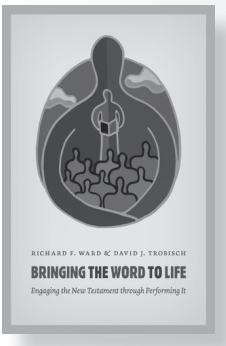

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enjoy him forever. It is precisely in becoming more like Christ that we glorify God. And it is only in becoming more like him that we are able to enjoy him more fully.)

If the purpose of the sermon is to advance the purpose of preaching—namely, Christian maturity, or holiness—we can more precisely say that the purpose of the sermon is, likewise, to help our people pursue holiness (Heb 12:14). Preachers desire their peoples' sanctification. This sets (the purpose of) preaching in the context of creation and redemption: we were made for, and saved for, Christlikeness.

How does a person become increasingly transformed into the image of Christ? Paul provides at least two contrasting, though congruent, responses. On the one hand, Paul says we are transformed by "beholding the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This glory is most clearly seen in the face of God, as Exodus 33 makes plain. "Please show me your glory," Moses asks God (33:18). But, as God explains, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (33:20). Instead, God allows him a glimpse of his "back" (33:23), as he "[makes] all my goodness pass before you" (33:19). In other words, while God's glory is most clearly seen in his face, such a theophanic encounter is impossible without instant and immediate death (Isa 6:1).

Yet, there remains a way to behold God's glory in something less than the fullness of its splendor: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). We see the face of Jesus Christ with the eyes of our hearts as we "[see] the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). Such a "seeing" is, now, but a dim reflection of the beauty that awaits all Christians in the Beatific Vision, when we will see the Lamb of God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 22:1–4).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul uses a different image to describe this progressive change into Christlikeness:

> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:1–2).

Transformation by the renewal of the mind is set in direct opposition to conformation to the world. You cannot be transformed if you are being conformed. The two are mutually exclusive. We either worship God or the world. There is no alternative. "What people revere," G. K. Beale argues, "they resemble, either for ruin or restoration."[9] We either become more like Christ or more unlike him. Spiritual worship—worship that is "holy and acceptable to God"—renews the mind and transforms the worshiper.

Combining these two Pauline descriptions with our discussion up to this point, we may say that the purpose of the sermon is to help our people pursue holiness, which happens as we behold God's glory. This "beholding" is an act of worship. It is not a dispassionate contemplation. To behold is to see God's glory and to ascribe glory to Him: it is to worship (Ps. 29:2; 96:6, 9). Put another way, we are transformed into Christlikeness—we grow in holiness, we become more like him—when, and as, we worship.

"The cross, the grave, the skies"

While we cannot now behold God's glory in the fullness of its splendor—that is, face to face—we are able to see something of his radiance in "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). This gospel is, in short, the saving work of Christ: his death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3–5). That is, until we "see him as he is" (1 John 3:2), we most clearly behold God's glory in redemption. It has always been this way.

Under the Old Covenant, only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, and that only once a year, to make a sacrifice of atonement for his, and the peoples', sin. He did this by sprinkling the blood of the animal sacrifice over the mercy seat that covered the Ark of the Covenant (Lev 16:1–34). It was "from above the mercy seat" that God spoke with Moses (Ex. 25:21–22). It was here that God's glory was displayed in its greatest splendor (see also 1 Kings 8:10–11). When David prays "that [he] may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of [his] life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4), this is what he is envisioning. The beauty of God, David intuits, is "in the house of the LORD," "in his temple," "in his tent" (v. 6). He longs to gaze upon it, to seek God's face (vv. 8–9). David is seeking the deepest, sweetest, most intimate communion with God possible, through access to the Most Holy Place.

In other words, God's glory has always been displayed in its greatest splendor in redemption. In the Old Covenant, this glory was seen at the mercy seat. In the New Covenant, it is seen in Christ crucified, dead, buried, and raised: "the cross, the grave, the skies." Christ "entered once for all in the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11–12), and because of him "we have confidence to enter the holy places by [his] blood, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh" (Heb. 10:19–20). As Thomas Boston puts it:

> In our redemption by Christ, we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of his glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here. Indeed the glory

> of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and reveal one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. His truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory.[10]

Boston's observation is consistent with what we read about the relationship between God's glory and the cross throughout the New Testament. In his study of the glory of God in the Johannine writings, for instance, Andreas J. Köstenberger "conclude[s] that the cross is at the heart of John's glory theology and that the cross, in turn, is the most notable instance where the persons of the divine Godhead collaborate in bringing glory to one another."[11]

If the purpose of preaching is to help people pursue holiness by beholding the glory of God, that is, by worshiping him, it does this best by pointing hearers back to the cross, even as it beckons them to the most glorious communion that awaits them beyond the grave in the Beatific Vision. In David Peterson's words, "Practical holiness means working out in everyday life and relationships the moral consequences of our union with Christ. . . . The call of Scripture is to live out the practical implications of our [definitive/positional] sanctification by pursuing holiness as a lifestyle. We are to do this by looking back to the cross and forward to the resurrection, when by God's grace we will share his character and life completely."[12] And this is precisely what we're saying is preaching's purpose.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SERMON

Since a good sermon must advance the purpose of preaching, it must have as its goal the pursuit of holiness among those who will hear it proclaimed. Growth in holiness happens as people look back to the cross and forward to the Beatific Vision. The implications of this conclusion for the entire preaching event are numerous, and I hope that future studies will more fully engage them. Here, we only have space to consider the implications for

the sermon; and specifically, the implications for the three constituent parts of every sermon: content, design, and language.

Implications for sermon content

J.I. Packer describes "the life of growth into Christ-likeness" as "a three-legged stool, which can only stand if all three legs are in place."[13] These three legs, Packer tells us, are *doctrine* ("truth taken into the mind and heart to live by"), *practice* ("the specific and habitual response of obedience to the doctrinal truth one has received") and *experience* ("the conscientious pursuit and conscious enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and the Son"). Genuine growth in holiness—true transformation in Christlikeness—involves proportionate growth in all three dimensions. As Packer says, "[A] stool cannot stand on any less than its three legs. In the absence of any one of them, the stool falls down. If one leg is larger or smaller than the other two, stability is lost, and the stool is in danger of tipping over as soon as any weight is put on it. So it is only when [doctrine, practice, and experience] are balanced together in proper proportions that the spiritual life is solid and steady."[14] Packer's observation suggests that while our sermons ought to lead people to worship, they aren't simply to be tractates on the cross or resurrection. Rather, our sermons need to be grounded in doctrinal *truth*, appeal for practical demonstrations of *goodness*, and seek for our hearers an experience of the *beauty* of God's glory, because the pursuit of holiness is always characterized by knowledge of *Truth*, doing of *Goodness*, and experience of *Beauty*. Holiness, we might say (and say rightly), is holistic. It involves truth, goodness, and beauty. Thus, while the primary goal of the sermon is our hearers' pursuit of holiness, we may understand this as consisting of three subsidiary goals that we will consider in turn.

Truth

Sermons should be rooted in the redeeming work of Christ, and in the Beatific Vision. While evangelical preachers would be the first to affirm the necessity of grounding our sermons in the biblical text, one of the implications of what we have been articulating is that it is insufficient to simply base a sermon on the Bible. Rather, we need to connect whatever book or text or word or theme of Scripture that is the basis of our sermon to the cross and the Beatific Vision. In other words, we do not preach a text of the Bible; we preach the gospel. Whatever a sermon's *minor theme* might be—forgiveness, courage, temptation, and so forth—the gospel must always be its *major theme*. Paul Scott Wilson says we "[use] the gospel as a lens to read the [biblical] text. . . . [A] full gospel hermeneutic is needed that has three critical dimensions: a) seek the gospel in the text itself; b) bring the text to the cross and resurrection to see how the meaning of the text is altered in light of Easter; and c) bring the larger gospel story to the text to discover echoes

of it there."[15]

Expositing a text—even when such exposition includes suggestions for application, even when the exposition is exegetically accurate, as it needs to be—falls short of what makes for a good sermon if it fails to shine the light on the work of Christ on the cross and direct our gaze and longings to our future with him. We can do this without being unfaithful to the Bible since we read Scripture canonically. We affirm the Bible as one book, unified though diverse, telling one story, whose climax is the death and resurrection of Christ, and whose end is the Beatific Vision. Our sermons are based on this text in its entirety, or some text or word in it, but the context is always the whole gospel story.

Some may object that such an approach makes for boring, routine sermons. Wilson treats this concern: "Because of the centrality of the resurrection for the good news, does this mean that every sermon will bring the same news, like endless deliveries of yesterday's newspaper? Yes and no: yes in that Christian preaching is Christ-centered and the cross has saving power. No in that preaching texts vary and how the gospel is proclaimed in relationship to specific occasions will vary widely from week to week."[16]

It must be noted, too, that no serious reflection on the Beatific Vision is possible without thinking upon one's inevitable death. Richard Baxter, in his directions to husbands and wives on their obligations to each other, included:

> the duty . . . to be helpers and comforters of each other in order to have a safe and happy death. First, in the time of health, you must often and seriously remind each other of the time when death will make the separation. You must live together, in your daily converse, as those who are expecting the parting hour. Help to awaken each other's souls, to make ready all those graces that will then prove necessary. Live in a constant preparation for your change. Reprove all in one another that will be unsavory and ungrateful to your review at death. If you see each other dull and slow in your preparations or live in vanity, worldliness, or sloth, as if you had forgotten that you must shortly die, stir up one another to do all without delay that the approach of such a day requires. Second, when death is at hand, oh, then what abundance of tenderness, seriousness, skill, and diligence is needful for one who has the last office of love to perform to the departing soul of so near a friend! Oh, then what need will there be of your most wise, faithful, and diligent help! What skill and holy seriousness will be necessary when nature fails and the pains of flesh divert the mind, when temptations are strongest, when the body is weakest, when a languishing body and a doubting, fearful, troubled mind calls for your compassion and help.[17]
>
> If it is not too frequent to think about, prepare for, and remind each

other of, one's death on a daily basis, surely, to do this once or even twice a week is not to go too far.

Goodness

There is a second implication to what we have said about the purpose of the sermon. Since the pursuit of holiness necessarily includes practical Christian living, a good sermon must exhort hearers to genuine goodness. There must be application. This application arises out of human needs and divine provisions surfaced in the biblical text that is the subject of the sermon (that is, the "preaching portion"). In includes specific ideas to be practiced by the congregation. A life of holiness is, after all, a life lived in obedience to God's Word: in love toward God and neighbor. It is a beautifying life. So sermons should include calls to mortify sin and to live as new creation (2 Cor 5:17). Without such appellations we run the risk of antinomianism. But without grounding such application in the redemptive work of Christ we run the risk of either legalism or neonomianism. Instead, our exhortations to goodness ought to be connected to the redemptive work of Christ. We should make clear that acts of goodness are an implication and obligation of our redemption. Goodness is the gospel applied.

In other words, a good sermon avoids statements like "You need to do this and avoid that." While such lists of things to do and avoid may be in keeping with right Christian conduct, a good sermon demonstrates why any particular form of goodness that application calls for is motivated by, and an implication of, what Christ has done for us. *Why* must you do this and avoid that? *Why aren't you* doing this and avoiding that? How can you do this and avoid that? This involves deep diagnosis and insight into the human life.

Two New Testament texts make the connection between the gospel and its application clear. In Hebrews 12, the writer urges his community to mortify sin and live unto God by calling them to look to Jesus (12:1–2). The strategy of the book of Hebrews is our strategy. We motivate people to goodness by showing such goodness to be an implication of the good news. In 2 Peter 1, Peter says that a Christian who lacks practical, experiential holiness has "forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins" (1:9). She has forgotten what Christ accomplished for her in his death and resurrection. She has forgotten that she will see him one day, face to face, and experience perfect communion with him. In other words, it is remembering the victory of the cross—and the future that is assured because of that victory—that enables virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

Beauty

The goodness that is motivated by Christ's redeeming work and the hope of seeing his face happens when we see the beauty of Christ in his

saving grace.

> Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
> And all the twinkling starry host;
> Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
> Than all the angels heaven can boast

A good sermon, then, should tell us (1) what Jesus has done: redeemed us through his atoning work on the cross, thus making possible our certain future in his glorious presence, and (2) what we must, therefore, do. But how do we connect these two homiletical "dots"? It is only the beauty of Christ that makes it possible. When the truth of Christ's work is seen in the imagination of the hearer as beautiful, the result is a beautifying life of goodness.

We may believe the historicity of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We may understand that this should motivate us to a life of loving God and neighbor. Yet, we will never actually exercise such love unless we first, and continually, *experience* the beauty of Christ's work on our behalf. But even this experience of the beauty of Christ's redeeming work is penultimate. Our end is Christ. We long to see him, to please him, to worship him, to be close to him, "to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD" (Ps. 27:4). It is neither intellectual assent to truth, nor practical doing of good, that transforms us in Christlikeness. Truth and goodness need to be joined and compelled by beauty. Beauty, as Jacques Maritain argues, "is the radiance of all the transcendentals united."[18] David Bentley Hart says, "As the supreme beauty, the *perpulchrum*, Christ . . . is the measure of all beauty, who restores beauty to what has become formless through sin and death, makes the beautiful yet more beautiful, and makes the exceedingly beautiful more beautiful still."[19]

We will never respond to the truth of Christ's saving work unless we taste and see him as beautiful (1 John 4:19). Similarly, we will never obey as we ought unless we see our obedience as a means of pleasing the one we find beautiful. The beauty of God summons us to a life of goodness.[20] "There is an unsettling prodigality about the beautiful," Hart observes:

> …something wanton about the way it lavishes itself upon even the most atrocious of settings, its anodyne sweetness often seeming to make the most intolerable of circumstances beautiful. . . . More to the point, beauty is a category indispensable to Christian thought; all that theology says of the triune life of God, the gratuity of creation, the incarnation of the Word, and the salvation of the world makes room for—indeed depends upon—a thought, and a narrative, of the beautiful.[21]

Nowhere is the "prodigality" of beauty seen more clearly than in the person of Jesus Christ, Beauty himself. Thus, we aim in our sermons to

make not just Christ's work on the cross beautiful, but to lead our hearers to desire Christ, himself. Thomas Aquinas famously defined beauty as that which pleases when seen (*ST* 1. Q.5 A.4). And that is what the sermon purposes t do: to help hearers see Jesus, and to see him as beautiful; to desire to see him face to face in the Beatific Vision; to worship. At the heart of the gospel is the beautiful God-man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, "Beauty-less ways of understanding faith and the Gospel await and call for re-enchantment."[22]

Implications for sermon design

We noted earlier that a good sermon must serve its purpose effectively and in addition prove good and satisfying to use for that purpose. And we observed that to prove good and satisfying to use for the purpose of leading hearers to pursue holiness (by leading them to worship God, or behold his glory) a sermon must be aesthetically good as a literary composition. We turn now to a consideration of that facet of the sermon. What makes a sermon, as a literary work, aesthetically good?

Three conditions need to be met, according to Thomas Aquinas: "'integrity' or 'perfection,' since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due 'proportion' or 'harmony'; and lastly, 'brightness' or 'clarity,' whence things are called beautiful which have a bright color" (*ST* 1. Q.39 A.8). In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, translates Thomas's *integritas*, *proportio*, and *claritas* as wholeness, harmony, and radiance. I will use this triad of terms in considering the implications for sermon design.

Wholeness

In her exposition of Maritain's work on the transcendentals, Francesca Aran Murphy observes, "The unity of the work's many parts makes it a form in its own right. Such integrity resides in its telling 'one' story. . . . The unitive energy of the story binds together the work's diverse representations. . . . The immanent action of the work underlies its integrity. The work's action is what it does, its own expressive movement. The literary work is coiled around the action which carries its agents."[23] The literary "work" we are concerned with is the sermon. According to Murphy, a sermon must exhibit unity in its different parts: its "points" or "moves" (or "pages" or "episodes"). In other words, a good sermon has a clear beginning, middle, and end. There's a sense of wholeness.

Additionally, the sermon should be about one thing—what I have referred to elsewhere in this paper as the sermon's *minor theme*. This minor theme leads to, and is resolved by, the gospel—the sermon's *major theme*. Nevertheless, the minor theme should be carried through the entirety of the sermon. (The more skilled the sermon writer, the less obvious this connective thread will be, and the more satisfying the overall effect of the sermon.) Any

of a number of different sermon shapes may do this. There are different ways to assemble the parts of a sermon into the larger structure. For instance, Fred B. Craddock lists the following sample of sermon forms:

- What is it? What is it worth? How does one get it?
- Explore, explain, apply
- The problem, the solution
- What it is not, what it is
- Either/or
- Both/and
- Promise, fulfillment
- Ambiguity, clarity
- Major premise, minor premise, conclusion
- Not this, nor this, nor this, nor this, but this
- The flashback (from present to past to present)
- From the lesser, to the greater[24]

Whatever form is used, it should fit the text of Scripture on which the sermon is based and the minor theme of the sermon. Some forms will suit some texts and themes better than others. (More work, in general, needs to be done in this area.)

Harmony

Because people learn differently—and, as a result, are moved to worship by different means—preachers should not expect that one dominant mode of communication will have an equal effect on everyone in their congregations. A harmonious sermon will, therefore, use multiple tools—arguments, anecdotes, explanation, and the like—and approach the hearer from multiple perspectives—first person, "I"; second person, "you"; third person, "we." This is common homiletical wisdom.

Another accepted truth in sermon design is also an important component to the harmony of a sermon, namely, the time spent in the world of the text relative to that spent in the world of the hearer. A sermon that is 90% exegesis (theology, history, and so forth) is less a sermon than it is a religious lecture. Similarly, a sermon that spends nine-tenths of its time addressing contemporary concerns is less a sermon than it is a self-help talk. This does not mean that sermons should endeavor for a 50/50 split between explanation of the text and application to the listener; but the two frames of reference should be balanced. An implication of this paper's argument, however, is that enough time also needs to be devoted to the major theme of the sermon: the redeeming work of Christ. That, as we have said, is where God's glory is seen most clearly; and seeing that glory is how we grow in Christlikeness.

That leads to a final implication for the harmony of the sermon is

its ending. Not only must there be a genuine sense of completeness when the sermon is finished, the sermon's ending should be a happy one. Tolkien notes:

> The *eucatastrophic* tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function.
>
> The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous "turn" (for there is one true end to any fairy-tale): this joy, which is one of the things which fairy stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially "escapist", nor "fugitive". In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *euangelion*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. . . .
>
> I would venture to say that approaching the Christian Story from this direction, it has long been my feeling (a joyous feeling) that God redeemed the corrupt making-creatures, men, in a way fitting to this aspect, as to others, of their strange nature. The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. . . .
>
> The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the "happy ending."[25]

The message of our sermons is, after all, good news. And the hope and final end of the Christian is the very face of God, himself. That should impact our sermon forms, and particularly their conclusions.

Radiance

Radiance, with respect to the shape of the sermon, has to do, chiefly, with the connective power of beauty. If it is true that beauty is what connects the dots of truth and goodness—that it is a vision of the beauty of Jesus that not only makes truth about him existentially real in the hearts of our hearers, but also what leads Christians to genuine goodness, there is an additional implication for the shape of our sermons. Preachers should not assume that truth stated clearly leads to goodness. It is a *post hoc* fallacy to believe that explaining what the Bible commands (explicitly or implicitly) will lead people to obedience.

The important thing to recognize as it relates to the shape of the sermon is that the primary issue is not how many "moves" can be made in and out of the biblical text and the contemporary world (Wilson's four page

model assumes no more than three and as few as one, for instance). What is of concern is not the number of "moves," but how well the moves are connected. It is also not a matter of whether our sermons are deductive (as with the traditional three-point sermon), inductive (the narrative sermon), or even "abductive."[26] What matters is whether we have shown how truth and goodness connect via the beauty of Jesus (his person and his work). This is both the subject of sermon content and sermon design. It does not matter, for instance, if we start with goodness or truth, so long as the two are connected via beauty.

This also suggests the significance of a sermon's sequencing, or movement. A sermon should not be simply a set of propositions. (Integral, here, is the transition from one section of the sermon to the next.) The tighter the individual parts, transitions, and overall movement, the more intelligible the sermon will be. Like a good book, no element of the sermon should prove unnecessary. Rabbit trails and tangents only serve to obscure what should be clear. And clarity is essential if we are to help our hearers pursue holiness.

Implications for sermon language

"Language is wonderful and mysterious," says Vern Sheridan Poythress. "It is so because it is a gift of God to us. It reflects and reveals him."[27] Language, in the context of the sermon, is how the preacher speaks for God (to the people) or to God (as part of the people). It is the preacher's most valuable tool. Poythress proposes that we analyze language from three different perspectives: meaning, control, and presence: "Human speech depends vitally on all three of these aspects. Without meaning, speech is empty. Without control, it does not accomplish anything, and makes no difference. Without presence, the speech is disconnected from the speaker, and again loses its point."[28] What does this mean for the sermon?

Meaning

The language of our sermons—the words we use, the sentences, the grammar, and so forth—carry meaning, but they must mean something to the people the sermon addresses. Our congregational context should mediate, to some extent, the vocabulary of our sermons. We do not use the same words to a university group as we do with preschoolers. Like a custom-fitted suit, so the language of the sermon must be tailor made for a particular people. Telling people about the work of Christ will ring hollow if our words are obtuse.

Our language should also be descriptive and precise, rather than vague and jargonistic. Preachers choose the words of their sermons with attention to detail because they bear the weight of comprehension of Christ's redeeming work. Careless language will not do.

Control

The goal of the sermon is the pursuit of holiness, which happens as our people are moved to worship at the foot of the cross, in anticipation of the Beatific Vision. There is, then, a specific effect, or experience, that our sermonic language aims for: worship. To that end, our words should be both conversational and forceful: conversational because we plead lovingly and respectfully for people to respond to the beauty of Christ; forceful because we preach with all the authority of Christ's ambassadors.

Finally, because we aim for growth in holiness and recognize that it may well take more time than is available during the preaching event (or even the entire worship service) for some hearers to process what they are hearing, our sermon language, particularly in its key emphases, endeavors to be memorable so our people can worship long after they part company.

Presence

"The beauty of language shows the beauty of God himself,"[29] according to Poythress. What does that imply about sermonic language that is less than beautiful? At the very least, it suggests that the more skill and craftsmanship we demonstrate with our words, the more creative and playful we are with our use of language, the better.

All of our language about God, however, is analogical (rather than equivocal or univocal). We cannot speak about God, his attributes or his redemptive work, without appealing to metaphor and imagery. Until we see him face to face, it is only in the imagination—the eyes of the heart—that the beauty of Christ becomes visible. So a good sermon will, by necessity, feature evocative images that illumine who God is.

A heuristic for sermon assessment

This paper began by asking, "What makes a good sermon good?" and traced the answer to that question through a series of preliminary questions, beginning with, "What makes any good thing good?" The sermon, we noted, exists to advance the purpose of preaching; namely, the pursuit of holiness (or alternatively and synonymously, Christian maturity or progressive sanctification). This transformation in Christlikeness happens as we worship; that is, as we behold God's glory, which is seen most clearly in redemption, and which will be fully consummated in the Beatific Vision. We then discussed the implications of this conclusion for the sermon, with the goal of getting us closer to answering our original question, "What makes a good sermon good?"

We may attempt an answer to that question now. A sermon is good insofar as it is aesthetically good as a literary work (in its content, design, and language), and does what it is supposed to do as a sermon—namely, help

hearers pursue holiness.

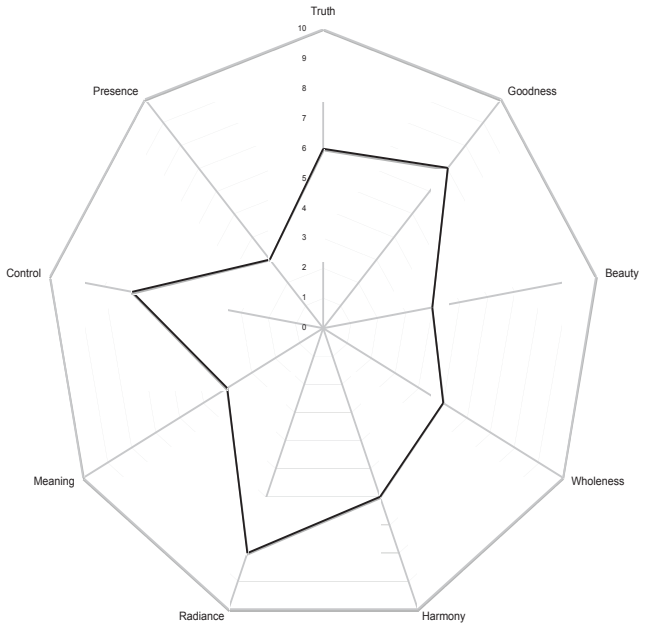
By mapping what we have said regarding sermonic purpose, content, design, and language onto Wolterstorff's triad of aesthetic merits for assessing an artwork—unity, internal richness, and fittingness-intensity[30]—we arrive at a helpful heuristic for sermon assessment. (This heuristic should account for differences in context of all sorts; that is, it should be equally applicable to Greek and Latin sermons of the 4th century as it is to English sermons of the 18th century and Chinese sermons of the 20th century. It should also be equally applicable to a children's sermon as it is to any other sermon.)

Figure 3, below, both summarizes, visually, the findings of this paper, and serves as a checklist for sermon assessment. For each of the twenty-seven statements (which come from the nine subcategories and three primary categories in sections 2.1 through 2.3, above: content [truth, goodness, beauty], design [wholeness, harmony, radiance], and language [meaning, control, presence]), the sermon receives a score of 0, 1, 2, or 3, where 0 means "disagree," 1 means "somewhat disagree," 2 means "somewhat agree," and 3 means "agree." Scores are then tallied by subcategory to arrive at nine raw totals. The highest total in any subcategory is 9 (3+3+3), while the lowest possible total is 0 (0+0+0). (No sermon, fittingly, can score a perfect 10!) The higher the overall number, the better the sermon. Scores may then be plotted graphically, as in Figure 4, where the darker line (the inner web) represents the sermon's "final grade."[31]

Figure 3. Sermon Assessment Heuristic

Content		
Truth		
Unity	The sermon is exegetically sound.	____
Richness	The move from the biblical text to the cross is legitimate.	____
Fittingness	The sermon leads appropriately to the Beatific Vision.	____
Goodness		
Unity	Sermon application arises from the biblical text.	____
Richness	Sermon application exhibits insightfulness, depth, offers practical ideas.	____
Fittingness	Sermon application is seen as an implication of the gospel.	____
Beauty		
Unity	The sermon's goal is to lead people to worship.	____
Richness	The sermon contrasts Christ's beauty with pale imitations.	____
Fittingness	The sermon leaves you with a sense of God's presence.	____
Design		
Wholeness		
Unity	The minor theme runs throughout the sermon.	____
Richness	There is a clear beginning, middle, and end.	____
Fittingness	The sermon's form suits the text and theme of the sermon.	____
Harmony		
Unity	There is appropriate balance between text and world.	____
Richness	There is variety in the different parts and perspectives of the sermon.	____
Fittingness	The sermon is resolved with a happy ending.	____
Radiance		
Unity	The sermon is intelligible: nothing is unnecessary.	____
Richness	The sermon exhibits movement/plot, not just propositions.	____
Fittingness	The sermon is driven by beauty.	____
Language		
Meaning		
Unity	Language is clear and descriptive, not vague and obtuse; avoids jargon.	____
Richness	The key idea (minor theme) is repeated, but with variety.	____
Fittingness	Language is appropriate for the congregation.	____
Control		
Unity	Language produces an effect: worship.	____
Richness	Language is conversational (warm, loving, respectful), but forceful (direct).	____
Fittingness	Language is memorable.	____
Presence		
Unity	Evocative use of metaphor, including biblical imagery.	____
Richness	Skill and craftsmanship with language: creativity.	____
Fittingness	Rising emotional appeal and sense of immediacy.	____

Figure 4. Sermon Assessment Web



CASE STUDY

A very brief case study may help crystallize some of the concepts discussed in this paper. Let us consider for this purpose Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Harry S. Stout and Nathan O. Hatch call it:

> the quintessential 'fire and brimstone' sermon, at once riveting to the 'convicted' and despised by skeptics. There is little room for aesthetic appreciation when listening to or reading such a sermon. Rather, the responses evoked are terror or disgust. . . . Edwards continually repeats one theme—the horror of the damned—in as many ways as he sees necessary. The art of this sermon consists in its apparent indifference to art. As the preacher pursues a single theme throughout the sermon, he creates his own artistic effects. And in this single sermon, on which, for better or worse, rests much of Edwards' notoriety, he reached what many consider his artistic apex.[32]

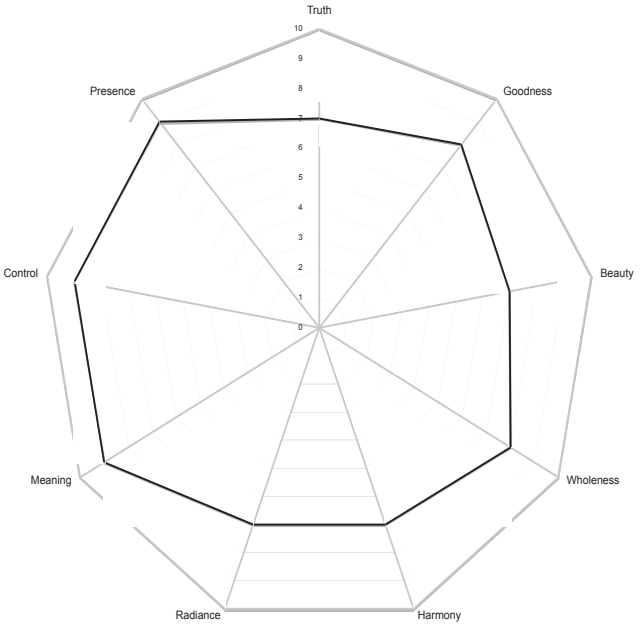
Given space constraints, I am only able here to provide my own raw scores for the sermon, along with the briefest of explanatory comments, below.

Figure 5. Assessment of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

Content		
Truth		
Unity	The sermon is exegetically sound.	3
Richness	The move from the biblical text to the cross is legitimate.	3
Fittingness	The sermon leads appropriately to the Beatific Vision.	1
		7
Goodness		
Unity	Sermon application arises from the biblical text.	3
Richness	Sermon application exhibits insightfulness, depth, offers practical ideas.	2
Fittingness	Sermon application is seen as an implication of the gospel.	3
		8
Beauty		
Unity	The sermon's goal is to lead people to worship.	3
Richness	The sermon contrasts Christ's beauty with pale imitations.	1
Fittingness	The sermon leaves you with a sense of God's presence.	3
		7
Design		
Wholeness		
Unity	The minor theme runs throughout the sermon.	3
Richness	There is a clear beginning, middle, and end.	3
Fittingness	The sermon's form suits the text and theme of the sermon.	2
		8
Harmony		
Unity	There is appropriate balance between text and world.	3
Richness	There is variety in the different parts and perspectives of the sermon.	3
Fittingness	The sermon is resolved with a happy ending.	1
		7
Radiance		
Unity	The sermon is intelligible: nothing is unnecessary.	3
Richness	The sermon exhibits movement/plot, not just propositions.	3
Fittingness	The sermon is driven by beauty.	1
		7
Language		
Meaning		
Unity	Language is clear and descriptive, not vague and obtuse; avoids jargon.	3
Richness	The key idea (minor theme) is repeated, but with variety.	3
Fittingness	Language is appropriate for the congregation.	3
		9
Control		
Unity	Language produces an effect: worship.	3
Richness	Language is conversational (warm, loving, respectful), but forceful (direct).	3
Fittingness	Language is memorable.	3
		9
Presence		
Unity	Evocative use of metaphor, including biblical imagery.	3
Richness	Skill and craftsmanship with language: creativity.	3
Fittingness	Rising emotional appeal and sense of immediacy.	3
		9

Graphically, this is how "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" looks on the assessment web:

Figure 6. Assessment Web for "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"



The great strength of Edwards' sermon is its language and imagery, and the forceful repetition to flee the wrath of God by turning to Christ. As J. A. Leo Lemay concludes, "Because of its extraordinarily increasing immediacy, because of its inexorably increasing tension and suspense, because of its exhaustively and inescapably convincing logic, and because of its suspenseful and archetypal imagery, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* is a masterpiece of rhetorical strategies."[33]

The one place where it seems to me to fall somewhat short is in its failure to adequately show the beauty and loveliness of God. That being said, the overall assessment of the sermon is surely a positive one. Figure 6 shows "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to be very close to an "ideal" sermon.

CONCLUSION

The point of this exercise has not been to devise a better system of "grading" sermons, or ranking them relative to one another, but to help preachers assess their own sermons. We all do this. Anytime we call a sermon good, or better or worse than another, we make a judgment of value. Better

sermons can only benefit the church and the world, as they beckon us to "Turn [our] eyes upon Jesus, / look full in his wonderful face, / and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, / in the light of his glory and grace."

NOTES

1. See also Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 2005), 15–18.
2. The triadic diagrams that follow are visually inspired by those that appear in Vern Sheridan Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1999).
3. Distinguishing between "sermon" and "preaching" also enables us to consider the sermon apart from the original context in which it was preached and heard. A published sermon, for instance, can be read and assessed without appealing to how it was received by its original hearers. Such sermons are no longer part of the preaching event, but are still very much sermons.
4. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 169.
5. *Art in Action*, 169.
6. *Art in Action*, 170.
7. See: Scott M. Gibson, "All I Want is a Practical Theology of Preaching," paper presented at the 2008 meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Birmingham, AL.
8. David Peterson shows that "renewal" for Paul in Romans 12 "is the present experience of glorification through the Spirit, anticipating the glorification that will come with the resurrection of our bodies. It is being conformed to the likeness of Christ, who is himself the image of God. . . . In its broadest sense, renewal is a more comprehensive term [than sanctification, which is specifically associated with covenant theology and the notion of belonging to God because of the redemptive work of his Son], covering what is meant by sanctification and glorification, but setting these themes in a creation-recreation framework" (*Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 133).
9. G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 16.
10. Thomas Boston, "The Purpose of God's Decrees," http://www.puritansermons.com/boston/bost6.htm.
11. "The Glory of God in John's Gospel and Revelation" in *The Glory of God*, Theology in Community, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 119. See also James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).
12. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 114, 136–37.

13. J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1992), 61.
14. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 167.
15. Paul Scott Wilson, "Preach the Text or Preach the Gospel?" *TST Homiletics Seminar* 1:1 (2007): 9–10.
16. Wilson, "Preach the Text or Preach the Gospel?" 7–8.
17. Richard Baxter, *The Godly Home*, ed., Randall J. Pederson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 149–50.
18. Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 162.
19. David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 320.
20. See Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
21. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 15–16.
22. Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2001), 85.
23. Francesca Aran Murphy, *Christ the Form of Beauty: A Study in Theology and Literature* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 50.
24. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 177.
25. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," quoted in *The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature and Writing*, rev. ed., ed., Leland Ryken (Colorado Springs: Shaw, 2002), 365–66.
26. Leonard Sweet, Brian D. McLaren, and Jerry Haselmayer, *A is for Abductive: The Language of the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 31–33.
27. Vern Sheridan Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 9.
28. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 31.
29. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 75.
30. Space prevents us from a discussion of this triad. The reader is encouraged to consult *Art in Action*, 164–68.
31. The idea for the assessment web comes from John Harris, "Assessment of Ministry Preparation to Increase Understanding," *Theological Education* 39:2 (2003), 131–32.
32. From their introduction to "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in *Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742*, ed. Harry S. Stout and Nathan O. Hatch with Kyle P. Farley, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 22 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 402.
33. "Rhetorical Strategies in *Sinners in the Hands of Angry God* and *Narrative of the Late Massacres of Lancaster County*," in *Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Edwards, and the Representation of American Culture*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 191.

A MINISTER'S PREACHING

ARTHUR BENNETT, ED.
The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions[1]

My Master God,
I am desired to preach today,
but go weak and needy to my task;
Yet I long that people might be edified with divine truth,
that an honest testimony might be borne for thee
Give me assistance in preaching and prayer,
with heart uplifted for grace and unction.
Present to my view things pertinent to my subject,
with fullness of matter and clarity of thought,
proper expressions, fluency, fervency,
a feeling sense of the things I preach,
and a grace to apply them to men's consciences.
Keep me conscious all the while of my defects,
and let me not gloat in pride over my performance.
Help me to offer a testimony for thyself,
and to leave sinner inexcusable in neglecting thy mercy.
Give me freedom to open the sorrows of thy people,
and to se before them comforting considerations.
Attend with power the truth preached,
and awaken the attention of my slothful audience.
May thy people be refreshed, melted, convicted, comforted,
and help me to use the strongest arguments
drawn from Christ's incarnation and sufferings,
that men might be made holy.

I myself need thy support, comfort, strength, holiness,
that I might be a pure channel of thy grace,
and be able to do something for thee;
Give me then refreshment among thy people,
and help me not to treat excellent matter in a defective way,
or bear a broken testimony to so worthy a redeemer,
or be harsh in treating Christ's death, its design and end,
from lack of warmth and fervency.
And keep me in tune with thee as I do this work.

Amen

NOTES

1. Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision: A collection of Puritan prayers and devotions* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 191.

PREACHING! OUR PRIVILEGE AND GOD'S POWER

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON
New Park Street Pulpit
Preached, Sunday Morning 25 November 1860
Exeter Hall, London, England

Mark 6:20

"For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy,
and observed him; and when he heard him,
he did many things, and heard him gladly."

The preaching of the Word hath exceeding power. John commenced his ministry as an obscure individual, a man who led an almost hermit life. He begins to preach in the wilderness of Judea, but his cry is so powerful, that ere he has spoken many days, multitudes wait upon his words. He continues, clothed in that shaggy garment, and living on the simplest of food, still to utter the same cry of preparation for the kingdom of heaven—Repent! repent! repent! And now, not only the multitude, but the teachers, the respectable part of the community, come to listen to him. The Scribes and Pharisees sit down by Jordan's banks to listen to the Baptist's word. So powerful is his preaching that many of all ranks—publicans, sinners, and soldiers,—come unto him and are baptized by him in Jordan confessing their sins. Nay, the Scribes and Pharisees themselves seek baptism at his hands. Boldly, however, he repulses them; tells them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and warns them that their descent from Abraham does not entitle them to the blessings of the coming kingdom of the great Messiah. His word rings from one end of Judea to the other. All men wonder what this can mean, and already there begins to be a feeling in the hearts of men that Messiah is at hand. Herod himself hears of John, and now you behold the spectacle of a cruel and unrighteous king sitting humbly to listen to this stern reformer. The Baptist changes not his preaching. The same boldness which had made him rebuke the common people and their teachers, now leads him to defy the wrath of Herod himself. He touches him in his most tender place, strikes his favourite sin, dashes down his idle lust to the ground, counts it his business not to speak of truth in generals but in particulars. Yea, he tells him to his very face, "It is not lawful for thee to take to thyself thy brother's wife."

Oh, what a power there is in the Word of God! I do not find that the Pharynx with all their learning had moved Herod. I discover not that the most mighty of the Grecian philosophers, or of the Gnostics who were then

in existence, had any power to reach the heart of Herod. But the simple, plain preaching of John, his declaration of the Word with all honesty and simplicity, had power to pin Herod by the ear, to vibrate in his heart and to awaken his conscience, for sure we are it was awakened; if the awakening did not end in his conversion, at any rate it made him troubled in his sins so that he could not go on peaceably in iniquity. Ah, my dear friends, we want nothing in these times for revival in the world but the simple preaching of the gospel. This is the great battering ram that shall dash down the bulwarks of iniquity. This is the great light that shall scatter the darkness. We need not that men should be adopting new schemes and new plans. We are glad of the agencies and assistances which are continually arising; but after all, the true Jerusalem blade, the sword that can cut to the piercing asunder of the joints and marrow, is preaching the Word of God. We must never neglect it, never despise it. The age in which the pulpit it despised, will be an age in which gospel truth will cease to be honored. Once put away God's ministers, and you have to a great extent taken the candle out of the candlestick; quenched the lamps that God hath appointed in the sanctuary. Our missionary societies need continually to be reminded of this; they get so busy with translations, so diligently employed with the different operations of civilization, with the founding of stores, with the encouragement of commerce among a people, that they seem to neglect—at least in some degree—that which is the great and master weapon of the minister, the foolishness of preaching by which it pleases God to save them that believe. Preaching the gospel will effectually civilize, while introducing the arts of civilization will sometimes fail. Preaching the gospel will lift up the barbarian, while attempts to do it by philosophy will be found ineffectual. We must go among them, and tell them of Christ; we must point them to heaven; we must lead them to the cross; shall they be elevated in their character, and raised in their condition. But by no other means. God forbid that we should begin to depreciate preaching. Let us still honor it; let us look to it as God's ordained instrumentality, and we shall yet see in the world a repetition of great wonders wrought by the preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.

To-day, I shall want your attention to a subject which concerns us all, but more especially those, who being hearers of the Word, are hearers only, and not doers of the same. I shall first attempt to show *the blessedness of hearing the Word of God;* secondly, *the responsibilities of the hearer;* and then, thirdly, *those accompaniments which are necessary to go with the hearing of the Word of God, to make it effectual to save the soul*.

I. First of all, my dear friends, let us speak a little about THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING THE WORD.

The prophet constantly asserts, "Blessed are the ears which hear the things that we hear; and blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see." Prophets and kings desired it long, but died without the sight. Often do

the seers of old use language similar to this, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." Godly men accept it as an omen of happy times when their eyes should see their teachers. The angels sang the blessedness of it when they descended from on high, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto you and to all people." The angels' song is in harmony with the seers' testimony. Both conjoin to prove what I assert, that we are blessed in having the privilege of listening to God's Word.

Let us enlarge upon this point. If we reflect upon what the preaching of the Word is, we shall soon see that we are highly privileged in enjoying it. The preaching of the Word is the scattering of the seed. The hearers are the ground on which the good seed falls. Those who hear not the Word are as the arid desert, which has never seen a handful of the good corn; or as the unploughed waves of the sea which have never been gladdened with the prospect of a harvest. But when the sower goes forth to sow seed, he scatters it broadcast upon you that hear, and there is to you the hope that in you the good seed shall take root and bring forth fruit a hundred fold. True, some of you may be but wayside hearers, and evil birds may soon devour the seed. At least, it does fall upon you, nor is it the fault of the seed, but of the ground, if that seed does not grow. True, you may be as stony-ground hearers, who for awhile receive the Word and rejoice therein, but having no root in yourselves, the seed may wither away. That again, I say, does not diminish your privilege, though it increases your guilt, inasmuch as it is no fault of the seed nor of the sun, but the fault of the stony ground, if the fruit is not nourished unto perfection. And you, inasmuch as you are the field, the broad acres upon which the gospel husbandman scatters the precious grain, you enjoy the privilege which is denied to heathens and idolaters.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a net which is cast into the sea, and which gathers of divers kinds. Now you represent the fish of the sea, and it is happy indeed for you that you are where the net is thrown, for there is at least the hope that you may be entangled in its meshes, and may be drawn out of the sea of sin, and gathered into the vessels of salvation. If you were far, far away, where the net is never cast, there would be no hope of your being caught therein. But here you are gathered round the fisherman's humble boat, and as he casts his net into the sea, he hopes that some of you may be caught therein,—and assuredly gracious is your privilege! But if you be not caught, it shall not be the fault of the net, but the fault of your own wilfulness, which shall make you fly from it, lest you be graciously taken therein.

Moreover, the preaching of the gospel is very much in this day like the mission of Christ upon earth. When Christ was on earth he went about walking through the midst of sick folk, and they laid them in their beds by the wayside, so that as Jesus passed by, they might touch the hem of his garment and be made whole. You, to-day, when you hear the Word, are like

the sick in their beds where Jesus passes by. You are like blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside begging, in the very road along which the Son of David journeys. Lo, a multitude have come to listen to him. He is present wherever his truth is preached: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the world." You are not like sick men in their chambers, or sick men far away in Tyre and Sidon, but you are like the men who lay at Bethesda's pool under the five porches, waiting for the moving of the water. Angel of God, move the waters this day! or rather, O Jesus, give thou grace to the impotent man that he may now step in.

Yet further, we may illustrate the privilege of those who hear the Word by the fact that the Word of God is the bread of heaven. I can only compare this great number of people gathered here to-day to the sight which was seen upon the mountain in the days of Jesus. They were hungry, and the disciples would have sent them away. But Jesus bade them sit down in ranks upon the grass, as you are sitting down in rows here, and there were but a few barley loaves and five small fishes (fit type and representation of the minister's own poverty of words and thoughts!) But Jesus blessed the bread, and blessed the fishes, and brake them; and they were multiplied, and they did all eat and were filled. So you are as these men. God give you grace to eat. There is not given to you a stone instead of bread, nor a scorpion instead of an egg; but Christ Jesus shall be fully and freely preached to you. May you have appetites to long for the Word, faith to partake of the Word, and may it be to you the bread of life sent down from heaven.

Yet often in Scripture we find the Word of God compared to a light. "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light." "Unto them that dwell in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death, has a great light arisen." Those who hear not the Word are men that grope their way not only in a fog, but in a thick Egyptian darkness that may be felt. Before your eyes to-day is held up the flaming torch of God's Word, to shew you your path through the thick darkness. Nay, to-day there is not only a torch, but in the preaching of the Word the Sun of Righteousness himself arises with healing beneath his wings. You are not they that grope for the wall like blind men; you are not as they who are obliged to say, "We see not the path to heaven; we know not the way to God; we fear we shall never be reconciled to Christ." Behold, the light of heaven shineth upon your eyeballs, and, if ye perish, ye must perish wilfully; if ye sink into hell, it will be with the path to heaven shining before you, if damned, it will be not because you do not know the way of salvation, but because you wilfully and wickedly put it from you, and choose for yourselves the path of death. It must even be then a privilege to listen to the Word, if the Word be as a light, and as bread, and as healing, as a gospel net, and as divine seed.

Once more let me remind you, there is yet a greater privilege connected with the Word of God than this—for all this were nothing without the last. As I look upon a multitude of unconverted men and women, I am reminded of Ezekiel's vision. He saw lying in the valley of Hinnom multitudes of bones,

the flesh of which had been consumed by fire, and the bones themselves were dried as in a furnace, scattered hither and thither. There with other bones in other charnel-houses, lying scattered at the mouths of other graves; but Ezekiel was not sent to them; to the valley of Hinnom was he sent, and there alone. And he stood by faith, and began to practice the foolishness of preaching, "Ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord, ye dry bones live." And as be spoke there was a rustling, each bone sought its fellow; and as he spake again, these bones united and stood erect, as he continued his discourse the flesh clothed the skeleton; when he concluded by crying, "Come from the winds, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," they stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. The preached Word is like Ezekiel's prophecy; life goes forth with the word of the faithful minister, when we say, "Repent!" We know that sinners cannot repent of themselves, but God's grace sweetly constrains them to repent. When we bid them believe, it is not because of any natural capacity for faith that lies within them, but because the command "Believe and live," when given by the faithful minister of God, hath in it a quickening power; as much as when Peter and John said to the man with the withered hand, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, stretch out thy hand," and it was done. So do we say to the dead in sin—"Sinner, live; repent and be converted; repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus." Owned of God the Spirit, it becomes a quickening cry, and you are made to live. Blessed are the dry bones that lay in a valley where Ezekiel prophecies; and blessed are ye that are found where Jesus Christ's name is preached, where his power is invoked by a heart which believes in its energy; where his truth is preached to you by one, who despite of many mistakes knows this one thing—that Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God unto every one that believeth. This consideration alone then—the peculiar power of the Word of God, might compel us to say, "That indeed there is a blessedness in hearing it."

But, my dear friends, let us look at it in another light. Let us appeal to those who have heard the Word and have received good in their own souls by it. Men and brethren, I speak to hundreds of you, who know in your own soul what the Word of God is. Let me ask you—you who have been converted from a thousand crimes—you who have been picked from the dunghill and made to sit among the princely children of God—let me ask you what you think of the preaching of the Word. Why, there are hundreds of you men and women, who if this were the proper time and occasion, would rise from your seat and say, "I bless God that ever I listened to the preached Word. I was a stranger to all truth, but I was enticed to come and listen, and God met with me." Some of you can look back to the first Sunday on which you ever entered a place of worship for twenty years, and that place was this very hall. Here you came an unaccustomed worshipper to tread God's hallowed floor. You stood and knew not what you were at. You wondered what the service of God's house could be. But you have reason to remember that Sabbath-day, and you will have reason to remember it to all eternity. Oh that day! it broke

your bonds and set you free; that day aroused your conscience and made you feel your need of Christ. That day was a blessed turning point in your history, in which you were led to escape from hell, turn your back on sin, and fly for refuge to Christ Jesus. Since that day let me ask you, what has the Word of God been to you? Has it not been constantly a quickening word? You have grown dull and careless during the week; has not the Sabbath sermon stirred you up afresh? You have sometimes all but lost your hope, and has not the hearing of the Word revived you? Why I know that some of you have come up to the house of God as hungry men would come to a place where bread was distributed, you come to the house of God with a light and happy step, as thirsty men would come to a flowing well, and you rejoice when the day comes round: you only wish there were seven Sabbath days a week, that you might always be listening to God's Word. You can say with Dr. Watts, "Father, my soul would still abide within thy temple, near thy side. And if my feet must hence depart, still keep thy dwelling in my heart."

Personally I have to bless God for many good books. I thank God for *Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion;* I thank God for *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted;* for *Alleyne's Alarm to Sinners;* I bless God for *James's Anxious Enquirer;* but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the living Word—and that too addressed to me by a poor uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt of a menial kind during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." The books were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me, it was the living Word saved me, and I must ever attach peculiar value to the *hearing of* the truth, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights.

But further, my dear hearers, the value of the Word preached and heard may be estimated by the opinions which the lost have of it now. Hearken to one man, it is not a dream nor a picture of my imagination which I now present to you, it is one of Jesus Christ's own graphic descriptions. There lies a man in hell who has heard Moses and the prophets. His time is passed, he can hear them no more. But so great is the value he attaches to the preached Word, that he says, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, for I have five brethren, let him testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." He felt that if Lazarus could speak—speak personally his own personal testimony to the truth, that peradventure they might be saved. Oh! what would the damned in hell give for a sermon could they but listen once more to the church-going bell and go up to the sanctuary! Ah, my brethren, they would consent, if it were possible, to bear ten thousand years of hell's torments, if they might but once more have the Word preached to them! Ah! if I had a congregation such as that would be, of men who have tasted the wrath of God, of men who know what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of an angry God, oh, how would they lean forward to catch every word, with what deep attention would they all regard the preacher, each one

saying, "Is there a hope for me? May I not escape from the place of doom? Good God! may this fire not be quenched and I be plucked as a brand from the burning?" Value then, I pray you, the privilege while you have it now. We are always foolish, and we never value mercy till we lose it. But I do adjure you cast not aside this folly, value it while it is called to-day, value that which once lost will seem to us to be priceless beyond all conception,—estimated then at its true worth, invaluable, and precious beyond a miser's dream.

Let me again ask you to value it in a brighter light—by the estimation of the saints before the throne. Ye glorified ones, what think ye of the preaching of the Word? Hark to them! Will they not sing it forth—"Faith came to us by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It was by it that we were led to confess our sins; by it we were led to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb?" I am sure they before the throne think not lightly of God's ministers. They would not speak with cold language of the truth of the Gospel which is preached in your ears. No, in their eternal hallelujahs they bless the Lord who sent the Gospel to them, as they sing—"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Value, then, the preaching of the Word, and count yourselves happy that you are allowed to listen to it.

II. My second head deals more closely with the text, and I hope it will likewise appeal more closely to our consciences—THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEARER OF THE WORD.

Herod, you will perceive, went as far as very many of us, perhaps farther than some, and yet was lost. Our responsibilities concerning the Word do not end with hearing it. Herod heard it, but hearing is not enough. Ye may sit for fifty years in the sanctuary of God hearing the gospel, and be rather the worse than the better for all you have heard, if it end in hearing. It is not the Word entering into one ear, and coming forth out of the other ear which converts the soul but it is the echoing of the Word down in the very heart, and the abiding of the truth in the conscience. I know there are very many who think they have fulfilled all their religion when they go to their church or chapel. Let us not deceive you in this thing. Your church-going, and your chapel-going, though they give you great privileges, yet involve the most solemn responsibilities. Instead of being in themselves saving, they may be damning to you unless you avail yourselves of the privileges presented to you by them. I doubt not that hell is crammed with church and chapel-goers, and that there are whole wards in that infernal prison house that are filled with men who heard the Word, but who stopped there, who sat in their pews, but never fled to Christ; who listened to the call, but did not obey it. "Yes," saith one," but I do more than simply hear the Word, for I make choice of the most earnest preacher I can find." So did Herod, and yet he perished. He was not a hearer of a man with a soft tongue, for John did not speak as one clothed in fine raiment, John was not a reed shaken with

the wind; he was a prophet, "Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;" faithful in all his house, as a good servant of his God. There was never a more honest and faithful preacher than John. And you too, may with care have selected the most excellent minister, not for his eloquence, but for his earnestness; not for his talent, but for his power of faith, and you may listen to him, and that too with attention, and after all may be a cast-away. The responsibilities involved in listening to such a man may be so weighty, that like a millstone about your neck, they may help to sink you lower than the lowest hell. Take heed to yourselves, that you rest not in the outward Word, however fitly spoken, or however attentively heard; but reach forward to something deeper and better. "Yes," saith a third, "but I do not only hear the most earnest preacher, but I go out of my way to hear him. I have left my parish church, for instance, and I come walking five or six miles—I am willing to walk ten, or even twenty, if I can but hear a sermon—and I am not ashamed to mingle with the poor. I may have rank and position in life, but I am not ashamed to listen to the earnest preacher, though he should belong to the most despised of sects" Yea, and Herod did the like, Herod was a king, and yet listened to the peasant-prophet. Herod is clothed in purple, and yet listens to the Baptist in his shaggy garment. While Herod fared sumptuously every day, he who ate locusts and wild honey reproves him boldly to his face; and with all this, Herod was not saved. So, also, you may walk many a mile to listen to the truth, and that year after year, but unless ye go further than that, unless ye obey the Word, unless it sinks deep into your inmost soul, ye shall perish still—perish under the sound of the Word—the very Word of God becoming a death-knell to your soul, dreadfully tolling you down to deep destruction. But I hear another object. "I, sir, not only take the trouble to hear, but I hear very gladly. I am delighted when I listen. I am not a captious, critical hearer, but I feel a pleasure in listening to God's Word. Is not that a blessed sign? Do you not think that I must be saved, if I rejoice to hear that good sound?" No, my friend, no; it is a hopeful sign, but it is a very uncertain one, for is it not written in our text, that Herod heard the Word gladly? The smile might be on his face, or the tear in his eye while the Baptist denounced sin; there was a something in his conscience which made him feel glad that there was one honest man alive; that in a time of enormous corruption, there was one fearless soul that dare with unblanched cheek, to correct sin in high places. He was like Henry the Eighth, who when Hugh Latimer presented him on New Year's day with a napkin, on which was embroidered the words, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" instead of casting the preacher into prison, he said, "He was glad there was one man who dared to tell him and he stands up for you and defends you, but he is as bad a man as there is living." Oh sirs! I am glad you listen to me; I do hope that the hammer may yet break your hearts but I do conjure you, give up your sins. Oh! for your own soul's sake, do not abide in your transgressions, for I warn you, if I have spoken faithfully to you, you cannot sin so cheaply as other men. I have never prosed away to you; I have never

been too polite to warn you of perdition, I speak to you in rough and earnest terms—I may claim that credit without egotism. If you perish, sirs, it will little boot you that ye stood up in my defense; it will little serve you that ye tried to screen the minister from slander and from calumny. I would have you think of yourselves, even though ye thought less of me and my reputation. I would have you love yourselves, and so escape from hell, and fly to heaven while yet the gate of mercy stands on the jar, and the hour of mercy is not passed for ever. Think not, I say, that hearing the Word gladly is enough; you may do so and yet be lost.

But more than that. "Ah," says one, "you have just anticipated what I was about to say. I not only listen gladly, but I respect the preacher. I would not hear a man say a word against him." It was so with Herod. "He observed John," it is said, "and he accounted him a just man and a holy," and yet though he honored the preacher, he was lost himself. Ah! what multitudes go to our fashionable places of worship, and as they come out they say to one another, "What a noble sermon!" and then they go to their houses, and sit down and say, "What a fine turn he gave to that period! what a rich thought that was! what a sparkling metaphor!" And is it for this that we preach to you? Is your applause the breath of our nostrils? Do you think that God's ministers are sent into the world to tickle your ears and be unto you as one that plays a merry tune on a goodly instrument? God knows I would sooner break stones on the road than be a preacher for oratory's sake. I would never stand here to play the hypocrite. No, it is your hearts we want, not your admiration. It is your espousal to Christ, and not your love to us. Oh that we could break your hearts, and awake your consciences, we would not mind what other results should follow. We should feel that we were accepted of God, if we were but felt with power to be God's servants in the hearts and thoughts of men. No, think not that to honor the preacher is enough. Ye may perish praising the minister in your dying moments.

Yet further. Some one may say, "I feel I am a better man through hearing the minister, and is not that a good sign?" Yes, it is a good sign, but it is not a sure one for all that. For Herod they said did many things. Look at the text. It is expressly said there, "He observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things." I should not wonder after that, that Herod became somewhat more merciful in his government, somewhat less exacting, a little more outwardly moral, and though he continued in his lasciviousness, yet he tried to cover it up with respectable excuses. "He did many things." That was doing a very long way, but Herod was Herod still. And you sirs, it may be, have been led to give up drunkenness, through the preaching of the Word: to shut up the shop that used to be opened on a Sunday. You cannot now swear; you would not now cheat. It is good, it is very good; but it is not enough. All this there may be, but yet the root of the matter may not be in you. To honor the Sabbath outwardly will not save you, unless you enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Merely to close the shop is not enough. The heart itself must be shut up against the love of sin. To cease blasphemy

is not sufficient, though it is good, for there may be blasphemy in the heart, when there is none upon the tongue. "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven." For "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord grant that you may not rest with outward cleansing, with moral purification, but strike deeper into the root, and soul, and marrow of these blessings, the change of your heart, the bringing of your soul into union with Christ. One thing I must also remark about Herod, with the Greek text in view "He did many things," will allow me to infer that he felt many doubts. As a good old commentator says, "John smote him so hard, that he could not help feeling it. He gave him such home blows that he could not but be bruised every now and then, and yet though his conscience was smitten, his heart was never renewed." It is a pleasant sight to see men weep under the Word—to mark them tremble; but then we remember Felix. Felix trembled. But he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee. Happy the minister who hears the people say, "Almost thou persuadest us to be Christians." But then, we remember Agrippa—we remember how he returns to his sins, and seeks not the Savior. We are glad if your consciences are awakened, we rejoice if you are made to doubt and question yourselves, but we mourn because your doubts are so transient, because your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.

I have tracked some of you to your houses. I have known of some who after a solemn sermon, when they got home could scarcely eat their meal. They sit down, leaning their head on their hand. The wife is glad to think that her husband is in a hopeful state. He rises from his seat; he goes up stairs; he walks about the house he says he is miserable. At last he comes down and sets his teeth together, and says "Well, if I am to be damned I shall be damned; if I am to be saved I shall be saved, and there's an end of it." Then he rouses himself, saying, "I cannot go to hear that man again: he is too hard with me. I must either give up my sins, or give up listening to the Word; the two things will not exist together." Happy, I say, are we to see that man troubled; but our unhappiness is so much the greater when we see him shaking it off—the dog returning to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. O God, save us from this, let us never be men who spring up fairly, but wither away suddenly and disappoint all hope. O God, let us not be as Balaam, who prayed that his last end might be with the righteous, but returned to defy Israel, to provoke the Lord God, and to perish in the midst of his iniquity.

And now I hear many of you say, "Well if all these things are not enough, what is it that is expected of the hearer of the Word?" Spirit of God! help us so to speak that the Word may come home to all! Believer in Christ, if you would hear the Word to profit, you must hear it *obediently.* You must hear it as James and John did, when the Master said "Follow me," and they left their nets and their boats and then followed him. You must do the Word as well as hear it, yielding up your hearts to its sway, being willing

to walk in the road which it maps, to follow the path which it lays before you. Hearing it obediently, you must also hear it *personally* for yourselves, not for others, but for yourselves alone. You must be as Zacchaeus, who was in the sycamore tree, and the Master said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, to-day I must abide in thy house." The Word will never bless you till it comes home directly to yourself. You must be as Mary, who when the Master spoke to her she did not know his voice, till he said unto her, "Mary!" and she said, "Rabboni." There must be an individual hearing of the truth, and a reception of it for yourself in your own heart. Then, too, you must hear the truth *penitently.* You must be as that Mary, who when she listened to the Word, must needs go and wash the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. There must be tears for your many sins, a true confession of your guilt before God. But above all you must hear it *believingly.* The Word must not be unto you as mere sound, but as matter of fact. You must be as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened; or as the trembling jailer, who believed on the Lord Jesus with all his house and was baptized forthwith. You must be as the thief, who could pray, "Lord, remember me," and who could believe the precious promise given, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." God give us grace so to listen, and then shall our responsibilities under the Word be cleared up receiving the power of the Word into our conscience, with demonstration of the Holy Spirit, and fruits agreeable to our profession.

III. Now to conclude. I want your serious attention to THE NEEDFUL ACCOMPANIMENTS OF HEARING THE WORD.

There are many men who get blessed by the Word through God's sovereign grace without any of the accompaniments of which I am now about to speak. We have, connected with us, as a Church, a brother in Christ, who came into this place of worship with his gin bottle in his pocket one night. A chance hit of mine—as some would have thought it, when I pointed to the man and told him of it, not knowing aught but that the feeling that I was moved thereunto—was the man's first awakening. That man came without any preparation, and God blessed the word. Numerous have been the instances, which those who have not proved them deem utterly incredible, in which persons have absolutely come to me after a sermon, and begged me not to tell anybody about them, being firmly persuaded from what I said that I knew their private history, whereas I knew no more about them than a stranger in the market. But the Word of God will find men out. Preach the gospel and it will always find the man out and tell him all his secrets, carrying the lamp of the Lord into the hidden recesses of the heart.

But to you as a mass I speak this. If you will be blessed under the Word, would that you would pray before you come here. You sometimes hear of preparation for the Lord's Supper—I am sure if the Word is to be blessed, there ought to be a preparation for hearing it. Do you, when you come up

to this house, pray to God before you come, "Lord, give the minister words; help him to speak to me to-day; Lord, save me to-day; may the Word to-day be a quickening word to my poor soul?" Ah! my friends, ye would never go without the blessing, if ye come up prayerfully looking for it, having asked it of God. Then after prayer, if you would be blessed under the Word, there should be an expectation of being blessed. It is wonderful the differences between the same sermon preached in different places, and I do not doubt that the same words uttered by different men would have different effects. With some men the hearers expect they will say something worth hearing; they listen, and the man does say something worth hearing; another man might say just the same; nobody receives it as other than common-place. Now if you can come up to the house of God expecting that there will be something for you, you will have it. We always get what we angle for. If we come up to find fault, there always will be faults to find. If we come up to get good, good will be gotten. God will send no man empty away; he shall have what he came for. If he came merely for curiosity, he shall have his curiosity gratified; if he came for good, he shall not be disappointed. We may be disappointed at man's door; we never were at God's. Man may send us away empty, but God never will. Then while listening to the Word with expectation, it will naturally come to pass that you will listen with deep attention. A young boy who had been awakened to a sense of sin, was remarked to be exceedingly attentive to sermons, and when asked why it was, he said, "Because I do not know which part of the sermon may be blessed to me, but I know that whichever it is, the devil will do his utmost to take my attention off then for fear I should be blessed;" so he would listen to the whole of it, lest by any means the Word of life should be let slip. So do you, and you will certainly be in the way of being blessed by the Word. Next to that, all through the sermon be appropriating it, saying to yourselves, "Does that belong to me?" If it be a promise, say, "Is that mine?" If it be a threatening, do not cover yourselves with the shield of hard-heartedness, but say, "If that threatening belongs to me, let it have its full force on me." Sit under the sermon with your breasts open to the Word; be ready to let the arrow come in.

Above all, this will be of no avail unless you hear with faith, Now faith cometh by hearing There must be faith mingled with the hearing. But you say, "What is faith? Is faith to believe that Christ died for me?" "No, it is not. The Arminian says that faith is to believe that Christ died for you. He teaches in the first place that Christ died for everybody, therefore, he says, he died for you; of course he died for everybody, and if he died for everybody he must have died for you. That is not faith at all. I hold, on the other hand, that Christ died for believers, that he died for no man that will be lost, that all he died for will be saved, that his intention cannot be frustrated in any man; that if he died to save any man, that man will be saved. Your question to-day is not whether Christ died for you or not, but it is this;—the Scripture says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And what is it to believe? To believe is to trust it is the same word, though believe is

not so plain a word as trust. To trust Christ is to believe. I feel I cannot save myself, that all my doings and feelings cannot save me; I trust Christ to save me. That is faith; and the moment I trust Christ, I then know that Christ died for me, for they who trust him, he has surely died to save, so surely he died to save them that he will save them, so finished his work that he will never lose them, according to his own Word—"give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" "But may I trust it!" says one. *May!* You are *commanded* to do it. "But I dare not." What! dare not do what God bids you! Rather say—"I dare not live without Christ, I dare not disobey. God has said—"This is the commandment, that ye believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." This is the great commandment which is sent to you. To-day trust Christ and you are saved; disobey that command, and do what you will you are damned.

Go home to your chamber, and say unto God, "I desire to believe what I have heard; l desire to trust my immortal soul in Jesus' hands. Give me genuine faith; give me a real trust. Save me now, and save me hereafter." I dare avow it—I never can believe that any man so hearing the Word can by any possibility perish. Hear it, receive it, pray over it, and trust Christ through it, and if you are lost, there can be none saved. If this foundation give way, another can never be laid. If you fall, we all fall together. If trusting in Christ you can perish, all God's prophets, and martyrs, and confessors, and ministers, perish too. You cannot. He will never fail you; trust him now.

Spirit of God! incline the hearts of men to trust Christ. Enable them now to overcome their pride and their timidity, and may they trust the Savior now, and they are saved for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BOOK REVIEWS

Matthew. Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries. By O. Wesley Allen Jr. Minneapolis: Fortress. 2013. 978-0-8006-9871-3, 284 pp., $22.00.

Reviewer: *Victor Anderson, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

The broad goal of this commentary series from Fortress Press is "to help preachers and students make connections between the various lections from a given book throughout the lectionary cycle and liturgical year in their sermons and studies" (ix). Allen's contribution to this series certainly achieves this goal for the *Gospel According to Matthew*. Throughout the work, the author is ever mindful of assisting preachers, particularly those who are following the Revised Common Lectionary. The author consistently balances a positive tone with discerning, pointed insights. This balanced tone is evident, on the one hand, with appreciative expressions of the benefits of following a liturgical calendar. Yet on the other hand, the author clearly advocates that preachers must overcome specific obstacles presented by preaching within the lectionary system. Allen assists readers in this quest by foregrounding selected matters of structure and theology so that these important interpretive elements are never far from sight.

While the book's primary target is the preacher who follows a lectionary, Allen's insights prove valuable for those who are not serving in this tradition. This likely is due to his broadly appealing conviction that "preachers should focus their gaze less *on* the text and more *through* it to look at life there and find the God made known in the Christ event in new and enlivening ways" (xi). This does not mean that the author's comments come without careful attention to the details of the text. Rather, the book consistently pulls readers beyond such exegetical details toward theological synthesis and contemporary relevance of each pericope. Such an approach can be welcomed by all preachers, regardless of the degree to which they employ a lectionary.

The strength of this commentary is the manner in which it rigorously restricts discussion along the lines mentioned above. Allen does not allow the reader to get lost in questions of historicity, nor does he try to harmonize the gospels, grapple with the Synoptic Problem, or debate scholarly interpretations. At the same time, the book does not venture into proposals for sermon structures, illustrations, or specific contemporary applications. Rather, Allen concisely moves readers to grapple with what he perceives to be the theological emphases of each pericope. He helps readers see the uniqueness of Matthew's take on Jesus and offers rationale for why Matthew relayed the story as he did. Along the way, it is evident that Allen

has wrestled with fine differences between Matthew and the other Synoptic writers, and these differences are consistently highlighted in the discussions.

A commentary of this nature proceeds with some inherent liabilities. At some points, readers may desire greater explanation of how the author arrived at his conclusions, particularly in relation to exegetical support. Further, some preachers may be disappointed to find that biblical units are not synthesized to the level of a Main Idea, at least not as a single concise statement of theology. In fact, discussions of some of the pericopes surface multiple ideas that cannot be preached in a single sermon. Perhaps the most disconcerting limitation is that biblical units excluded from the lectionary are treated only in a cursory fashion in the commentary. So this book does not provide everything a preacher will need in getting from text to sermon, nor was it intended to be a single source solution for preachers. However, readers will find here a helpful bridge from textual details to theological distillation, making the volume a valuable resource for busy preachers crafting sermons through Matthew's Gospel.

Dem Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope. By Luke A. Powery. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. 978-0-8006-9822-5, 258 pp., $20.00.

Reviewer: *Michael P. Knowles, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON*

Powery takes as his point of departure the current slide of African-American homiletics towards a "health and wealth" gospel, at least in some quarters. While acknowledging the appeal of such an approach among those who have historically been socially disenfranchised, he critiques it on two fronts. First, "prosperity" preaching seeks to ignore suffering, tribulation, and physical death in human experience. Not least, it denies the centrality of the cross in Christian thought. Second, over-emphasizing social advancement and material blessing cuts off the African-American church from the rich resources of its own cultural heritage. Specifically, Powery draws on the experiential theology of African-American "spirituals," which represent a species of exegesis and preaching in the form of song. He takes the "valley of dry bones" from Ezekiel 37—a frequent trope in traditional lyrics and sermons—as the reigning metaphor for preaching "at the intersection of life and death" (16), whereby the preacher relies on God's Spirit to raise dead or dying hearers to new life.

First, "Dry Bones: Death as the Context of Preaching" introduces spirituals as a communally-shaped response to the bitter suffering of slavery: as Powery observes, "This is the heart of preaching—chanting new life in the midst of death" (32). Notwithstanding the book's ultimate focus on homiletics, this chapter offers an extended discussion of spirituals as a form of social resistance. Powery then derives four lessons for homiletical

practice: because pain and death are inescapable, they form the backdrop for all proclamation; the Christian gospel affirms God's own entry into human suffering; adversity and sorrow are the common legacy of the Christian community both past and present; and preaching itself joins the battle between forces of life and death.

Chapter 2 ("Hear the Word of the Lord: The Content of *Spirit*ual [*sic*] Preaching"), names our source of hope in preaching as the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit. African-American spirituals provide a model for such preaching insofar as they themselves "are musical sermons inspired by the Spirit"; indeed, "[t]hey are musical sermonic revelations of the Spirit" (53). Accordingly, "the spirituals represent first and foremost an embodied, communal theology of the Spirit" (57), a musical expression of hope in the face of death (all the more so when death itself was the sole release for which slaves could hope). Powery gives particular attention to the themes of heaven and final homecoming as expressions of ultimate hope beyond present suffering. Again he adduces four lessons: 1) the seriousness of the gospel message requires preachers to embody, even perform the words they speak; 2) "Spiritual preaching implies a deep personal trust in God" (72); 3) "To preach in the Spirit includes preaching the hope of heaven for the present and future" (75); and 4) preaching is an expression of ongoing pilgrimage, rather than quick or easy victory.

"Prophesy to the Bones: Generating Hope through Preaching" (chapter 3) returns to the theme of eschatological hope, emphasizing Jesus' death and resurrection as the necessary focus of "spiritual preaching." However much considerations of form or format and social context influence his homiletical vision, here Powery insists that theological content is also paramount. He then proceeds to discuss (again) the tension in preaching between death and hope, the importance of casting a vision of God's just reign, and the need for preachers to insist on God's active presence as the immediate source of hope. Important as these observations may be, however, their connection whether to Christology (death and resurrection), the theme of Ezekiel's "valley of dry bones," or African-American spirituals is consistently less clear.

Fourth, "You Shall Live: Reading the Bible for Preaching Hope (and Death)" proposes to address the process of sermon preparation (105). Powery goes on to explain that the approach to exegesis exemplified by the spirituals invokes the "story" and themes of Scripture in a manner that takes precedence over the details of the text (110–112): "That is, what is heard, felt, believed, and experienced takes priority over words on a page" (113). Powery appears to argue for an anthropocentric hermeneutic: this is clearly in tension with his earlier insistence on divine agency and Christocentric focus. In practice, he advocates balancing "Attentiveness to Human Need" (113), "Belief in a Loving, Liberating God" (116), and engagement with Scripture in equal measures. Attending more to hermeneutics than to sermon preparation *per se*, he then offers eight specific reading strategies, all illustrated from the lyrics of African-American spirituals.

Powery is at his best when expounding the counter-intuitive, hope-filled theological vision that the spirituals embody. His study will appeal most immediately to those who share his alarm at the ascendency of prosperity preaching, his deep appreciation for the spiritual legacy of the African-American church, and his commitment to preaching that speaks from experience of a God who brings new life out of human suffering and death.

Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013. 978-0-8024-0713-9, 336 pp., $35.99.

Reviewer: *Ken Langley, Christ Community Church, Zion, IL, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL*

Abraham Kuruvilla of Dallas Seminary has written an important book on moving from Scripture to sermon. Important because (among other reasons) he proposes fresh alternatives to three perennial hermeneutical challenges: how theology informs exegesis, how Mosaic Law applies to Christians, and how Christ may to be seen in all of Scripture. This review majors on Kuruvilla's contribution to these discussions.

How theology informs exegesis. Central to this book is a conviction that authors of classics like the Bible *do* something as well as assert something when writing. They project a "world in front of the text," and invite readers to inhabit that world. Each pericope (preaching portion) portrays something of God and a God-oriented life, that is, a theological claim with implied demand that readers trust and obey. Discerning this pericopal theology is a daunting intellectual task, but essential if the then-and-there of the ancient text is to speak to the here-and-now of contemporary readers. Application that moves directly from the original writing and its context to the situation of twenty-first century readers without first discerning this pericopal theology (roughly equal to the transhistorical intention of the text, the pragmatics of the utterance, and what the author is doing with what he's saying) is invalid.

Kuruvilla demonstrates how pericopal theology complements systematics and biblical theology. Where those disciplines paint grand murals, pericopal theology contributes necessary miniatures. Preachers who display only the murals (hitting a few redemptive/historical themes week after week) miss the chance to show listeners Scripture's dazzling variety. But when preachers exposit pericope after pericope over years of pulpit work, articulating and applying the theology of each passage—in other words, when preachers privilege the text—God's people gain a comprehensive *and fleshed-out* vision of the world God intends for them to inhabit. Kuruvilla's exposition of 2 Samuel 11-12 (David and Bathsheba) illustrates the importance

of attending to what the author is doing with what he's saying if we're going to hear the precise theological claim of the passage.

How Mosaic Law applies to Christians. Pericopal theology offers a different approach than traditional and "new perspective" theologies to the relevance of ancient Israelite laws for contemporary believers. Kuruvilla believes that there's a transcultural rationale for every command of God, and that therefore all of them are applicable to all people in all places and all times. "Every law of God depicts a facet of the character of the Lawgiver and his relationship to his people–i.e., every law has something theological to offer" (176). Discerning this slice of theology is a more fruitful route to sermon application than a sweeping systematic theology statement about the believer and the law, however legitimate and necessary such a summary statement may be in contexts other than the weekly sermon.

How to legitimately see Christ in all of Scripture. One of the canons of hermeneutics accepted throughout church history (canons discussed in Chapter 1 of *Privilege the Text*) is the "Rule of Centrality." Christ is central in the purposes of God and pivotal in orienting believers to right application of the Bible. All Scripture in some sense testifies to him. But in *what* sense? "Christ-centered preaching," in its allegorical, typological, and redemptive-historical forms, too often shoehorns Jesus and his cross into every sermon in an artificial or clumsy fashion. Kuruvilla's alternative, which he labels "christiconic," builds on the book's commitment to pericopal theology: each pericope shows some aspect of life as the child of God is meant to experience it. Christ is the only one who lives out this vision in perfect filial obedience, and by his Spirit enables God's people to do so in progressive sanctification. In every pericope we encounter a facet of Christlikeness and a fresh occasion to trust Christ's grace for living in light of it. Genesis 22 (the sacrifice of Isaac) provides a case study on the superiority of christiconic interpretation to other attempts to see Christ in an Old Testament passage.

Other strengths of *Privilege the Text*. Kuruvilla manages to apply insights from speech act theory, pragmatics, and semantics to preaching with a minimum of jargon. His discussion of literary classics–they are perennial, plural, and prescriptive–explains why we think an ancient work like the Bible could apply to modern readers. Examples of how secular legal material applies across changing times and cultures illuminate how and why we may expect biblical law to do the same. His discussion of "exemplar preaching" is balanced and helpful. The book includes clear summaries, charts, diagrams, bibliographies of ancient and modern sources, and indices. Some blank pages in the back for taking notes would have been nice.

Jacket endorsements lauding the book as "highly original" and "virtually unique" indicate that Kuruvilla has written a noteworthy theological hermeneutic for preaching that will undoubtedly meet a need in many homiletics curricula.

Show Me How to Preach Evangelistic Sermons. By R. Larry Moyer. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012. 978-0-8254-3880-6, 251 pp., $17.99.

Reviewer: *Kenton C. Anderson, Northwest Baptist Seminary (ACTS Seminaries of Trinity Western University), Langley, BC*

Evangelistic preaching and expository preaching have not always fit well together. The traditional expository form doesn't always carry the emotive element felt necessary to evangelistic appeal. Further, the expository concern to offer the strict intent of the biblical author amplifies the lack of overt evangelistic intent in many biblical texts.

How do we preach evangelistically, when our concern is to preach the Bible, given that the Bible is not always intentionally evangelistic? To preach about justice and integrity from Proverbs 11 or on love from 1 Corinthians 13 would seem to be appropriate to the concerns of exposition. To preach evangelistically, from these texts, might seem an imposition on the text, something any expositor is loathe to do.

Larry Moyer is well placed to address this critical question. Trained in the expository tradition at Dallas Seminary and Gordon-Conwell, Moyer has been engaged in evangelistic outreach for more than forty years. The author draws heavily on this experience throughout the book.

Moyer's sixth chapter describes the difficulty. Few passages are addressed to non-believers and offer the complete plan of salvation. Further, the complex structure of many biblical texts makes clear and simple communication to people not already committed a significant challenge.

These challenges do not lead Moyer to back away from the concern for exposition. "An expository evangelistic speaker starts with the text," he writes. "He does not prepare a message and then find a text that fits it" (175). Rather, Moyer wants to help us to communicate the Bible with greater sensitivity to the non-believing listener's culture and concerns, while becoming more effective in communication.

Moyer's prescriptions are practical, sensible, and accessible, though sometimes dated (it has been many years since I have seen a Palm Pilot in active use, 145). Readers will not be surprised by his insights, but could profit from many of them. I was encouraged, for example, by Moyer's emphasis upon the combination of grace and truth in the life and practice of the preacher (133).

The particular strength of the book is that Moyer reads homiletics through the eyes of an evangelist. I like the impulse that drives us to think about everything we do from the perspective of listeners who are unconvinced and uncommitted. The weakness of the book might be that it assumes a particular cultural context where traditional evangelistic crusade-style preaching is possible. Moyer is not talking about your Sunday morning sermon (he counsels against saying anything directly to believers, for example, 170). He is talking about the kind of preaching that has gone out of

fashion in most of North America. It is fine enough for us to want to assert the primacy of the preaching of the Bible, particularly in the church, but if our concern is to reach non-believers, we might want to consider ways by which we could more readily capture their attention.

The book would have been helped by awareness of the current literature on the missional engagement with post-Christendom culture. Such an approach might have helped us understand how an exposition of justice from the Proverbs or love from the first letter to the Corinthians could lead to a compelling evangelistic interest from within a disinclined culture.

Show Me How to Illustrate Evangelistic Sermons. By R. Larry Moyer. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012. 978-0825433566, 363 pp., $28.99, paper.

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

Larry Moyer, founder and CEO of EvanTell, Inc., is a respected figure in the field of evangelism in the last several decades. This book is a companion to *Show Me How to Preach Evangelistic Sermons* (Kregel, 2012), also reviewed in this issue of the *Journal*.

The first five chapters deal with general topics: why illustrate, why humor, how illustrations help communicate, where one finds illustrations, and what topics one illustrates. As I read these chapters, I realized the need for a solid tome that helps preachers illustrate—not a book of illustrations, but one addressing the hows and whys of illustrations. I thought Moyer had hit a rich vein of pragmatic utility, but unfortunately these sections take up only 25 pages of his book, a tenth of the size, the rest being … a book of illustrations. The first five chapters could have also used some updating: the author recommends carrying around index cards to record ideas and thoughts about illustrations. I would have thought a smartphone would be a better implement for this purpose. And he recommends Microsoft Access© as his database of choice. Rather than a paid product (and it costs a pretty packet), I'd have recommended databases available for free, or even an app like Evernote©. His exhortation to make illustration collection a habit is well taken, for every preacher, amateur or veteran.

In any case, this is a book on illustrating evangelistic sermons, and Moyer identifies three broad areas in such preaching endeavors that call for vivid illustrations: sin, substitution, and faith. A chapter is devoted to each of the three, and the author provides—and this is a rough estimate—about 900 illustrations in total.

The illustrations are all marked by standard bullet points, except for the humorous ones that have a smiley face as their bullet. A clever design stratagem, that helps the preacher easily identify the kind of story a particular entry is. To many of the illustrations provided, Moyer also

suggests a "Possible Entrance" (an opening line/question) and a "Possible Exit" (a closing remark/question). I found those quite useful as well, since far too often, the potency of an illustration is contingent upon how well it is introduced and concluded.

Within each broad category—sin, substitution, and faith—the illustrations are categorized under topics sorted alphabetically. For instance, in the "Sin" chapter, his entries come under "Acceptance/Rejection," "Achievements," "Atheists," "Blame," "Confusion," "Conscience," "Consequences of Sin," "Death," etc. On the quality of the illustrations in the book, I'd give it a solid B+ overall. In short, the book is worth having (though $30 seems a tad too high).

My recommendation: get a copy, go through it, select illustrations you might find useful (about 65% of them, I'd guess), and copy them into your file/database/favorite organ of storage. And then go preach some evangelistic sermons!

Sermon Outlines on the Psalms. By John Phillips. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012. 978-0-8254-4157-8, 191 pp., $12.99.

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

John Phillips' *Sermon Outlines* offers a minimalist overview of each of the 150 Psalms lifted out of his two-volume, 1436-page *Exploring the Psalms*, first published in 1988. All the author's expositions and illustrations have been stripped away from *Exploring* so that only the verse-by-verse word or phrase outlines remain. The intent in this paring down is to "provide a convenient foundation for the preacher" (5).

Each Psalm has been titled and given at least a two-point outline. The exception is Psalm 119, which has been divided into twenty-two separate outlines. The length of the Psalm consistently determines the length of the outline with most outlines filling a single page or less.

Unfortunately, the outlines are neither exegetically accurate nor homiletically relevant. Seldom does the structure of the Psalm emerge in Phillips' outline. The preacher who is looking for the uniqueness of a lament as compared to a hymn or psalm of thanksgiving will be disappointed. For example, Phillips' title for Psalm 99 is, "The Lamb Upon His Throne," and the outline is as follows: "I. The Ideal Prince (99:1-4)"; "II. The Ideal Priest (99:5-6)"; and "III. The Ideal Prophet (99:7-9)." The title ignores the historical significance of this enthronement psalm, the divisions ignore the repeated theme, "He is holy," of verses 3, 5, and 9, and the "prince, priest, prophet" terminology has surely been drawn from the author's biblical-canonical theology and pressed down upon the text.

Phillips' outlines tend to be devotional, if not subjective, topical and

descriptive rather than expositional. Many statements seem to cherry-pick some concept with which the author was intrigued. Why some structural and/or thematic elements of a Psalm were focused on while others were ignored remains a mystery. On the other hand, this work displays creativity and a sense of unity, since the outlines are "packaged" in a manner that brings about closure with each Psalm.

Phillips' theology is premillennial, with unapologetic references to Christ and his coming kingdom (e.g., Psalm 47—"A Millennial Hymn" or Psalm 66—"More about the Millennium"). Often New Testament theology, references, or allusions are read back into the outline.

Readers who are distracted by alliteration and rhyme will not appreciate this text. Those without an aversion to these devices may wonder at times what the author had in mind when he chose a particular word. Too often the style hinders rather than helps.

This book may prove a helpful tool for a *lectio divina*, or devotional approach to the Psalms. The exposition is too uneven to prove useful for consistent interpretation. Even so, preachers may find the titles and outlines useful for generating their own sermon titles or as a kind of lexicon to stimulate their own creative presentations.

Rewiring Your Preaching: How the Brian Processes Sermons. Richard Cox. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012. 978-0830841011, 181 pp. $16.00, paper.

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

To my knowledge, no book on homiletics has been written from the perspective of neurobiology and neuropsychology. What a fresh voice in the field! Richard Cox has made a unique contribution, demonstrating that "now as never before, preaching even has the power of neuroscience behind it" (157). Cox is a researcher in brain science (with an MD and a PhD), but for the most part he communicates in layman's terms. He also holds a DMin, and is an ordained clergyman (PCUSA): he speaks of theology on nearly every page. The synthesis of science and theology could be made plainer and deeper, but Cox strives to make clear what can and cannot be known about faith by studying the brain. He reminds the reader often that the mind is not the same thing as the brain, and that many of God's ways will remain a mystery.

Homileticians and rhetoricians will feel affirmed that their centuries-old commonplaces are now being verified scientifically. Cox regularly makes statements like this: "The brain, without any conscious intent, determines very early in a sermon whether the mind's lights will come on or will short out and turn off" (23). "Productive preaching requires both *fact* and *feeling*"

(29). "Effective teaching requires as much sensory input as possible. The senses can be thought of as gates into the brain" (37). Other findings confirm the importance of repetition (40, 45) and review (93), story (41), and concrete application (74). Cox also emphasizes credibility, community, symbols, and sacraments as indispensable components that work with preaching.

While the book tends to jump from idea to idea, perhaps like the firing of synapses, it is worth purchasing and reading for its original contribution.

Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views. Edited by Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012. 978-0830839636, 224 pp., $20.00, paper.

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

Multi-view books on particular theological topics have virtually become a genre, with every publisher producing versions of their own. InterVarsity joined the fray with this one on biblical hermeneutics, with a twist: the contributors were also charged with discussing Matt 2:7–15 that cites Hos 11:1.

"Biblical hermeneutics" is, of course, a broad concept that spans a variety of interests and agendas. My agenda, as I reviewed this work, was that of a preacher, as I asked: How will this help me preach better?

After an overview by the editors, Craig Blomberg begins, expounding the "Historical-Critical/Grammatical" view. Nothing particularly new here, but one sentence caught my eye: "The idea of preserving a dispassionate chronicle of events for posterity—with no necessary lessons to be learned from it—*is* largely a modern invention" (33). Bravo! That's exactly what I, as a preacher, am looking for: What is the lesson or agenda here? What is the author *doing* with what he is saying? But that's all he says about it, unfortunately. In his dealing with Matt 2:7–15, Blomberg spends a lot of ink on historical analysis (who the magi were and where they came from, etc.), but had really nothing to say about Matthew's use of the OT in the NT. Nothing here to help me preach Matt 2.

Scott Spencer takes over, dealing with the "Literary/Postmodern" view. His is a clever approach: final text (final form of the text), cotext (coherence with adjacent text), intertext(uality), context (circumstances of the writing), and open text (engagement by audiences everywhere). On Matt 2:7–15, Spencer shone, respecting the literary art of both Matthew and Hosea. Jerusalem is seen as the center of opposition, whereas, ironically, Egypt is a haven. Matthean irony makes Jesus' journey an escape from the dangers of the homeland into Egypt, and a return, his homecoming, bespeaking the mighty deliverance and covenant love of God. However, Spencer, in my opinion, takes things a bit too far (postmodern?) as he depicts the *unwise*

magi as "naïve fools blindly following the shiny star here and the shady king [Herod] there" (67). Apart from that, I might find something useful for preaching here.

Merold Westphal is next—the "Philosophical/Theological" view. He favors a "double hermeneutic": What did the author say to the original audience? and What is God saying now to present readers? Somewhat later in his essay, to my gratification, Westphal calls the second hermeneutic "application." I also said "Amen!" to: "To take this double task seriously in sermon preparation is not easy" (86). As expected, he does not touch at all his appointed task of interpreting Matt 2:7–15; after all, his, he claims, is "not a method or strategy for interpreting" (71). Altogether interesting, but not going to help me much in my preaching endeavor.

Richard Gaffin represents the "Redemptive-Historical" view. As expected, this is christocentric, and he makes the history of redemption the fulcrum of his interpretive transactions: "The subject matter of revelation is redemption" (92)—a broad (and, in my opinion, arbitrary) sweeping of all the intricate specificities of the all the pericopes of all the books of the canon under a cruciform rug. On Matt 2:7–15, Matthew and Hosea, it seems, simply establish God as Savior. In sum, Egypt = sin, and the calling of Jesus out of that land portrays salvation for sinners. That conclusion may not be all that off the mark, but his redemptive-historical rationale is weak.

Robert Wall concludes the five essays with his "Canonical" view. He outlines his approach looking at Scripture as a text that is human, sacred, single, shaped, and belonging to the church. He is also for canonical "shaping" of texts—their final form and their locations in the canon. Wall argues for Matthew's canonical position as giving it a "strategic" position in the NT, that calls for a unique "reading strategy" (120, 125). Is such ordering inspired and authoritative? Wall seems to think so. On Matt 2:7–15, he, like the others, thinks "Egypt" recalls the exodus event. I didn't think this essay would help me preach Matt 2 either.

The remainder of the book is made up of responses from each of the contributors to the offerings of the others, and a final conclusion by the editors.

In sum, the book made interesting reading, though I'm not sure I'd want to buy this book to help me preach better. Rather it left me with a melancholic feeling that much more work needed to be done in the area of biblical hermeneutics *for preaching*.

Preaching the New Testament. Edited by Ian Paul and David Wenham. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013. 978-0-8308-3990-2, 263 pp., $26.00.

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

I applaud the efforts of Paul and Wenham in assembling sixteen scholars to address helpful ways to preach through the various genres and sub-genres that make up the New Testament. In their introduction they write, "It is not designed as a scholarly book for scholars either on hermeneutics or on the biblical writings themselves, but it is a book informed by scholarship and designed to be useful to preachers who are at the coalface of ministry" (15). I had to look up the phrase, "at the coalface." The Cambridge online dictionary says it is a UK expression that means "in real working conditions." The editors and contributors succeeded for the most part. Preaching pastors, those who preach the New Testament regularly, and homileticians will appreciate the following:

(1) Suggestions for preaching through-the-book series. I especially found it helpful to think about ways to handle books that contain a great deal of repetition (151). Marshall asks, "Does [the shape of the teaching in the pastoral epistles]…require us to teach through a letter from beginning to end, or is it sometimes better to reorder the material?" (117).

(2) Careful thinking about the fact that, often, what the authors of the New Testament are interested in conveying to their readers is not what some congregants want to hear (39–41). I loved France's honest question concerning the theology contained in the infancy narrative: "But is this what our Christmas congregations have come for?" (41). Which meaning *do* we preach, the one conveyed in the Gospel or the one the faith-family expects to hear?

(3) The refrain that immediate and canonical context drastically affects meaning at the level of interpretation and application. Carson writes, "expository preaching can be too narrowly exegetical. It can so focus on the immediately chosen text that we fail to make clear how our passage fits into its *canonical* context" (29–30). The brief discussion of the canonical relationship between James and Paul (the apostle, not the editor) is an example of this emphasis throughout the book (145).

(4) Practical discussion about the economy of time during sermon delivery. Most preachers appreciate reading counsel like, "do not use up much sermon time dealing with such issues [of apparent discrepancies among Gospel writers]" (26). Or another asserting, "Such comments may be enough to show that the preacher is not unaware of the issues, without allowing them to hijack the primary intent of the sermon" (37). Or Marshall remarking, "It is not appropriate to raise such a debatable technical issue in an expository sermon when it is irrelevant (I am tempted to say 'totally irrelevant') to the matter in hand and would cause a distraction" (118). Concerning the place of archaeology in sermon development, Oakes writes, "All these resources could be used by a preacher at the level of, say, a one-hour research project as part of sermon preparation" (177). That's helpful.

(5) Anderson's presentation of Hebrews as a sermon and the implications this has for our preaching ("Hebrews is God preaching an actual sermon," 141). His discussion of how the author used the Old Testament was intriguing

for hermeneutics. You'll enjoy more of this in the chapter on preaching Revelation (164–65).

For the most part the contributors fulfilled the goal of the book. Sometimes the scholars showed their true colors and spent too much time on less fruitful material such as authorship, summarizing the content of individual New Testament books, and listing the challenges of preaching them.

I was saddened by the editor's (i.e., Paul's) understanding of the role of the preacher as shepherd. As he advocated letting our congregants see how we arrive at theological conclusions, he writes, "This is good practice for all preaching, because it avoids the preacher's functioning as a 'priestly' intermediary between text and congregation, holding privileged information others cannot know" (170). According to the New Testament's view on preaching, congregants do need us (1 Tim 4:14-16; Heb 13:17).

Overall, this is an excellent addition to my library and to the field. If you're preaching the New Testament, locate the pertinent section in this book and reap the benefits of scholars who have written for those of us at the "coalface of ministry."

Effective Bible Teaching. Second edition. By James C. Wilhoit and Leland Ryken. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. 978-0-8010-4860-9, 193 pp., $21.99.

Reviewer: *R. Larry Overstreet, Corban University School of Ministry (retired), Salem, OR*

Wilhoit and Ryken wrote this book (in 1988) because they were alarmed that "Bible teaching is a subject of neglect in the contemporary church" (ix). The intervening years have not diminished their concern, as their new chapter (chapter 1) details, "The Changing Landscape of Bible Study." In these opening pages, they consider items which affect Bible study in today's church, including the lack of good models for it, the impact of technology, and the problems of dynamic equivalence in Bible translation. The volume is divided into three sections. Part 1 considers "Effective Teaching," Part 2 deals with "The Methods of Effective Bible Teaching," and Part 3 emphasizes "The Bible We Teach."

Being written jointly by a professor of Christian ministry and an English professor, it is no surprise that it communicates well to Bible teachers, from new small group leaders to experienced veterans. Their conversational style connects effectively with readers, whether they are discussing their philosophy of education, the methodology of teaching, or the subject of hermeneutics.

Of particular benefit are the "Practical Suggestions," scattered throughout the book. These concise applications of the principles discussed answer "Now what?" so that prospective teachers can immediately apply

these guidelines.

Their discussions on "The Task of the Effective Teacher" (chapter 3) and "The Teacher: The Human Element in Teaching" (chapter 4), are worth the price of the book. These set forth what effective teachers are, what they do, and the passion they need, while also insisting that students must learn for themselves.

Part 2, "The Methods of Effective Bible Teaching," builds to its main emphasis. The discussion begins by providing guidance on identifying unity in biblical passages through literary form, genre and structural unity (chapter 5), and on discovering the thematic unity (the "Big Idea") of a passage (chapter 6). As a natural follow-through, chapter 7 guides a teacher on principles to bridge the gap between the time of the Bible and contemporary times. After that discussion the authors identify "Principles of Biblical Interpretation" in chapter 8, which seems to be placed too late in the book. Chapters 9 and 10 reach the climax of Part 2 by focusing on inductive Bible study, identifying what it is and how to do it. A brief contrast is given between this approach and the "Directed Bible Study" approach (109–11), an approach that deserves more space than it gets.

"The Bible We Teach," Part 3, concludes the book. It considers what kind of book the Bible is (chapter 11), the various types of writing found in the Bible (chapter 12), teaching the narrative sections of Scripture (chapter 13), as well as its poetry (chapter 14), and its other genres (chapter 15). This is the weakest section of the book, because they seek to do so much in so few pages. Entire volumes have been written on each of these subjects. Beyond that, however, some specifics can be mentioned. They assert that the world of the Bible includes "Palestine, Egypt, Greece, and Rome" (135), omitting such areas as Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. Further, I take exception with their statement that since biblical poetry is not to be taken literally, but metaphorically, it is a form of "fiction," and that poetry "is inherently fictional" (168). I prefer to use the word "figurative," not "fictional." Their discussion of Hebrew poetry's parallelism is too brief to be of significant assistance. Chapter 15, "Teaching Other Genres of the Bible," needs expansion. For example, concerning "Visionary Writing" they assert that "so much of the Bible falls into this genre that any Bible teacher needs to confront it" (180), but their discussion of how to do that consists of less than two pages. Likewise, their discussion on "The Epistles" (182-83) and "The Parables" (183-84) is too brief to provide sufficient guidance for someone inexperienced with hermeneutics.

Finally, a subject and an author index are included. Significantly omitted, however, is a Scripture index. As was the case with the book in its first edition, so it is with this one—it ends abruptly with chapter 15. A concluding chapter is needed to tie all things together.

This book has demonstrated its staying power over the last two decades. Its updated edition should continue to have a positive impact on the teaching ministry of God's Word.

1 & 2 Samuel. By Robert B. Chisholm. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 978-0-8010-9225-1, xiii + 337 pp., $39.99.

Reviewer: *Ben Walton, Arizona Christian University, Phoenix, AZ*

This commentary by Robert Chisholm is the first Old Testament volume in the new Teach the Text Commentary Series. Packaged in an attractive color format and illustrated amply, the goal of the series is to help preachers and teachers proclaim the primary theological message of the biblical text. To that end, its commentaries are organized by preaching portions. The discussion for each one is limited to six pages and is divided into three sections. The first, "Understanding the Text," places the passage in its surrounding context, notes relevant background information, comments on selected verses, and summarizes its original message. It also contains breakout text and bullet-pointed themes that are usually written in "there and then" language. The second section, "Teaching the Text," elaborates on one or two "points" that are usually a restatement or implication of the theological big idea. The third section, "Illustrating the Text," provides illustrations of the "points" in the second section. The content of the three sections overlap, which makes reading them seem a bit repetitive. The series does not venture into concrete application, which may be wise, given many of the "applications" in other sermon-directed commentary series. Overall, it may be that an unstated goal of the series is to provide content and theology to preachers who would not ordinarily use quality resources in sermon preparation.

For his part, Chisholm fulfills the series' aims well. Following the methodology of his other books, Chisholm understands the theology of 1–2 Samuel to be primarily theocentric. Therefore, he adopts a more hermeneutically sophisticated approach to discerning text-specific theology than simply morphing exegetical ideas (i.e., plot summaries) into theological big ideas. This is a welcome treat. Chisholm divides 1–2 Samuel into fifty-two units and does a good job discussing the text in the little space that he is allowed.

The series' focus on theological big ideas and Chisholm's solid execution make this volume a must-have for preaching and teaching 1–2 Samuel. Textual theology, however, is not everything, and preachers will need to supplement this commentary with others that comment on each verse and address a broader range of exegetical questions. Nonetheless, as a starting point and sparring partner for theological analysis of 1–2 Samuel, this work succeeds admirably.

Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers. By Scott M. Gibson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. 978-0-8010-9159-9, 141 pp., $12.99.

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

The motivation for Gibson's writing *Preaching with a Plan* was his concern that, "Perhaps sermons are imposed on listeners more out of habit than out of intention" (65). Without a doubt, he is correct. And that should trouble not only professors of biblical preaching and congregations victimized by pedestrian preaching, but more importantly, those who stand as mediators between God and his people, the preachers of this world. The author hopes to remedy that sorry—one might go so far as to say sinful—state by weaving together several threads of preaching related themes.

Gibson warms to his subject by asking, "Why do we preach?" (13). His answer, reiterated perhaps three dozen times and supported by multiple biblical and homiletical texts, concludes: to disciple people, to grow their faith, to bring them to maturity, to call them to Christlikeness, etc. This theme is so often repeated that the title of the book could easily have been changed to *Discipleship through Preaching*.

The next assertion of *Preaching with a Plan* is that preaching that matures disciples must be planned. The author assumes the reader will accept the logic of this claim for he offers little evidence in its support. Who would argue that randomly chosen sermon texts or topics and ill-prepared presentations (lacking the clarity, interest, and relevance of well planned sermons) rise to the challenge of maturing disciples? Still, as Gibson reminds the reader often, many preachers fail to plan.

For those who agree that preaching should be planned, Gibson offers several strategies. One that appears repeatedly throughout the book is the necessity of knowing one's people, i.e., basic audience analysis. In several sections throughout the book this flag is raised. The concept seems so important—rightly so—and resurfaces so often that another title might have been *Knowing your People: How to Preach to Who they Are*.

Two other crucial strategies are prayer and knowledge of the various preaching styles/plans that are available for the discipling preacher's use. Prayer seeks God's supernatural assistance throughout the entire preaching process and seeks insight into the nature and needs of the congregation. Preaching styles include expository, catechetical, polemical, doctrinal, apologetic, lectionary, topical, *lectio continua* (book studies), and series. The consequence of employing these strategies should be the ability to choose an appropriate text and style of preaching that will most likely result in spiritual growth for a particular group of people at a particular point in time.

Although *Preaching with a Plan* seemed somewhat random in its organization, with several themes surfacing, then fading, only to surface again throughout six chapters, the goal of this text should be the goal of all preachers and professors of preaching: well-planned preaching that

strategically seeks to disciple congregations.

Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons. By Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. 978-0-8028-6787-2, xv + 440 pp., $34.00.

Reviewer: *Ben Walton, Arizona Christian University, Phoenix, AZ*

Sidney Greidanus has written an excellent commentary for preachers on the book of Daniel, regardless of readers' position on the issue of preaching Christ from the Old Testament. The commentary opens with a concise, but insightful, discussion of the historical and literary issues germane to the theology of Daniel's pericopes. He advocates for the book's historical veracity, an original composition date of shortly after 536 BCE, and an implied audience of Israel in exile. He sees the book as employing two primary genres: redemptive-historical narrative (with similarities to court tales) and apocalyptic.

Greidanus divides Daniel into eleven preaching texts and expounds on the boundaries, literary art, and plot of each. He also provides each preaching portion's textual theme (i.e., exegetical idea or plot summary) and textual goal (i.e., exegetical theology) and their homiletical equivalents. Greidanus is to be commended for distinguishing between the text's theme and its goal. Furthermore, each unit's discussion contains ways to preach Christ legitimately, as well as an exposition that includes the kind of exegetical material that might be profitable in a sermon.

Greidanus' approach to the pericopal theology of Daniel is theocentric. He understands the book and its pericopes rightly to be primarily about God and his sovereign nature, with the aim of bringing comfort to those in exile or undergoing persecution. While he recognizes the theocentric focus of Old Testament narratives, Greidanus has never denied that ethics (i.e., morals) may be taught in them. In this volume, he provides his clearest definition yet of moralizing: "'Moralizing' is to draw one or more morals from the preaching text when the author of the text did not intend such application(s) for his original audience" (24n80, 31n5). It is not surprising then that Greidanus sees Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as authorially-intended exemplars (94). This does not mean that readers will always agree with Greidanus with respect to which characters are exemplars. This is to be expected, however, because discerning valid ethical applications from Old Testament narratives is difficult, partly because their pericopal theology is primarily about God's nature or covenant-keeping. What Greidanus rejects is a confusion of the text's semantics with its theological message. Further, that is why he distinguishes between a pericope's textual theme (i.e., exegetical idea or plot summary) and its goal (i.e., theological purpose), the latter being

the basis for application.

Greidanus' approach to the preaching of Daniel is Christ-centered. Preaching Christ, for Greidanus, is not about "finding" Christ (creatively or otherwise); it is about "preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God's revelation in the person, work, *and/or* teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament" (27, emphasis mine). Greidanus demonstrates that there is a difference between "finding" Christ in, and preaching Christ from the Old Testament, and that the latter may be achieved in hermeneutically-valid ways. As he explains, the move to Christ is a distinct step in the sermon, one that occupies only one to three minutes. For Greidanus, preaching Christ requires the addition of another developmental question to the standard three of explain, buy, and apply and is not about changing the text's transhistorical intention. Readers who seek a hermeneutically-valid approach to preaching Christ from Daniel will appreciate Greidanus' seven ways. Readers who are not so inclined may skip this section and benefit from the rest of his rich exegesis.

In summary, Greidanus has written a model preacher's commentary, one that is exegetically-rich, hermeneutically-informed, and theologically-sensitive. I recommend it to all who would preach *Daniel*. It is the best commentary of its kind.

Preaching Is Worship: The Sermon in Context. Edited by Paul J. Grime and Dean W. Nadasdy. St. Louis: Concordia, 2011. 978-0-7586-2972-2, 238 pp., $39.99.

Reviewer: *R. Larry Overstreet, Corban University School of Ministry (retired), Salem, OR*

This volume is specifically written for those ministering in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod to increase their preaching effectiveness during the church year, with emphasis on revitalizing their energies concerning liturgical preaching. Following the Foreword and Introduction are fourteen essays, written by an equal number of contributors. The first five essays focus on "understanding the relationship between preaching and worship in the Divine Service," essays six through ten emphasize "the ways in which the liturgical context can shape preaching and its content," and the final four essays stress "the method and purpose of preaching out of the worship context" (xiii).

Those who are familiar with, or minister in, a liturgical church ministry will reap the greatest value from this book. Those from a non-liturgical background will also find stimulating suggestions concerning the relationship of the sermon to other elements that comprise a regular worship service. The authors consistently agree that preaching is a pastor's most important work. However, preaching occurs in various contexts, and liturgy

is an integral context that must be considered. Even in those churches that are more informal, the sermon occurs in a context of prayers, singing, offering, observance of the ordinances, etc. These informal contexts are commonly well coordinated, and often repeated consistently week by week, thus becoming their own liturgical elements.

Several chapters were of particular benefit. The opening chapter, "The Place of the Sermon in the Order of Service," effectively sets the tone for the remainder of the book. It precisely reminds preachers that people "come to church expecting to be persuaded about some divine truth . . . that is good for our lives and that is from God" (4). This persuasive power of the preacher is carefully balanced by God's power: rhetoric and Word must be combined.

The third chapter, "Balanced Preaching: Maintaining a Theological Center of Gravity," warns readers not to allow the horizontal dimension of preaching, the human-oriented, to take precedence over the vertical dimension, the theocentric. This can occur when the sermon adopts a hearer-based epistemology of relativism, a consumer-satisfying mentality, or a self-help approach.

Two chapters focus on "Sacramental Preaching." Chapter four considers how preaching on baptism stresses repentance, initiates renewal, and links worship to life. The Lord's Supper is the focus of chapter five, and emphasizes how a sermon can proclaim that Christ is present, and that a cure for humanity's problems exists. It also provides numerous suggestions for preparing listeners to receive the Supper.

For those not familiar with a liturgical approach, chapters six through eight helpfully set forth the advantages of, and approaches to, "Preaching through the Seasons of the Church Year," "'Working' the Lectionary," and "Unfolding the Meaning of the Liturgy." Those ministering in liturgical churches will find within these chapters numerous suggestions on how to make sermons more dynamic and impacting.

Other chapters deal with connecting hymnody to preaching, using the visual arts in preaching, and preaching within the community of the church. The eleventh chapter provides a good overview of the "New Homiletic and its strengths and weaknesses for liturgical [and non-liturgical] preaching" (193).

The book is helpful and recommended. However, readers who are unfamiliar with Lutheran liturgy may need to refer occasionally to a dictionary for help in identifying specific words or phrases. For examples, the "confirmands" (63) are candidates for confirmation, the "paraments" (179) are ecclesiastical vestments, and "adiaphora" (208) refers to things outside moral law, neither commanded nor forbidden, which the author suggests refers to such things as the mode of baptism.

Commenting on what Lutherans expect in a church service, an intriguing statement is: "When it comes to preaching: no more than a dozen minutes is widely appreciated, if not encouraged" (207). No appendixes are included; this is an unfortunate omission.

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

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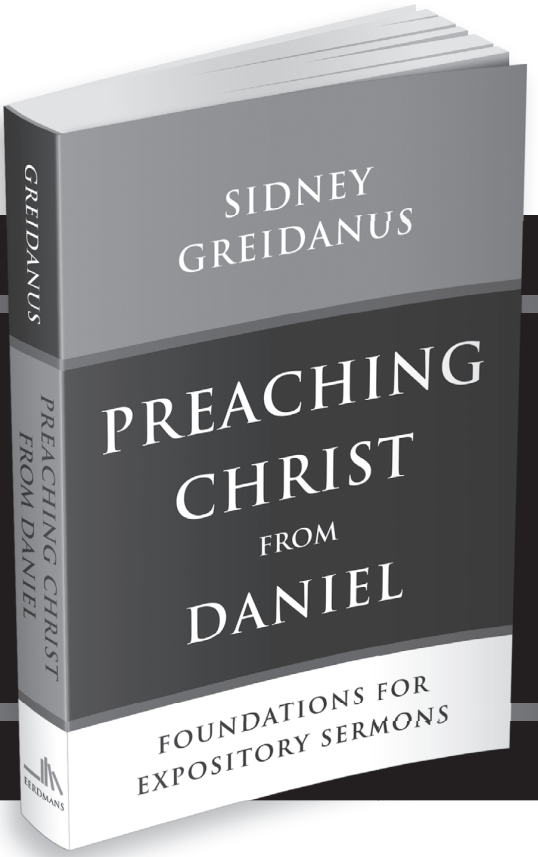

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