THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

March 2014, Vol. 14 No. 1

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

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

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

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

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EVANGELICAL
HOMILETICS
SOCIETY

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

ehomiletics.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE LAYERS OF PREACHING

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

The field of homiletics is muli-layered. One can approach the discipline through biblical studies, theological considerations, historical examination, rhetorical analysis, communication theory, among many others. The articles that have been featured in the journal throughout the years reflect these multi-layered methodologies.

The theme for the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society was "Spirit-Led Preaching," a theological approach to preaching. The plenary speaker was Dr. Jack Hayford who spoke on the importance of recognizing the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the preacher.

This issue of the journal begins with an article by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., who discusses the importance of preaching from the Song of Solomon. Kaiser argues that the Song of Solomon can be preached relevantly today without reading the New Testament into the Old Testament. His interesting study concludes with a suggested sermon outline.

The next article is by Daniel D. Green who explores the significant work of Robert Alter in biblical narrative. Green asserts that Alter's narrative principles may be applied to New Testament narrative studies. Green explores the usefulness of studying direct discourse—first-person speech—as it applies to finding the Big Idea of selected Lucan narratives. Green provides stimulating considerations for applying Alter's approach to the New Testament.

Jeffrey Arthurs of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was the recipient of the 2013 Keith Willhite Award. Chosen by the members of those in attendance at the conference, the annual prize is given to the author of the outstanding paper presented at the conference. The award is in memory of co-founder and past-president, Keith Willhite. In his paper, Arthurs provides an engaging exploration of the theology of remembering in the act of preaching.

The final article is by Mike Miller. Miller examines preaching difficult texts that often have the familiar words located in the margin of the Bible, "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have this passage," or some similar phrasing. Miller helpfully studies the implications of preaching on these "textually questionable" passages.

The sermon provided in this edition is by past-president Winfred Omar Neely, professor of pastoral studies at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL. At the conclusion of the annual meeting the out-going president traditionally preaches to those in attendance. In this sermon, which Winfred

Neely preached at the 2013 gathering at Talbot School of Theology of Biola University in La Mirada, CA, he led those gathered into the beautiful and challenging narrative of Ruth calling listeners to seize the moment and leave the results with God.

Lastly, the Book Review section provides stimulating reviews largely from members of the society. The reviews offer readers the opportunity to engage with the ideas communicated in the books published in the field of homiletics from the perspective of the reviewer. The reviews also provide a listing of books that can be suggested to the libraries of our schools or even purchased for our own libraries. Once again, the layers of preaching—the approaches to homiletics—are revealed in the books reviewed.

The layers of preaching potentially provide a rich exploration of the field of homiletics. As a society we want to encourage study in a variety of approaches in homiletics that will enrich the academy and encourage the church.

PREACHING AND TEACHING FROM THE SONG OF SOLOMON: "GOD'S GIFT OF ROMANTIC MARITAL LOVE," SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-2:18

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All too many homileticans and pastors abstain from preaching on an Old Testament text unless they can somehow eventually get to a teaching on the person of Christ from that passage – otherwise, they incorrectly assume, it is not a Christian sermon! But as commendable as such a desire appears to be from the face of the matter to some, it all too often bypasses the real teaching that is found in the passage itself and imposes in its place an eisegetical gloss from the New Testament back to the text being preached from the Old Testament. Nowhere is such improper reinterpretation of the Biblical text carried out more egregiously than from an Old Testament book such as Song of Solomon. This book is also known as the "Song of Songs," which is the Hebrew way of stating the superlative form, i.e., this is the "very best song!"

In an attempt to address those who say every verse in the Bible must point to Christ, or it is not a Christian sermon, I offer this opening study in the book of the Song of Solomon to show that its message is just as real and pertinent to our day as God intended it when he first gave these words to his human writer centuries ago. In fact, it is so much needed in our day that the culture has gone secular on love, marriage and human sexuality due to the famine of the teaching of God's word on marital love, marriage as a covenant with God, and human sexuality as a joy that comes from heaven. Let us see if that thesis works in the first two chapters of Song of Solomon and if it is not badly needed in the ministry of the Church today.

The "Song of Solomon" is not a modern novel nor is it a poem of love; instead, it is the Word of God teaching us the beauty and purity of what God meant the marital experience to be. It comes to us as one of the gifts from our Creator's hands to us mortals who are made in his image. The idea of one man and one woman being joined together in matrimony and in a covenant with each other as well as with God (Prov. 2: 17; Mal 2:14) is one of the great foundational teachings of Scripture that was presented at the very beginning of God's revelation in Scripture (Gen 2:23-24).

In its brief 117 verses, Solomon tells us how deeply moved and how greatly impressed he was by the fact that despite all the gifts he could offer to this Shulamite maiden, whom he so desired to be one of his wives, she

steadfastly refused him in favor of the boyfriend to whom she was engaged, a mere shepherd boy. So this is a book of three main characters and not just two: there is Solomon, the Shulamite maiden and the shepherd boyfriend. But more on this further on.

It should not be such a remarkable concept that God would devote a whole book of the Bible to this single theme of the love and joy that God intended to exist between a man and woman as they came together in wedded matrimony. In fact, as the late Meredith Kline summarized the whole point of this book, he said:

> What the incarnate Word did for the sanctity of marriage by his presence at the Cana wedding, so the written Word does by dwelling with joy upon (the prospect) of conjugal love in the Song of Solomon."[1]

In a similar manner, Sierd Woudstra commented:

> [The Song of Songs] is the Word of God teaching us the beauty and purity of genuine love, one of the gifts of the Creator to his creatures. This love the Holy Spirit saw fit to picture in terms of mutual desire for fellowship on the part of those devoted to each other.[2]

Thus the question that many believers will likely raise is this: Can God's saints be lovers in their wedded lives and yet still be saints? Or must sweethearts married to one another accept each other's love at the expense of their full spirituality and love for God? But then we must ask, why must I think that these are opposing questions for which there is not a balanced answer that allows for both a sweet and beautiful life of wedded bliss and a simultaneous joy of walking in the light of God's word and in fellowship with him?

Was it not God who said, "It is not good for the man to be alone?" (Gen 2:18). This, of course, states the general principle that applies to most cases, but this does not mean that God cannot and has not also given the gift of celibacy and made some of the same benefits possible for those who love him as well in the single life. But on the whole, our lives as mortals generally make more sense when we love and act in community with another living being. God provided this relationship with another mortal in order to help us be more fulfilled as we live and work together in harmony as a couple. Thus, God's remedy for Adam's loneliness was Eve; not any of the animals! For when Adam saw Eve, he jubilantly announced:

> This is now [at last] bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
> She shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Gen 2:22).

But how shall we interpret a book that is so enigmatic and has had such different interpretations ascribed to it? Who is to say which of all

these alternative scenarios attributed to this book are the proper ways for interpreting Song of Solomon? And the only answer, of course, is that we must defer to the writer who stood in the council of God and first heard these words. His meaning is the only meaning that is authoritative and reflects the point of view of heaven.

To get this answer, we must go to the writer of this book himself. This is why we must therefore run ahead of ourselves and get to the end of the story, for the time being, and come to the conclusion of the Song of Solomon (8:6-7), where Solomon, the author of this book, tells us what his conclusion was after he was called to write the whole book. In this conclusion he wrote:

> Place me like a seal over your heart,
> like a seal on your arm;
> for love is as strong as death,
> Its jealousy unyielding as the grave,
> like a flame of Yah[weh].
> many waters cannot quench love;
> rivers cannot wash it away.
> If one were to give
> all the wealth of his house for love,
> it would be utterly scorned.

So what did all of that mean? It meant this: Solomon had tried unsuccessfully to woo this rustic country girl from the little town of Shunem in Israel as one of his own wives, but she remained loyal, as she should have, to her shepherd boyfriend back home, to whom she was engaged. Hence, as part of their vows to each other, the Shepherd wanted the Shulamite maiden to have him in possession of her heart so that it would be sealed against all other loves and male suitors. Even though her arms might be active in doing any number of things to show her love for her bridegroom, they too would be sealed and closed off from all other activities that would compromise, hurt or disappoint him.

The measure of the shepherd's love for the Shulamite maiden has such strength that he would have died for her, had that been necessary. For there is a natural jealousy that wants to protect, guard and save his love; this love burns deeply in his heart. But this is not a natural "flame," it has come from the Lord ("Yah" –weh) himself!

As Solomon writes, he too witnesses to the fact that this love between a man and his intended, (in this case) wife is not something that can easily be swayed by gifts of gold, silver, furs, jewelry, or anything else similar to such gifts; you just cannot wash away true marital love, nor can even rivers carry such love away in its currents. Solomon had tried with all his wealth to woe this gal, but all of that wealth was "utterly despised;" it just could not be exchanged for the depth and joy of the "flame from Yahweh."

The author of this book is said to be "Solomon" (1:1), but not only is his name placed first in this book, but so is his reputation as a close

observer of nature (1 Kgs 4:30-33) verified in the text as he plants vineyards, gardens and parks (2:4-6). This Song names eighteen plants and thirteen animals. The writer shows a wide knowledge of products from the East and it alludes to jewelry, works of art, and goods obtained from commerce. Solomon already has a number of women in his royal harem (6:8), against a warning Scripture had clearly given in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, but violated in 1 Kings 11:1-8. So it was written sometime during Solomon's reign from 971- 931 B.C.

Some worry whether this book should be in the canon of those books that were authoritatively given by our Lord, but Jesus himself bore witness to this fact. He referred to the entire 39 books we call the Old Testament that were in the hands of the Jewish population of his day and he said these were the books that were authoritative (Jh 5:39; Lk 24:2, 44). It is true that the Song of Solomon is never quoted in the New Testament, but some commentators see allusions to this book even though it is not directly quoted. The only place the divine name appears, however, is in 8:6.

The literary form of the book appears to have a somewhat dramatic form, but it never was intended for dramatization, for such a practice was unknown among the Jewish people. The poem in this book does present a continuous story even though there is no strict chronological division that structures the Song as such. Its structure can best be seen in its repetitions, refrains, assonances, alterations and the like. For example, see the repetitions in 2:6 and 8:3; 2:17 and 8:14; 2:17a and 4:6a; 1:15 and 4:1. There is also the four-fold adjuration of the court ladies in 2:7; 3:5; 5:8; and 8:4. Three times there comes the same inquiry in 3:6; 6:10; and 8:5 and the Shulamite makes three avowals in 2:16; 6:3 and 7:10. Therefore, the song is a melody of beautiful poetry that must rank extremely high among the works of lyrical poetry in the world. It is composed of both monologues and dialogues, soliloquies and reminiscences as well as dreams. There are seven speakers or groups of speakers: Solomon, the Shulamite maiden, her brothers, her shepherd lover, his companions, the daughters of Jerusalem and some inhabitants of Jerusalem. There may also be an eighth speaker in 7:1-5.

The way to determine a change of speaker is to note the change in the Hebrew text of masculine or feminine forms of pronouns, which distinctions may be inferred from some translations (but not all agree or follow the lead of the Hebrew text). The imagery of the Song is filled with country life and is full of vitality and charming similes.

A quick outline of the story in this book includes the following. In a small city of Shunem a virtuous maiden lived with her two or more brothers and her widowed mother. Her duty was to shepherd the flock while also caring for their vineyards and a nut orchard. In the course of her duties she met a shepherd one day at noon while resting their flocks in the shade of a certain tree. This tree, then, became their trysting place where mutual vows of fidelity appear to have been exchanged.

So on one Spring day, as God's providence would have it, as she was visiting her family's nut orchard, quite unexpectedly along came

King Solomon with his retinue. When he observed this maiden, he was immediately struck by her unusual beauty and he determined to make her a member of his harem. He had her brought to Jerusalem and handed over to the care of the court women as he promised the maiden all sorts of gifts. But her resolve was unshaken, even by this king with all of his splendor; she only wanted to be reunited with her boyfriend back home. Solomon came to realize how utterly useless his advances were as this gal's virtue and constancy finally made him yield so that she could return back home to her lover. The story ends with the lovers (The Shulamite and the shepherd boyfriend) being reunited and Solomon realizing that love cannot be bought or talked into, but it is a gift from Yahweh.

So let us begin to preach from this little known book, especially in a day and time when the concept of marriage and human sexuality, as it was divinely intended and often had been experienced in previous times, but is now under enormous attack and redefinition.

Text: Song of Solomon 1:1-2:17
Subject of Title: God's Gift of Romantic Marital Love
Focal Point: 2:7, "Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desire."
Homiletical Keyword: Portraits
Interrogative: How? (Is that love portrayed in this text?)
Memory Verse:
MEMORY VERSE: 2:7, "Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desire."

OUTLINE:

I. LOVE'S DESIRE FOR AN ABSENT LOVER – 1:1-4
II. LOVE'S FEELING OF UNWORTHINESS – 1:5-7
III. LOVE'S COMPARISONS – 1:8-17
IV. LOVE'S VIRTUES – 2:1-7
V. LOVE'S ANTICIPATIONS – 2:8-17

I. LOVE'S DESIRE FOR AN ABSENT LOVER – 1:1-4

The title of this song begins with a note about its superlative character: "Song of Songs," which is the Hebrew way of saying it represents the very best song (cf. "King of kings," or "Holy of Holies," or "God of gods"). There was no better song anywhere; it is God's song of love in a marriage.

The opening scene is somewhere in Solomon's royal courts where the damsel suddenly finds herself among unaccustomed splendors. Actually, Song of Songs 6:11,12 explains how it was that the Shulamite maiden got to the palace, but despite all the elaborate magnificence of the royal setting, the maiden's thoughts were still occupied with her beloved boyfriend back home. She muses in a soliloquy on the memory of his kisses and his love

rather than on all the fuss King Solomon is now making over her (1:2). She does not name the shepherd's name directly, but for her there was only one "him." His love was "more delightful than wine" (2b), a beverage (Hebrew, yayin) that was distinguished from "strong drink" (Hebrew shekar).

Previous to this, she had lived a sheltered life in her single-parent home, where her brothers forced her to do a man's type of work extending long hours each day. But now, none of the perfumed odors that filled the king's apartments had any comparison to the fragrance of her shepherd boyfriend's presence (3). Solomon could keep his perfumes; she preferred the presence of her shepherd boyfriend.

Solomon continued his enchanting ways with this maiden, but her heart was still fixed on being drawn away only by her shepherd. She does not wish to be rude to the king, but his blandishments are just plain not working on her (4). Of course, it is thrilling for the moment to be chased by the king of the country, but real love is still the best love.

II. LOVE'S FEELING OF UNWORTHINESS – 1:5-7

There was a clear difference between this girl from Shunem and the daughters of Jerusalem, for in verses 5-6 she addressed these society ladies about how different she felt compared to them. The Shulamite was deeply sun tanned from tending the flocks and the vineyards; in fact she was as "black" or "swarthy" as the "tents of Kedar," a nomadic tribe from Northwest Arabia (descendants of the second son of Ishmael, Hagar's son), whose tents were made of goat and camel hair and were very dark in color. The Shulamite was richly suntanned, due to working out-of-doors and under the sun for so long, but she also was "comely/lovely" (5a), meaning in Hebrew that there was more here than a superficial beauty; she was pleasant to be with and she had a beauty that was apparent in the home as well. This must have caused the society ladies of Jerusalem to look with distain on her, but she urged them not to stare at her in that manner (6a). It was the sons of her mother's husband (perhaps now deceased) that had forced her to care for the vineyards so that her suntan was the natural result (6c-d). The result was that she had not had any time to take care of her own person ("my own vineyard," 6d) such as was true of the richly perfumed and painted ladies of Jerusalem.

Once more, the maiden's thoughts about her boyfriend resumed (7) as she wished someone would tell her where her shepherd lover was. Apparently verse 7 was what she said aloud as a soliloquy. It was about this time that the flock and the shepherd would be taking time to rest at noon. Must she now wander among all the resting flocks to locate her lover by herself?

III. LOVE'S COMPARISONS – 1:8-17

Verse 8 comes from the ladies of the court of Jerusalem who say in a somewhat ironical note, why don't you go and try to find out for yourself

where your lover is. From their point of view, that would eliminate the rival who had just arrived in the court. So hurry, they say in effect, for it is the custom in our country for unmarried women to pasture the flocks and to water them.

Solomon addressed the Shulamite as "my darling" (9, Hebrew, rayah, where it occurs 9 times in the Song), both here and once more in 6:4. But her shepherd lover used the word 7 times (1:15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2). The king likened her to a "mare" hitched to one of Pharaoh's chariots, which one would never introduce female horses into battle unless one wanted to create pandemonium, for the male horses would be distracted and forget about the call of battle. Modern women would not take such comparison to a mare pulling one of Solomon's chariots as a compliment, but among Orientals it was a great compliment. Solomon, of course, had several chariot cities, such as one at Megiddo. So the king promised all sorts of costly gifts in return for her love.

Solomon went on to compare the Shulamite's beauty to that of his horses, who had every hair of their mane and tail bushed in glowing luster, with bridle and collars of gold, silver and costly gems. The king would add even more jewels to the Shulamite's already glowing "cheeks" so that her neck would be lined with "strings or chains of gold" (10b) along with earrings to match. In v 11 the king associates the palace ladies with himself as they together will replace the common bead necklaces worn by this country gal with costly jewelry.

While the maiden and the king are seated at his table (12), she recalls the words of her "beloved" (used 25 times by the Shulamite and 7 times by others). But his gal could not enjoy the feast set at the king's table, for her inner turmoil continued to build as she recalled her boyfriend's words, "How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves" (15). His was a love that kept on giving, and he recognized her love not for what she could do or give, but for who she was. She in turn compared her lover to a bundle of myrrh twigs which hung at her bosom, which continued to give a beautiful aroma (13).

Even the fragrance of the "cedar beams" in the palace, as beautiful as they were, (17) were not enough to change her mind about the priority of her love to the one she had pledged herself to originally. She knew inwardly that this was not her place; a shepherd's tent with a grass floor and surrounding hills would do well enough for her because she would be with the one she loved.

IV. LOVE'S VIRTUES – 2:1-7

The Virtue of Modesty – 2:1

It has become somewhat of a tradition, by means of some interpreters and hymn writers, to attribute the words of 2:1 to Christ; however, it is the Shulamite who speaks to the Shepherd and contrasts herself as a simple

wild flower with all the beauties of nature about her. The Sharon Plain, which bordered the Mediterranean Sea, was famous for its wild flowers and pastures. The "rose" here was a bulbous plant of the narcissus and the "lilly" family (2:2) was most certainly the scarlet anemone, which can be seen all over the Holy Land (cf Matt 6:28); not the "rose" we think of in the west. This is how the shepherd had once compared how his girlfriend compared to all other gals (2:2). She was like one of those scarlet anemones set among "thorns;" that is how she stood out!

The Virtue of Exclusiveness – 2:2-3

The Shulamite, in turn, compared her "beloved" (2:3) to an "apple tree" (or a citron tree), for he too was erect, tall, strong and able to produce delicious fruit. That is how he stood out from all the other young men (3b). Then she recalled the "banqueting house" (4), or house of wine, to which she and her boyfriend had walked in the past. That "banqueting hall" had been more like a vine arbor near a wine press, where they had shared a lunch together, but what she had seen at Solomon's palace was a huge spread canopy with a banner spread over it to welcome his guests to a banquet. Nevertheless, the shepherd had something she cherished much more than the elaborate field canopy especially prepared outdoors for a royal banquet: it was the delight of the shepherd's presence which covered her as a bower of love as it arched over them in loving devotion to their joint love for each other.

The Virtue of Desire – 2:4-6

This bride to be married to a shepherd was in a very delicate position: she was separated from her beloved shepherd in the palace of her king. This is why her love for the shepherd made her feel depressed. While "raisins" and "apples," or "citrons," will satisfy her appetite and make her body healthy, they are just no substitutes for the presence of her beloved shepherd. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov 13:12), so the desire was that grapes dried and pressed into cakes would have sustaining qualities and eating citrons would revive her by their taste and odor. Nevertheless, she still wished and longed for her lover to be present to uphold and protect her as his right hand embraced her (6).

The Virtue of Purity – 2:7

Therefore, she adjures the ladies of the court at Jerusalem not to attempt to awaken or kindle love by any improper or premature times (7). She has already given her heart to the shepherd, so all attempts to flatter her into switching her allegiance over to Solomon instead of to her shepherd boyfriend would be unjust and a stirring of love before it was appropriate for such love. She wished to be left alone, just as the "gazelles/roes" and

the "does" of the field" showed the same kind of shyness, but who were also quick to escape.

V. LOVE'S ANTICIPATIONS – 2:8-17

Suddenly the Shulamite heard the shepherd's call come echoing across the valley. She had heard his distinctive call summon the sheep of his herd so frequently that she knew who it was that gave that call; it was he. Perhaps this all happened in a dream as it took her back to recent past when at her rural home in northern Galilee she imagined that she saw her lover bounding over the mountains "like a gazelle or a young stag" (9a) to her bedroom window. What physical agility and what athletic prowess he possessed. But "There he [stood], behind our wall" (9b), in his playful gestures, still calling her away to a new life with him.

Now in 2:10 the shepherd calls for his girlfriend as he puts the feelings of his heart into words. He now tells her why she ought to come with him. "See," he exclaims, "the winter is past; the rains are over and gone" (11). This may also be a metaphorical reference to the time of their separation as imaged in the metaphor of "winter." He has waited for her for what seemed to be too long. But since the rains were over and gone, the paths and the roads would now be passable as the streams and creeks had returned to their normal state and her foot would not slip. In fact, the wild flowers were out in profusion and it was now a time for singing (12). Even the fig tree had begun to grow as it had started in the winter as a green and small bud until it filled with juice and turned red in the Spring, just like their love was now beginning to bud and stir from its dormancy (13).

Earlier in 2:15 he had compared her eyes to those of a dove, a reference no doubt to their loving quality, but now he was calling her as if she were a dove hiding or building a nest in the "cleft of the rock" (14) to no longer refuse his invitation and to join him. He really wanted to see her. She, or her brothers more realistically, however, used a vinedresser's ditty as an excuse for her not dropping everything to leave and come with him (15). There was work to do, either her brothers, or she had protested, since the vines were in blossom and the vines had to be protected, which were vulnerable to the little foxes that would do their destructive work if she did not prevent them; therefore it was impossible for her to come at the moment. Both the young foxes and jackals often worked havoc with Palestinian vineyards as they played among the vines, dug holes near the vines and spoiled the fences meant to protect the vines. These foxes and jackals were indeed carnivorous, but they were also fond of young grape shoots and the grapes themselves.

If v 15 was the speech of the brothers denying her freedom to marry, as we suppose, her response was in vv 16-17. She replied, "You may indeed keep us apart in this way, but you cannot change the reality that the shepherd and I belong together" (16). We will be joined together at some time. Then she addressed the shepherd in v 17: When the day begins to cool off and the shadows begin to lengthen at the close of the day, you come as speedily as

a gazelle or a young deer bounds over the hills of Bether she urged in her poetical way. This must be a poetical allusion to the obstacles raised by none other than her brothers. The word "Bether" means "separation" or "division," the name of an actual site near Bethabara (2 Sam 2:29; or Bithron) that was separated from the rest of Israel by the Jordan River and cut up by hills and valleys. So, do come soon Shepherd boy; you can overcome the obstacles!

CONCLUSIONS

1. Romantic love is a gift from God; it has deep longings, it has shyness, modesty, feelings of unworthiness, yet the joy of being given a gift of a companion comes directly from God.
2. Position or power is no substitute for real love for a mate, for that real love comes as a gift from God. Solomon records under the inspiration of God how he loved this Shulamite maiden, but lost this girl to a boyfriend back home. That story is worth recording!
3. One may give a whole palace full of gifts of gold, silver and jewels, but it cannot quench true marital love which is as a "flame of Yahweh."
4. Times of separation during the engagement period can only make real love stronger rather than weaken it by greater offers.
5. "My beloved is mine and I am his" (2:16) is one of the sweetest and most enduring of all the associations given to us in our earthly journeys. Our marriages are heaven sent gifts to lighten some of life's loads along the way.

NOTES

1. Meredith Kline, "Bible Book of the Month—Song of Songs," *Christianity Today* (April 27, 1959): 39.
2. Sierd Woudstra, "The Song of Solomon," *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary,* eds., Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 604.

ROBERT ALTER AND THE APOSTLE LUKE: FINDING THE BIG IDEA OF LUCAN NARRATIVES BY EXAMINING DIRECT DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT: Robert Alter's ground-breaking work, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, has provided the church and synagogue with new eyes for reading narrative literature. Says J.R. Cameron, "He takes the texts of the Jewish bible and subjects them to the kind of critical analysis one might apply to Shakespeare or Faust."[1] While Alter's work concentrates on the Hebrew text, the principles proposed in his work may be applied to New Testament narrative as well. This article will seek to demonstrate the usefulness of studying direct discourse, that is, first-person speech, as it applies to finding the Big Idea of selected Lucan narratives. This will be done within the context of broader exegesis of these texts. The author has been applying, for several years, the material which will be presented, in helping Moody Seminary students preach through the narrative portions of Luke.

INTRODUCTION

Robert Alter is Professor of Hebrew and Comparative literature at the University of California, Berkley. His 1981 publication of *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (revised and updated, 2011) received the National Jewish Book Award for Jewish Thought and has made a very significant contribution to biblical interpretation. The present work appeared piecemeal in *Commentary* (1975), *Poetics Today* (1980) and *Critical Inquiry* (1978) and was presented at various scholarly lectures and conferences before reaching its present form. Alter is not a historicist, a structuralist, nor a traditional atomistic exegete, but a literary critic. David Jobling notes that Alter's approach represents "a paradigm shift from a predominantly historicist to a literary or more synchronic approach,"[2] and Roger Whybray that his methods are those normally used in the analysis of modern fiction.[3] The author himself says that his purpose is "to illuminate the distinctive principles of narrative art."[4] He sets forth his approach in several chapters, each of which isolates a certain aspect of narrative literature, while referring to numerous Old Testament passages which illustrate his points. Of the 2011 revision he says, ". . . . this revised version remains basically the same book as the one that appeared in 1981, but at least in some regards I think it is now tighter and

more precise."[5]

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Most of the chapters will be briefly summarized, with more substantial treatment given to chapter four that is strongly related to the subject of the paper. It will be considered last.

Chapter one, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," surveys the contributions of various scholars who, like the author himself, embrace a literary orientation to the text. It also provides an apologetic of sorts for seeing the Bible as literature that will yield its fruit when the conventions of such study are applied to it. As Joel Rosenberg has written:

> The Bible's value as a religious document is intimately and inseparably related to its value as literature. This proposition requires that we develop a different understanding of what literature is, one that might - and should – give us trouble.[6]

After showing the usefulness of such an approach in studying the biblical text Alter says, "It is a little astonishing that at this late date literary analysis of the Bible of the sort I have tried to illustrate here in this preliminary fashion is only in its infancy."[7]

As to the biblical narrative itself, Alter emphasizes the "rigorous economy,"[8] of the material, which leads the reader to engage the complexity of the characters. Of the uniqueness of biblical narrative, he says:

> Almost the whole range of biblical narrative, however, embodies the basic perception that man must live before God in the transforming medium of time, incessantly and perplexingly in relation to others; and a literary perspective on the operations of narrative may help us more than any other to see how this perception was translated into stories that have had such a powerful, enduring hold on the imagination.[9]

Chapter two is titled "Sacred History and the Beginning of Prose Fiction." According to Leslie Hoppe (who gives the best summary of the book that I have seen), this chapter contains Alter's basic theses and is the starting point for understanding his approach. Hoppe summarizes the contribution of this chapter as follows: 1) The best general rubric for describing biblical narrative is "prose fiction," or "historicized fiction." 2) This kind of narrative was an innovation of biblical writers who have no peer, so masterful is their prose and literary technique. 3) The theology of the Bible is "history-centered monotheism" which rejects the polytheism usually associated with verse - narratives and 4) Prose narrative is the chosen medium because it lends itself to the promotion of monotheism.

This, he says, "gives it a remarkable range and flexibility in presenting the ambiguities of the human person."[10]

Chapter three, "Biblical Type Scenes and the Use of Convention," shows that the Bible is replete with standard forms of literary presentation. It is here, Fokkelman says, "we are shown how essential our attitude and approach are as is our learning anew the literary conventions which narrative presumes."[11] Among those mentioned are intentional repetition of similar stories, doublets, the setting forth of heroes, word plays, and type - scenes such as the coming together in marriage of persons who had not previously met. Alter analyzes an impressive number of biblical accounts to illustrate his points. Events from the lives of Abraham, Rebekah, Boaz and David are carefully developed, and he provides an apt summary:

> Through our awareness of convention we can recognize significant or simply pleasing patterns of repetition, symmetry, contrast: we can discriminate between the verisimilar and the fabulous, pick up directional cues in a narrative work, see what is innovative and what is deliberately traditional at each nexus of the artistic creation.[12]

Chapter five, "The Techniques of Repetition," begins, "One of the most imposing barriers that stands between the modern reader, and the imaginative subtlety of the narrative is the extraordinary amount of verbatim repetition in the Bible."[13] Among the elements which are explained are 1) leitwort, or key words which are repeated throughout a story, 2) motif, the repetition of images and examples, such as water in the Moses narratives, or the colors red and white in the Jacob stories 3) theme, which traces the value system within the story and 4) sequence of actions leading to the climax of a series of repetitions.[14] Alter includes a fifth category, type-scenes. Of the five, he claims the leitwort and the type-scene "reflect distinctively biblical literary conventions," while the others are regularly present in other narrative works.[15]

The sixth chapter, "Characterization and the Art of Reticence," the author posits that biblical stories seem to hold back detail characteristic of great Western works. He says of it:

> . . . . whatever indications we may be vouchsafed of feeling, attitude, or intention are rather minimal...all the indicators of nuanced individuality to which the Western literary tradition has accustomed us – preeminently in the novel, but ultimately going back to the Greek epics and romances – would appear to be absent from the Bible.[16]

Such silence, or lack of detail, however is purposeful. For instance, the terse comment that "Michal loved David" in 1Samuel 18:20 is left without explanation so that the reader will ask himself why. The facts that it is never said elsewhere in the Old Testament that a woman loved a man, and that other people clearly loved him for numerous reasons, heightens the effect

of the brief statement. In the tragic interplay of their two lives, David is, contrastingly, essentially an emotionless individual – cold, pragmatic politically, even cruel. Yes, he has emotion, but it is publically displayed rather than described as possessed internally.[17] This is but one of Alter's illustrations of purposeful holding back of detail. Thus, the modern reader must be attuned to the "fine calibrations" of reticence.[18]

The seventh chapter, "Composite Artistry," deals with what Alter calls obstruction. Such is present because the biblical text is, for him, multi-layered and heavily redacted. This being so, it does not have the same characteristic unity as classic Western Literature. Herein he widely separates himself from those who believe in traditional theories of authorship, as well as textual and inter-textual unity. As Alter sees it, the understanding of narrative is often obstructed by its many layers, authors, and editors. Although suspicious of "scholarly ingenuity,"[19] he accepts the basic assumptions of the documentary hypothesis saying, parenthetically:

> . . . . the intricacies of the argument need not concern us here, only the basic proposition, which seems convincing enough, that the text we have is not the work of a single hand, or of a moment in time.[20]

He sees this lack of unity as present beyond the Pentateuch as well, with many of the passages of the Former Prophets bearing the same characteristic composite elements present in the Pentateuch. These, and other biblical narratives, resist attempts at harmonizing interpretation.[21] It is here that Alter seems to find himself in a bit of a quandary. How can he apply his methods to documents that bear no obvious unity? If there is not a finely interwoven unity, how can meaning be found? Herein lies an important part of his approach. He is not much concerned with the way a document was composed, or developed, but only with how the final redactor meant to use it.

> What I should like to propose is that the biblical writers and redactors . . . . had certain notions of unity rather different than our own, and the fullness of statement they aspired to achieve as writers in fact led them at times to violate what a later age and culture would be disposed to think of as canons of unity and coherence.[22]

This has put him at odds with the higher critical community which is unwilling to accept the seeming nonchalance with regard to the presumed internal difficulties. Roger Whybray says:

> Alter too readily dismisses the work of those critics who have attempted . . . . to discover the stages by which the Pentateuch reached its present form, even though he is himself aware that it is not, like a modern novel, the brainchild of a single brilliant author. It is important, even for a literary critic, to give serious

> consideration to the work of 'conventional' biblical critics, for within the Pentateuch – and also the Former Prophets – lies hidden, waiting to be fully discovered, the artistic achievement, not merely of one generation of literary artists, but of many.[23]

Although not oblivious to the difficulties of his approach, Alter seems quite happy to live with the logical tension which his theory must bear, a tension that is of concern to higher critics on one hand, and Evangelicals on the other.

The final chapter, "Narration and Knowledge," details the author's understanding of the omniscient narrator. For him, the story-tellers, while deliberately artful and even playful, "were obviously motivated by a high sense of theological purpose."[24] They use laconic summary, scenic representations, panorama and close-up as the way to control what the reader knows and is left to ponder. These all-knowing tellers speak for God, knowing what he knows, in this role ridding themselves of any personal identity. Their unlimited information and power are articulated thus:

> We are never in serious doubt that the biblical narrator knows all there is to know about the motives and feelings, the moral nature and spiritual condition of his characters, but, as we have seen on repeated occasions, he is highly selective about sharing this omniscience with his readers.[25]

These principles are illustrated through an uncommonly insightful interpretation of the Joseph narratives as he shows the omniscience of the teller and the masterful way that he lures the reader into the story to make his theological mark.

THE MAIN CHAPTER FOR CONSIDERATION

The literary critic/exegete may profit greatly from most of the principles set forth in the various chapters just summarized and should study them closely. The principal material on which this article focuses, however, is chapter four, "Between Narration and Dialogue." It is here that Alter reveals what seems to him to be the most empowering interpretive key. Direct discourse, the spoken parts of the narratives, carries the crux meaning literarily and theologically. The words which the characters speak directly, in the third person, warrant marque' attention. Alter introduces his central chapter thus:

> A proper narrative occurs when the narrative tempo slows down enough for us to discriminate a particular scene; to have the illusion of the scene's 'presence,' as it unfolds; to be able to imagine the interaction of personages or sometimes personages and groups, together with the freight of motivations, ulterior aims, character traits, political, social, or religious constraints, moral and theological

meanings, borne by their speech, gestures, and acts (italics mine).[26]

Alter illustrates his point in a study of David's flight to Ahimelech the priest at Nob. After isolating the spoken parts from the narration he says, "What this typological distinction should make immediately apparent in the passage is the highly subsidiary role of narration in comparison to direct speech by the characters (italics mine).[27]" He adds, "nothing is allowed to enter the scene that detracts from the dialogue itself,"[28] and "the biblical preference for direct discourse is so pronounced that thought is almost invariably rendered as actual speech, that is, quoted monologue."[29] Narration, says the author, merely confirms what is said in direct speech and often bridges large sections of it. Even third person narrative summary directs the reader back to what has been spoken. Thus, "direct speech is made the chief instrument for revealing the varied and at times nuanced relations of the personages and the actions in which they are implicated."[30]

At times contrast in dialogue is emphasized in driving home a point (Esau's outbursts versus Jacob's calculations, Joseph's lengthy moral rebuttal to the blunt offer of Potiphar's wife, Saul's shamed reply to David's passionate plea at the En Gedi cave). At other times, intensity is used to grab attention, as in the terse, but jolting "I am pregnant" from Bathsheba. "This sort of artifice," says Jobling, "whereby a narrator can imply much by saying little, is a main interest of Alter's."[31]

Alter summarizes the way in which "the Hebrew writers tell their tales:"

> . . . . beginning with narration they move into dialogue, drawing back momentarily or at length to narrate again, but always centering on the sharply salient verbal intercourse of the characters, who act upon one another, discover themselves, affirm or expose their relation to God, through the force of language.[32]

SCHOLARLY CRITIQUE OF ALTER'S WORK

Positive Critique

The response to Alter's work has been rather overwhelmingly positive. This applies first, and foremost, to his main literary theses. Says James McClendon:

> What Alter contributes is a kind of literary criticism almost untouched by 'biblical scholarship,' but which instead sees the biblical authors as highly sophisticated literary artists . . . .This book is recommended to those who seek to meet the Bible on its own terms, whatever there theological bias.[33]

Norman Habel concurs, writing:

> In sum, Alter's presentation of the techniques of literary art is a masterly programme for a fresh literary analysis of the Old Testament. . . . . Alter has boldly challenged the primacy of 'historical consciousness' as the principle governing traditional texts of Israel. . . . . Alter may have stirred a new controversy about the nature of biblical narrative as Scripture.[34]

Many have noted his meticulous study of the text. Jobling, says, "the book is distinguished, first of all, by excellent detailed textual observation throughout."[35] David Gunn adds:

> Above all I think he has made a major contribution to the machinations of repetition in biblical texts, and his skill as a 'practical critic'- leading to so many instances of fruitful exegesis - will be hard to rival.[36]

His work is valuable for those who are not professional critics, too. Stoneburner is impressed with the confidence that readers can gain in getting to the root of biblical passages:

> . . . . the person discovers, 'I can read the Bible with understanding,' and 'the Bible is worth reading if vivid and dramatic delineation of human existence is a test of literature (its episodes compare favorably with those of great novels).[37]

Whybray notes that his principles add to the pleasure which readers experience in reading the text as they increase their awareness of qualities that the Bible shares with other great writing.[38] Robert Cohn adds:

> To students of the Hebrew Bible Alter offers a new look at the literary qualities of the received text. To a more popular audience he presents an entree to the Bible unencumbered by theological jargon and scholarly technicality.[39]

Certainly also to be appreciated is the help that the book can provide for preachers. In reference to the work, McClendon says, "Those who must turn their theology into food for a flock may be . . . . helped, in the narrative mode, by an elegant, short book by Robert Alter. . . .[40] Gilbert Bartholomew concurs: "Such a study is of the utmost importance for a preacher, although it is only in the last decade that its importance has been gaining wide acceptance among theologians."[41]

Negative Critique

The most common and intense criticism is aimed at Alter's perceived slight of classical Old Testament scholarship. He is seen, by some, as dismissive, and not understanding well that which he criticizes. Although she sees his work as "extremely useful," overall, Edelman says:

> He launches into an attack on what he curiously labels as 'excavative pursuits,' while offering his own attempt to link the development of biblical prose narrative with the emergence of monotheism. It is precisely here, once he oversteps the confines of familiar literary criticism, that he runs into problems.[42]

Cohn joins the dissent, writing:

> Rather cavalierly, he dismisses the work of 'excavative' biblical criticism as irrelevant to his purposes without really giving it a fair hearing. With scarcely a backward glance, Alter thus disposes of two centuries of historical criticism which has labored to establish the biblical text, chart its history, and reconstruct the world in which it was formed.[43]

Burke Long is similarly critical of Alter, and fellow literary critic, Meir Sternberg, both of whom he sees as unengaged with broader scholarship:

> I am troubled that both men largely dismiss, and hence refuse to engage with, a considerable body of philosophical thought that questions the very traditionalism that they represent. . . . the key challenges of such recent discussions do not seem to have deeply affected their projects. . . . Their rhetoric thereby authorizes the rule of a particular practice in literacy criticism that is assumed to be exempt from the difficulties that many thinkers, particularly the post-structuralists, say afflict each and every intellectual activity.[44]

A related assertion is that Alter is overly selective with the passages by which he seeks to prove his theory. Jobling notes his tendency to illustrate with well-worked passages, like the Joseph David accounts, leaving doubt that it would work on less developed texts." Many examples," he says, "could be given of data from biblical narrative which surely must be significant, and yet whose significance Alter's methods provide no clue."[45] He summarizes his concerns as follows:

> . . . . I wish to suggest that there are things going on in biblical narratives so distant from Alter's 'literary artistry,' as to render his approach not wrong, but extremely partial, and needing to be applied in collaboration with other methods.[46]

Another concern is that that Alter does not hold a high view of the veracity of the biblical text. This is a concern for Cohn who calls attention to Alter's use of such terms as "historicized fiction," and "fictionalized history."[47] He is disturbed by the seeming arbitrariness of these terms and writes:

> Just calling it fiction does not make it so. Biblical narrative makes a

> claim of unique truth that modern fiction, in the context of which Alter studies the Bible, does not. Everywhere biblical narrative indicates its intention to be history…. Not invention but intention distinguishes history from fiction.[48]

Summary of Critique

Overall, it should be acknowledged that Alter has the profound respect of the scholarly community for the enormous amount of work that he has done in the biblical text. For whatever inadequacies may exist in his work, whatever ignorance he seems to betray of the long history of biblical interpretation, whatever simplicity with which he seems to treat complex texts, his work has greatly stimulated the scholarly community, synagogue and church. His respect for the narrative literature of the Old Testament cannot be reasonably questioned. His work should be used for reading and enjoying the text, as well as for studying, living and teaching it.[49]

IS HIS MATERIAL USEFUL FOR STUDYING THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Answering this question is important because Alter himself hesitates to assert the validity of this work beyond the Hebrew Scriptures:

> There are, of course certain literary as well as theological continuities between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, but the narratives of the latter were written in a different language, and at a later time, and, by and large, according to different literary assumptions. It does not seem to me that the two bodies of ancient literature can be comfortably set in the same critical framework. . . . I would not have the linguistic and scholarly competence to deal with the New Testament.[50]

Such care may be appreciated in a scholar, but it would be a mistake to ignore the great benefits of his work to the study of New Testament narrative. Leland Ryken, writing about the narratives of both testaments says, "Stories are always built out of three basic ingredients: setting, characters, and plot (action). Reading a story involves paying attention to the interaction of these three elements."[51] He also sees both as sharing patterns in their direct discourse:

> To sense that Abraham is a family man, Jacob a schemer, Ruth a gentle woman, and Jesus a person of compassion and authority as the occasion demanded, all we need to do is pay attention to their characteristic thought patterns and recorded speeches.[52]

Pervo has demonstrated at length the significance of studying direct speech in Acts,[53] and Bartholomew has no doubt about the usefulness of Alter's work for New Testament work.[54]

DIRECT SPEECH IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND GETTING THE BIG IDEAS OF SELECTED PASSAGES

Direct speech analysis is not a magic looking glass through which the Big Idea will be immediately seen. Many narratives have no such speech, and will have to be mined in another manner. It is only one tool at the disposal of the preacher. Narrative preaching students at Moody Seminary are also expected to have a beginning knowledge of Constantine Campbell's work in discourse analysis, especially as it pertains to the "zoomed in" perfective aspect,[55] as well as Harry Shield's work with tension-resolution graphs which help determine the subject and complement of a message.[56] Direct speech is the focus of this paper, however, and it will now be examined in selected Lucan narratives to see its influence in forming Big Ideas.

Luke 1:5-25

This story focuses on a "righteous" and "blameless" couple, Zachariah and Elizabeth, who were of priestly heritage, who nevertheless lived with the stigma of childlessness. The cause was Elizabeth's infertility which had persisted to advanced age. It is part of a larger pericope in which there is alternation between the lives of relatives Elizabeth and Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus. There is also clear intent to parallel the lives of John, Samson and Samuel. This couple is in a line of persons who received great promises and fulfillments from God.[57] Luke advances the narrative with details concerning Zachariah's special day as he, chosen by lot, served the Lord, offering incense in the temple. In the course of his work he is deeply frightened by and angel who appears to him. All the details of vv. 5-12, according to Alter's theory, set the stage for the direct speech to follow. They review elements of the Abrahamic Covenant. This narrative has a most uncommon amount of such speech, dominating most of the rest of the passage. It may be traced as follows.

The angel of the Lord: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. . . . . Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. . . . and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Zechariah: "How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years?"

The angel: "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. . . . you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words which will come true at their proper time."

At this point, Luke again inserts narration (vv.21-24) which records the fulfillment of the promise already delivered by direct speech, before

returning to the same to close out the passage.

Elizabeth: "Thus the Lord has done this for me. . . . in these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

We recall from chapter four of The Art of Biblical Narrative, "the highly subsidiary nature of narration as compared to direct speech" (see above). Thus, an application of Alter's theory is to lift any direct speech from the larger narrative for early examination. This can be done as soon as study of a passage begins. Note that every essential element of this passage is present in the spoken parts. Zachariah's profession, the predicament of infertility (advanced in years), God's marvelous promise with its miraculous fulfillment, the faithlessness, or at least inadequate faith of the priest, and the acknowledgement of the removal of the couple's approach are all there.

Using this approach as part of their study, two of my students preached the following Big Ideas:

We can trust God in impossible circumstances through our relationship with him, according to his Word, and seeing his provision.

When God's promises, and our circumstances don't seem to line up, we should respond by focusing on God, not ourselves.

My own preference: We should respond positively to the marvelous promises of God because he will ultimately bring them to pass.

Luke 1:26-38

This text exhibits the first of many alternations in the first three chapters of the book, as our attention is moved, for the time being, away from Elizabeth to Mary.[58] The narration of vv. 26-28a sets the stage for what is to come and also presents an irony. Whereas in the previous story a sexually experienced, older, woman was distressed by her infertility, here the distress of imminent pregnancy comes upon a young virgin. The narration moves the mega-story along by six months, locates it in Galilee, establishes the relationship between Joseph and Mary, and identifies him as David's descendant. The direct speech follows, dominating the rest of the story:

The angel Gabriel: "Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you,"

The omniscient narrator next reveals her distress and inability to grasp the significance of the greeting.

The angel Gabriel, again: "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and you will give him the name Jesus…. the Lord will give him the throne of his father

David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and his kingdom will never end."

Mary: "How will this be since I am a virgin?"

Gabriel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you. . . . So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be as you have said."

The narration says that the angel left the scene.

It may be noted here that, consistent with Alter's thought, one of the speaking parties is much more dominant than the other. In the Greek text, Gabriel speaks 118 words, whereas Mary utters only seventeen. This disparity may be due to the enormity of the announcement, but it also seems to highlight Mary's submission. It comes quickly, and her one question apparently did not betray the level of unbelief inherent in Zechariah's.[59]

Finding the idea for this passage has proved a bit tricky. Some preachers have focused on the nature of the virgin birth, and come up with an idea like the following: We should praise the Lord for the virgin birth of his Son.

The presence of perfect verbs *e,mnhsteume,nen* ("betrothed"), *kecaritum,enhv* ("favored"), and *sunei,lhfen* ("conceive") do point to the manner of birth, but probably not to the extent that it should dominate the preaching idea. One emphasis in this section of Luke is on the splendid mothers of the two main characters. Luke continues this with his featuring of Mary's words. The virgin birth is certainly to be respected, but the point here is the test of faith which such a birth posed for Mary.[60] She must have wondered about the exact nature of the coming impregnation and would have had no doubt as to the social and religious repercussions. Thus, the idea should emphasize the degree of challenge which was to be faced. One student preached this central idea:

When God confronts us with a difficult and challenging calling, we should be faithful and respond faithfully.

My preference: We should respond to a major challenge from God by submitting ourselves entirely to him.

These two ideas are essentially the same.

Luke 2:41-52

The story of the adolescent Jesus in the temple follows the annunciation

of his birth to the shepherds (2:1-21) and his presentation in the temple (2:22-40) as a baby. This example is much different than the first two that have been considered, in that the amount of narration far exceeds the direct speech. A gap in time of twelve years is ignored as Luke focuses again, momentarily, on the piety of Jesus' parents who had journeyed to Jerusalem. He shifts gears quickly, however, and centers on an intense hunt for Jesus, who had been mistakenly left behind when the family had departed from the feast. The idea of parents (vv.41,43,48) searching (vv. 44, 45) is intensified by the absence of the boy among his relatives, and a yet fruitless three-day scouring of the city. When they finally come upon him in the temple, they see "a pupil who astonishes his teachers by the understanding of the law apparent in this questions and answers to their counter-questions."[61] Although his parents share in the astonishment, Mary strongly challenges him with the first direct speech of the passage.

Mary: "Son, why have you treated us like this? Behold your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

Jesus: "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?"

The narration (vv. 50-52) now carries the story beyond its climax, providing assurance of Jesus' obedience to his parents, and offering a typical Lucan progress report (v.52).[62]

Students have struggled with the idea of this narrative as much as any in Luke. At least part of the challenge is that of perspective. What is to be done with Jesus' example? Are we to copy it? If so, then the idea might be something like this:

Two critical factors in our development as God's servants are a thirst for learning and obeying God's word.

But Luke is developing the reader's understanding of Jesus' person and identity in this book. Following this notion, one student offered this idea:

We should respond to the unique boy Jesus with astonishment and obedience.

Another possibility here is: We should be astounded by the avid devotion of the boy Jesus to his heavenly father.

In either of these last two ideas, Alter's theory holds only in part. The idea of Jesus' devotion is present in the direct- speech answer to Mary, but the astonishment is not. It must be gotten before, in the narration.

Luke 5:1-11

This passage is taken from a section which details the ministry of Jesus in Galilee as he chooses and prepares his disciples for their future work.[63] The narration sets the scene, describing Jesus standing by the lake of Genneseret where a crowd had gathered to hear him teach the Word of God. There were two boats there, which the fishermen had vacated in order to wash their nets. At the request of Jesus, Simon (Peter) took him out onto the water to preach. As he finished his message, the direct speech began:

Jesus: "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch."

Simon: "Master, we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

The narrator now provides details as to how such a large number of fish were taken that Peter called another boat for assistance. The catch was so great that both boats began to sink. Direct speech resumes:

Simon Peter: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

The omniscient narrator tells us here that his response was motivated by his astonishment at the catch, a feeling shared by his partners James and John. The second spoken part of Jesus follows:

Jesus: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will catch men."

The narrator states that they left their boats on the shore and followed him.

Elements taken from the speech are hesitant obedience to a command from Christ, realization of one's sinfulness in the presence of deity, and assurance from Christ, accompanied by an implied call to outreach. A preaching idea from the direct speech in this passage might be:

Jesus calls obedient sinners to follow him in the ministry of evangelism.

All the elements of this idea come from the direct speech, even, at least by implication, the following of Jesus.

Luke 9:28-36

This story, also from the Galilean ministry, greatly advanced the disciple's understanding of Jesus. Liefeld says of it: "The glorious transformation of the appearance of Christ is the most significant event between the birth and passion."[64] About eight days after a challenge to follow him at any cost (vv.23-27), says the narration, Jesus took Peter, John and James up a mountain to pray. While the disciples were groggy with sleep, Jesus prayed, and his face, being changed, shone. Moses and Elijah appeared in glory to speak of his departure (a discussion to which the

disciples were apparently not privy). After the discussion was complete, the disciples became aware of the three, and recognized them all. Direct speech ensued.

Peter: "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

The narrator says here that Peter did not understand the significance of what he had said, and that as he spoke they were overshadowed and enveloped by a dark cloud, out of which a corrective voice came.

God the Father: "This is my Son, whom I have my chosen; listen to him!"

The narration gives the detail that afterward Jesus stood alone. The disciples kept silent about what they had seen.

The direct speech again provides the essentials. Peter mentioned three tents and three men, treating them as equals. The voice from the cloud mentions one who has been chosen, to whom the disciples should listen. Moreover, he is God's Son.

From these elements, a preaching idea may be formed: We should regard Jesus as the incomparable Son of God.

CONCLUSION

1. Where direct speech is present, the preacher should cut to the chase. It should be isolated from the narration for consideration, and made to very strongly influence the preaching idea.
2. Narration is not unimportant, but it is less important than direct speech. It carries the action along, sets the scene, creates interest, and calls to mind previously mentioned themes.
3. Where there is no direct speech in a narrative, Alter's other emphases, as well as discourse analysis, and tension/resolution methods may be profitably employed.
4. The direct speech theory of Robert Alter is one valuable tool to be employed by preachers seeking the Big Idea of Lucan, and other, narratives.

NOTES

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3. Roger N. Whybray, "On Robert Alter's The Art of Biblical Narrative," in *The Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 27* (1983): 77.
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6. Joel Rosenberg, "Meanings, morals, and Mysteries: Literary Approaches to the Torah," Response 9:2 (Summer, 1975): 67-94.
7. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 13.
8. Ibid., 24.
9. Ibid., 24.
10. Leslie Hoppe, "A Synopsis of Robert Alter's The Art of Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical Research 31* (1986): 7-8.
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12. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 55.
13. Ibid., 88.
14. Here I am indebted to Shane Deane, one of my M.Div. students, who shared with me a summary document that he compiled for the course PS6602 Narrative Preaching.
15. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 121.
16. Ibid., 143.
17. Ibid., 148-159.
18. Ibid., 162.
19. Ibid., 164.
20. Ibid., 164.
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24. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative, 193*.
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29. Ibid., 84.
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39. Robert L. Cohn, "On the Art of Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical*

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49. For Alter's own rejoinder to some of this critics see "A Response to Critics," in *The Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 27* (1983): 113-117.
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51. Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), 35.
52. Ibid., 38.
53. R.I. Pervo, "Direct Speech in Acts and the Question of Genre," *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament 28* (2006): 285-307.
54. Bartholomew, *Homiletic*, 17.
55. Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 51. Campbell says here that the perfective aspect indicates "heightened proximity," and continues, "the perfect is proximate like the present, but more so." The presence of perfect indicative verbs in a narrative should influence the preaching idea.
56. Harry Shields, *From His Story to Our Story: A Manual for Developing Narrative Sermons* (Unpublished class notes for the Moody Bible Institute course PS430 Expository Preaching). On page 20 he explains the theory: "Another way to discover the central idea of a narrative is to follow the story line and observe how the tensions in the drama are ultimately resolved. The tension point in each narrative will often correspond to the subject of the idea. . . . and the way the tension is resolved will often correspond to the complement of the idea."
57. Darrell Bock, *Luke, NIGNT, vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 78.
58. Luke gives an extraordinary amount of attention to women in his Gospel. They are usually presented positively, or at least sympathetically. He even includes them among Jesus' regular followers and financial supporters (8:1-3).
59. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 84.
60. The virgin birth is a basic doctrine of faith because of its logical implications for the sinless nature of our Savior. Such theological freight, however, does not seem to be in the forefront of Luke's argument as he develops the character of Jesus' mother.

61. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 128.
62. The apostle uses these throughout Luke and Acts to provide structure and updates as to the progress of God's plans. Verse 52 appears to be a deliberate attempt to parallel Jesus with Samuel again (see: 1 Samuel 2:21, 26).
63. Chapters 4:14-21:38 describe his ministry, 4:14-9:50 his time in Galilee.
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THE LORD'S REMEMBRANCERS

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ABSTRACT: A purpose of preaching which is emphasized in the Bible may be missing or minimized in standard evangelical homiletics texts: reminding. This paper develops a biblical theology of memory, then explores how that theology is practiced in the preaching of Moses in Deuteronomy, the prophets, and the epistles. I conclude that the reminding-function is legitimate and needed when preaching to believers. The paper concludes with some suggestions on how reminding can be done without monotony.

"I love to tell the story; for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest."
Katherine Hankey

Some sermons teach, some persuade, and some apply the truth to everyday life—or more precisely, every sermon does all three of those functions to one degree or another. Those three functions of preaching are well-trodden terrain in standard textbooks of evangelical homiletics. While I agree with those purposes, I believe that the textbooks neglect another purpose—reminding. By "merely" reminding the baptized of what they know and believe, slumbering knowledge may be awakened, somnambulant conviction may be roused, and sluggish volition may be inspired. Jonathan Edwards put it this way: "God hath appointed a particular and lively application of His Word to men in the preaching of it . . . to stir up the minds of the saints, and quicken their affections, by often bringing the great things of religion to their remembrance, and setting them before them in their proper colours, though they know them, and have been fully instructed in them already."[1] It may have been Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), chaplain to the courts of Elizabeth and James I, who described preachers as "the Lord's remembrancers," a metaphor borrowed from the judicial system of the day. The office of The King's (or Queen's) Remembrancer is the oldest judicial position in continual existence in Great Britain, having been created in 1154 by Henry II. Today it is a ceremonial role, but for centuries the officer's role was to put the Lord Treasurer and the Barons of Court in remembrance of pending business, taxes paid and unpaid, and other things that "pertained to the benefit of the Crown."[2]

This paper considers the role of preachers as "remembrancers." We are the Lord's remembrances, reminding his subjects of the covenant he has made and its stipulations. In particular this paper examines the reminding-function of preaching by developing a biblical theology of memory, noting especially the place preaching plays in stirring memory. My research question is: what might a biblical theology of memory contribute to homiletics? And my thesis is that when preaching to believers (people in the covenant), preachers should see the stirring of memory as one of their primary tasks.

The first step in biblical theology is lexical.

LEXICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The two most important terms for this exploration are the Hebrew word *zakar* and its cognates, and the Greek word *mnemoneuo* and its cognates. The following table summarizes lexical data:

Term	Form	Meaning	Example
Zakar	Qal (169x)	Remember, call to mind, pay attention to (often accompanied by appropriate actions)	Psalm 137:1, "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when *we remembered* Zion."
	Hiphil (41x)	To cause to remember, to invoke, to mention	1 Sam. 4:18, "As soon as *he mentioned* the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat."
	Niphil (19x)	To be remembered	Zech. 13:2, "On that day…I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that *they will be remembered* no more."
Zeker	Noun	The act of remembering, a commemoration or memorial	Esther 9:28, [commenting on Purim] "These days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation...nor should *the commemoration* of these days cease among their descendants."
Zikkaron	Noun (24x)	Memorial, token, record	Esther 6:1, "On that night the kind could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring *the book of memorable deeds*, the chronicles, and they were read before the king."
Mnemoneuo	Verb (approx. 20x)	Remember, be mindful of (often accompanied by appropriate actions)	Gal. 2:10, "They asked us to *remember* the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."
Mnaomai. "remember."	Verb (approx. 20x)	Same	Luke 23:42, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."
Cognates	Nouns and verbs (approx. 29x)	Same	Luke 22:19, "Do this in remembrance of me."

The Hebrew term zakar, like our English term "remember," has a range of meaning, but the range is not extensive. Sometimes it denotes a simple mental act as when Israel "remembered" the food they ate in Egypt (Nu. 11:5), but most often "in the Bible, memory is rarely simply psychological recall. If one remembers in the biblical sense, the past is brought into the present with compelling power. Action in the present is conditioned by what is remembered."[3] For example, Israel was to "remember" the days of their slavery in Egypt and free their own slaves every six years (Dt. 15:15). Israel was also to "remember" the Sabbath by keeping it holy (Ex. 20:8). Joseph asked the cupbearer to "remember" him before Pharaoh (Gen. 41:14), that is, mention him favorably to Pharaoh. And Hannah vowed that if the Lord would "remember" her, she would dedicate her son to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:11). While the majority usage of the English word "remember" is limited to "psychological recall," an older definition captures the biblical connotations: "to bear a person in mind as deserving a gift," as when we say that "the company always remembers its employees at Christmas," and the child at the party says to the host who is passing out treats, "Remember me!"

Linguistic scholar Stephen Renn states, "When zakar is associated with God, divine 'remembering' signifies Yahweh's intention to implement the next state of his redemptive plan, whether it be his purpose to bless or (less frequently) bring down judgment."[4] The synonymous parallelism of Hebrew poetry confirms that zakar means more than mental recall. In the lines following zakar, the idea of God remembering his people is elevated to "blessing" (Ps. 115:12-13), "rescue" (Ps. 136:23-24), and "helping" (Ps. 106:4).

Israel was to remember the laws and statutes (Num. 15:3 ff., Neh 1:8, Mal. 4:4), God's redemptive deeds (Dt. 6:17), and YHWH himself (Dt. 8:8, Neh. 4:14, Eccl. 12:1, Jer. 51:50). "Part of the identity of the people of God comes from remembering God's great acts and faithfulness and the origins of His people. Remembrance leads to gratitude and praise for the present and hope and security for the future."[5] But while gratitude often accompanies this term, the greatest number of uses of zakar occurs in the psalms of lament: the psalmist strengthens himself when he remembers the glad shouts and songs of praise (42:5), but he also groans when he remembers God (77:3) and the days of old (143:5).

The opposite of remembering is, of course, "forgetting" (shakah—used about 100x in the OT), and this term also implies more than simple mental act. To forget God means to worship other gods (Dt. 8:19) and disobey the commandments (Dt.8:11). "Forgetting" is parallel to "forsaking" (Is. 49:14) and "rejecting" (Hos. 4:6). Forgetting is an important term and concept in the New Testament as well as the Old. The Greek words are lanthano (vb.) and lethe (noun). James 1:22-25 speaks of being "doers and not hearers only." The one who is merely a hearer is like a man who looks at himself in the mirror and then forgets what he has seen, "but the one who looks into the perfect law . . . and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will blessed in his doing" (v. 25). As in the Old Testament, "forgetting" is nearly synonymous with disobeying, or at least with lack of fervor for the will of God.

The Greek terms, mnemoneuo and its cognates, are similar in denotation and connotation to zakar. The Greek may lean slightly toward "mere mental recall," but the leaning is not severe. We are to "remember" those in prison (Heb. 13:3), probably meaning that we should pray for them; and we are to remember our spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:7), meaning that we should submit to them. God has "helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy" (Luke 1:54). And Paul commends the Corinthians because they remember him "in everything and maintain the traditions even as [he] delivered them" (1 Cor. 11:2). In the New Testament, memory changes attitudes and actions, as when the disciples remembered Jesus' predictions of his resurrection, and they believed (John 2:22, 12:16). Similarly, the church of Ephesus should remember from where they had fallen, repent, and do the works they did at first (Rev. 2:5, cf. 3:3).

Blair's summary of the Old Testament concept of memory also pertains to the New Testament concept: an "active relationship to the object of memory that exceeds a simple thought process. Memory awakens a past event to realization because of its present significance. 'Remember' connotes consciously to 're-member' oneself to the object."[6] Quoting Brevard Childs, Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke says, "*Remembrance equals participation*."[7]

MEMORY IN BIBLICAL CONTEXTS OF PREACHING

The theme of remembering appears throughout the Bible, but three portions of sacred Scripture bear special consideration to help answer this paper's research question (what might a biblical theology of remembering contribute to homiletics?) Moses addresses the people of Israel in Deuteronomy, and there we see him emphasize memory. The prophets do the same, as do the Epistles, the closest approximation we possess of what preaching to believers sounded like in the early Church.

Deuteronomy

The covenant people were poised, ready to enter the Promised Land, but they had not witnessed the redemptive acts of the Exodus as their fathers had, and they were not present when YHWH made the covenant. Yet these people, not just their fathers, are the covenant subjects of the same God and are still participating in the ongoing story of redemption. However, having not witnessed God's mighty deliverance, they must now depend on memory as the link between the past and the present.[8] Thus the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' farewell address to Israel, stresses time and time again that they must remember. What must they remember and not forget? Their slavery in Egypt (16:12, 24:22); their deliverance, often with wonders (5:15, 6:12, 7:18-19, 8:14, 15:15, 16:3, 24:18); the making of the covenant at Horeb (4:9-13, 23); YHWH himself (4:39-40, 8:11, 14, 18, 19); the commandments (11:18, 26:13); their rebellion in the wilderness and God's discipline (8:2, 14-16, 9:7, 24:9); Amelek (25:17-19); and the days of old (32:7).

The prompting of memory occurred both nonverbally and verbally

at the major festivals, Passover and Booths. That is, the ceremonies, rich with sensory experience (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) recounted the Exodus nonverbally, and the regular reading of the Law at those festivals reminded the people verbally of the covenant stipulations. Waltke elaborates on the verbal mode:

> The founding generation uniquely experienced the events that gave birth to Israel as a nation. . . . Their children, however, do not see these events (11:5), and they must not expect God to repeat them (30:11-14). Rather, God speaks to future generations through their periodic reading of the covenant (17:18; 27:3; 31:9-13, 26) . . . . Israel perceives God principally with their ears, not with their eyes. Memory becomes the divine instrument for maintaining the continuity of Israel and for upholding the divine welfare of those within it. Memory actualizes the word.[9]

Waltke's choice of the term "actualize" echoes Childs who explains that "actualization occurs when the worshipper experiences an identification with the original events. This happens when he is transported back to the original historical events. He bridges the gap of historical time and participates in the original history."[10] He continues: "Actualization is the process by which a past event is contemporized for a generation removed in time and space from the original event. When Israel responded to the continuing imperative of her tradition through her memory, that moment in historical time likewise became an Exodus experience."[11] Taking his stance as a "remembrancer," Moses recounted past events to convince the present generation that God should be counted on today. By commemorating and recalling the past—the Exodus in particular—God's people are moved to align themselves with God's ongoing covenant stipulations.

One way actualization occurs, the way that is most important to this paper, is by the creation of discourse—sermons. Notice how Moses performs actualization by identifying the generation which came out of Egypt with the current generation standing before him:

When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?" Then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day." (Deut. 6:20-24)

Moses' use of identification is not simply a rhetorical strategy; it is an exposition of a theological fact. The people of God are one people.

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 26:6-9 he conflates time: "The Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. Then we

cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders." Not only does Moses enfold the past into the present (cf. Deut. 5:2-5), he also gathers in the future generations: "It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and with whoever is not here with us today" [emphasis added].[12] (Deut. 29:15)

The rhetorical situation which Moses faced is similar to the one Christian preachers face today.[13] We too stand on the brink of full deliverance, but we too are separated from the great deeds of redemption. So Christians lean heavily on memory to keep our hope alive and faith strong. Our ceremonies, particularly the Lord's Supper, and our discourse, particularly our Scripture reading and sermons, should prompt memory to actualize the past with compelling power.

The Prophets

The prophets were remembrancers par excellence. They drummed a metronomic cadence of covenant stipulations, incentives, and warnings. As spokespersons of YHWH their cadence was so uniform and unceasing that Andrew Thompson claims they were in danger of being monotonous: "Even a casual reader will find the same themes over and over again: God's goodness, God's deliverance, God's law, the people's rebellion, God's judgment, God's salvation. Short oracles are stacked together by the dozen, prophecy after prophecy, repeating the same thing."[14] Harkening back to the Exodus and Sinai, the prophets relentlessly drummed a message of deliverance, gratitude, and obligation.

One way they avoided the potential snare of monotony was by varying the form and mood of their prophecies (I comment on this in the last part of this paper), but they never varied the content. Jeremiah reminds the people of the ten commandments (7:9); Habakkuk echoes Deuteronomy when he warns of foreign conquest for covenant breakers (Hab. 1:5-11, Deut. 28:49-51); and Amos, like Moses, actualizes the past by conflating it with the present: "God brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness" (2:10).

The prophets' rhetorical situation, like Moses,' also parallels the task set before Christian preachers. Thompson states:

> They both (Israel and the church) live under the same covenant LORD, who does not change in his character or affections. They both live in the light of his past deeds for their good (whether the promises to Abraham, the Exodus, the Davidic Kings, or the climactic salvation found in the death and resurrection of Christ). They both live under his demands for love and obedience as his people. And they both live in hope that God's promises of ultimate salvation and judgment will be fulfilled. Our hope is the return of Christ, the Second Advent,

> when he will defeat his enemies and pour out his grace to his church. The church's covenant situation is remarkably similar to Israel's.[15]

The parallel rhetorical situation is also present in the Epistles.

Epistles

Like Moses and the Prophets, Paul and the other NT letter writers regularly remind the recipients of what they already know and believe. A handful of examples demonstrate this:

> (Rom 15:14-16) I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.

> (Phil 3:1-3) Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.[2] Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.[3] For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh

> (Jude 5, 17) "Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe . . . . You must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."

> (2 Peter 1:13-16) I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

> (2 Peter 3:1-2) This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

New Testament scholar James Thompson argues that the epistles are the best examples we have of what preaching to believers sounded like in the infant Church.[16] Thus, to preach to the Church, as the apostles did, we should stir memory.

Furthermore, when the recipients of epistles are preachers, such as Timothy and Titus, and the Holy Spirit through the Apostle instructs them

how to pastor the Church, we contemporary pastors pay special attention:

> (2 Tim. 2:8, 14) "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel . . . . Remind them of these things, and charge them before God."

This command is especially important for us because we are to remember Jesus Christ and then remind parishioners of him and his commands.

> (Titus 3:1) "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work."

In addition to these overt instances and commands of reminding, the general structure of epistles also demonstrates that preachers are the Lord's remembrancers. That is, the well-known structure of indicative-imperative suggests that the authors of the epistles saw one of their tasks as reminding the Church of what they had learned previously and then exhorting them to obedience based on that theology. Just as the Lord began the Decalogue with the indicative, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Egypt," so Paul and the other writers stir the recipients' theological memory of redemption so that they will live in fidelity to their deliverance. The proof of memory is fidelity.[17]

Thus far in this paper, lexical and contextual data are supporting the thesis that when preaching to people in the covenant, we should see the stirring of memory as an important function of preaching. Turning now more explicitly to theology derived from this data, the thesis can be explored in more depth.

THEOLOGY

The Christian Faith, as well as the Jewish, is grounded in history. We do not follow cleverly devised stories, but rather the Word made flesh who was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, died, was buried, and rose again. The cross (and the Exodus) happened in space and time. Thus, preachers in the Bible such as Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles reminded their auditors over and over again of facts historical and facts theological. The two cannot be, or at least should not be, separated. Blair summarizes the Bible's sermonic argumentation which is grounded in history: "What God has done is regarded [consistently in the Bible] as offering conclusive understanding of what he is doing and what he will do."[18] Both Israel and the Church are witnesses and heralds. In a sense, all expository preaching is simply repeating what has already been stated.[19]

In Noth's phrase, we actualize actualizing history by "re-presenting" it.[20] Unlike God, who is both omniscient and omnipresent, so that all history is immediate to him, "man in his inevitable temporality cannot grasp this present-ness except by 're-presenting' the action of God over and over again

in his worship."[21] Theologian John Davis, states that when the Church re-presents the old, old story of redemption "through word, sacrament and Spirit, the assembly experiences sacred 'time travel,' reexperiencing with the Lord and his people the power of the saving events of the past, as well as tasting the reality of the future new creation in the 'down payment' of the Holy Spirit."[22]

Preachers might ask: how does actualization occur when the preacher reminds the listeners of what God has done in the past? How does "sacred time travel" occur when the preacher re-presents the old, old story? Theologically, the answer may be that God's words do things. They have performative power, what a speech-act theorist would call "illocutionary force." Just as matrimony is inaugurated with the statements "I do" and "I pronounce you husband and wife," so do God's words accomplish what they name. When God said, "Let there be light," there was light. And when the Lord Jesus said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood," a new covenant came to be. Through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, the Word is a lamp that illumines, a fire that consumes, a hammer that breaks stony hearts, a sword that pierces, a mirror that reveals, and milk that nourishes. When the preacher faithfully re-presents redemptive history and asserts again the doctrine that God has already revealed, then, to quote Childs, "The worshipper experiences an identification with the original events . . . . He bridges the gap of historical time and participates in the original history."[23] We see the hand of God smite the Egyptians on our behalf, part the Red Sea for our deliverance, and provide manna and water for us in the desert. We see the sun darkened and feel the ground shake when our greater Moses performed a greater deliverance. We too stand at the empty tomb to and hear the angel, "He is not here. He is risen." Memory becomes participation. To quote Blair again, "The past is brought into the present with compelling power. Action in the present is conditioned by what is remembered."[24]

If the performative power of God's words helps explain the theology of actualization (although the process is still, admittedly, beyond our ability to fully comprehend), then it should be obvious that preachers must do exposition. The power is in the Word. When preachers do a good job of reminding believers of what the Church knows and believes, and when God give their words performative power so that those words kindle faith, then the commonplace functions of preaching I mentioned early in this paper—to explain, prove, and apply—take place without too much rhetorical labor.

Preachers may also ask why believers need to be reminded. The short answer is because we forget. Aslan said it this way: "I give you a solemn warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind."[25] A confused mind ("forgetting" in the sense of mental recall) leads to straying feet ("forgetting" in the sense of forsaking). So preachers serve as remembrancers so that the minds of the faith-family will be clear.

The conviction that preachers must do exposition needs no further elaboration for members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, but to conclude this paper, a brief list of practical implications may be beneficial. If the reminding-function of preaching is central, not peripheral, when preaching to people in the covenant, then expository preachers want to know how to serve as God's remembrancers. A bland and bald recitation of salvation history, as if we were reading the genealogies of the kings of North Umbria, will not prompt memory and kindle faith because another theological truth comes into play here: God has ordained his truth to be conveyed through human agents. Those agents must embody the Word as clear, passionate, sincere, and creative messengers like the prophets and apostles.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Preaching-as-reminding will come as good news to some preachers who have been shamed into believing that every sermon has to be an original work of art. But other preachers will raise a skeptical eyebrow. "Preaching-as-reminding sounds monotonous," they say. "Repeating what believers have heard since they were children sounds like a homiletical nightmare, like preaching at Christmas fifty-two weeks a year." But preaching-as-reminding should not be empty repetition, formalistic and perfunctory. Rather, it is the work of soul-watchers who minister where the air is thick. Our people (and we) need reminders of the great truths of the Faith. Furthermore, take heart that listeners often enjoy reminders. We are like the hobbits who "liked to have books filled with things that they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions."[26]

None of the suggestions below are likely to be "news" to members of the EHS. They are just reminders. Other suggestions could also be added dealing with the importance of delivery which prompts a reciprocal response from the audience, illustrations that make old truths "present," and effective Scripture recitation, but the three suggestions below dealing with homiletical purpose, style, and arrangement are enough to point the way on how preaching-as-reminding can avoid monotony.

1. The Purpose of Preaching: Present Worship.

Remembrancers do not lecture about the text. They worshipped God as they prepared the sermon, continue to worship as they step into the pulpit, and prompt the congregation to worship as they listen. Based on his observations of preaching in Ethiopia, Victor Anderson advises western preachers to conceive of a good sermon as "one that ushers the audience into a heightened sense of God's powerful presence at the preaching event."[27] Anderson contrasts "comprehension," an indispensable goal of every sermon, with "apprehension" which "draws listeners into concrete experience and particularly touches pathos."[28] To illustrate this concept, Tim Keller uses the analogy of parents feeding their child baby food. The

child may be uninterested, so the parents taste the food: "Mmmm! Yummy!" They model the response they want and the child follows their lead. They are partakers and prompters about the glory of the food.

Likewise, preachers have to taste and see the glory of statements like these: "God is the creator and owner of all that is"; "heaven is our hope"; and "whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life." To mix my metaphors, when the preacher burns, the people catch fire. Much of this "burning" comes through the nonverbal channels of delivery, but such delivery cannot be conjured ex nihilo; it is the fruit of meditation.

2. Style: Clothe Stirring Thoughts in Stirring Words.

Commenting on Cicero's three offices of the orator, Augustine said that "teaching" relates to doctrine/content, but that "delighting" and "moving" depend on style. The way we say what we say is crucial to avoid monotony when reminding believers of what they already know. Listeners are rarely moved if the sermon is not phrased movingly. This is one of the lessons we learn from the prophets. Their message was potentially monotonous, but they found fresh ways to speak the repetitive message about the covenant curses and blessings. Thus, a genre-sensitive handling of those texts will help us capture the same moods and forms they used. For example, Greidanus suggests that "when the prophecy is in poetry, the sermon can emulate the prophecy's use of concrete imagery. When the prophecy spins out a metaphor, the sermon can follow suit and allow the audience to participate in this new and often surprising vision."[29]

Three specific tools of style may help God's remembrancers. The first is the refrain. Fred Craddock, a master stylist, points out how a recurring line or phrase can build intensity, as when Marc Antony repeats in his funeral oration for Julius Caesar, "and Brutus is an honorable man." Each time he speaks that ironic line, it generates new insight for the crowd and intensifies their emotions.[30] Senior members of the EHS may remember our second conference, held at DTS, when Calvin Miller preached from 1 Corinthians: "We preach Christ crucified." As he urged us to declare the gospel without spin, regularly and simply, he used the refrain: "What do we preach? Just a pronoun, a verb, a noun, and an adjective. 'We preach Christ crucified.'" While it is hard to capture the dynamics of that oral event in the medium of print, perhaps you can imagine a small group of sincere homileticians receiving this reminder by a senior member of their guild. Every time he asked "What do we preach?" and answered: "Just a pronoun, a verb, a noun, and an adjective," he imparted no new information, but he moved us to do what we already believed.

Closely related to the refrain is the epitomizing phrase. In a fascinating study of the instructional techniques of the rabbis in the first century, Birger Gerhardsson states:

> When a teacher's words are accorded considerable authority and when an attempt is made carefully to preserve them . . . brevity

> and conciseness are important virtues . . . . There was a very active consciousness of the importance of such concentration, of condensing material into concise, pregnant—and if possible also striking, pithy and succinct—sayings.[31]

Gerheardsson quotes one of the ancient rabbis who exemplifies the pithy saying: "A sharp peppercorn is better than a basket of gourds."[32]

Followers of big idea preaching already know the value of communicating the essence of the sermon in a crafted sentence, so why not take this homiletical wisdom to the next level: big idea ministry? In his books and sermons, John Piper often repeats this dominating thought: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." Piper relates all topics (missions, preaching, children's ministry, giving, etc.) to that overarching concept. It reminds his audience of their raison d'etre. Tim Keller does something similar with this sentence: "Jesus lived the life I should have lived and died the death I should have died." That sentence is a thread woven into many sermons, a kind of supra big idea.

A third stylistic device is parallelism. When an orator rhythmically restates an idea rather than saying it only once, it has a greater chance of stirring the affections of the listeners. Black preaching has used these devices, of course, for centuries. White preachers have much to learn from them.

3. Arrangement: Use Induction When the Truth Sparks No Surprise

A final reminder on how to preach the old, old story to folks who know the story is to use induction. Homiletician Robin Meyers calls induction "midwifery": "It is essentially Platonic because the Preacher as Teacher often helps us to remember and reaffirm what we already know."[33] Clergyman and novelist George MacDonald struck the same note: "The best thing you can do for your fellow man, next to rousing his conscience, is not to give him things to think about, but to wake things that are in him; that is, to make him think things for himself."[34]

CONCLUSION

Much more can be said about preaching-as-reminding with explorations of more biblical data, liturgics to examine ceremonies like the Passover and the Lord's Supper, cognitive science, and classical rhetoric with its canon of "memory" and the type of discourse called "epideictic"—a speech designed to stir values and emotions already held by the audience; but my hope is that this article will expand our concept of the purposes of preaching. We are not only teachers of the untaught, persuaders of the skeptical, and exhorters of the listless. We are also, especially when preaching to believers, the Lord's remembrancers. One of our primary duties, as modeled in Deuteronomy, the Prophets, and the Epistles, is to remind the people of the covenant of what they already know and believe. Their knowledge may lie buried under the ash heap of neglect, and their beliefs

may be muted by the white noise of the world, but the truth nevertheless resides in the hearts of the faithful. The Lord's remembrancers step into the pulpit in faith as tools of the Holy Spirit who brings to remembrance the things Jesus taught (John 14:26).

NOTES

1. Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, ed., John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), 115-116.
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_Remembrancer. Accessed August 27, 2013.
3. Edward P. Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance: The Memory Motif in Deuteronomy," *Interpretation* 15 (1961): 43.
4. Stephen D. Renn, ed., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2005), 804.
5. M.W. Meyer, "Memorial," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), electronic version.
6. Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance," 42.
7. Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 504.
8. Much of the material in this section is gleaned from Brevard S. Childs who has written the most thorough study in English of the biblical theology of memory: *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, in the monograph series *Studies in Biblical Theology* no. 37 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1962).
9. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 504.
10. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 82.
11. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 85.
12. Other portions of Scripture such as Ps. 95:6-7 also conflate past and the present: "Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as at Meribah, as in the day in the wilderness" And enthronement psalms such as 47 announce the *future* as present today.
13. The term "rhetorical situation" is a technical term of rhetorical theory first developed first by Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* vol. 1 (1968): 1-14. Bitzer defines it as "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse . . . can so constrain human decision of action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."
14. Andrew Thompson, "Community Oracles: A Model for Applying and Preaching the Prophets" *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 10:1 (September 2010): 53.
15. Thompson, "Community Oracles," 42.
16. James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: WJK, 2001).
17. I am indebted to Russell St. John for some of the thoughts and wording in this section. Email correspondence, July 2013.
18. Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance," 41.

19. Approaching Christian preaching from a secular standpoint, communication scholar Michael C. McGee defines the genre of Christian "sermon" and concludes that the primary feature of the genre is "thematic reduplication." It moves deductively from an immutable premise derived from "Ultimate Authority" to tautological restatement of that premise as exemplified in particular situations. "Thematic Reduplication in Christian Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56:2 (April 1970): 196-204.
20. Martin Noth, "The 'Re-presentation' of the Old Testament in Proclamation" (1952), trans. James Luther Mays, rpt. in Claus Westermann, ed. *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation* (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 76-88.
21. Noth, "Re-presentation," 85.
22. John Jefferson Davis, *Worship and the Reality of God: An Evangelical Theology of Real Presence* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010), 92.
23. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 82.
24. Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance," 43.
25. C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 21.
26. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1954), 9.
27. Victor D. Anderson, "Learning from African Preachers: Preaching as Worship Experience," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 10:2 (September 2010): 84.
28. Anderson, "Learning from African Preachers," 99.
29. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 260.
30. Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 175.
31. Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, trans. Eric J. Sharpe (Copenhagen, Denmark: 1964), 136-137.
32. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 137.
33. Robin R. Meyers, *With Ears to Hear: Preaching as Self-Persuasion* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1993), 56.
34. George MacDonald, *The Gifts of the Child Christ*, vol. 1 (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker), 27.

PREACHING TEXTUALLY QUESTIONABLE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

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ABSTRACT: "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have this passage." Modern Bibles all contain these and similar words. While the preaching of difficult texts has barely been addressed in homiletical literature, the subject of preaching those passages I call textually questionable is completely untouched. This article is meant to begin the discussion by addressing implications for incorporating textually questionable passages into the preaching event.

INTRODUCTION

Many passages of Scripture are difficult to interpret for a variety of reasons. Because of the difficulties associated with understanding such passages, homiletical problems arise, resulting in the most challenging of biblical texts being rarely preached. When they are preached, however, my observation is that the difficulties frequently are ignored, treated superficially, or handled without regard to a grammatical-historical approach. The result is a church population with little or no understanding of interpretive methods and without the benefit of a number of rich portions of Scripture. Moreover, some passages contain added difficulty because of their textual uncertainty. Modern Bibles contain reference notes saying things like, "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not include this passage." This particular problem poses a homiletical challenge of its own. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to present a homiletical approach for what I call textually questionable passages of Scripture, using John 7:53-8:11 as a paradigm.

THE PROBLEM

While some have undertaken the task of addressing the interpretation of challenging passages in the Bible, little attention has been given to the preaching of those texts. Even less attention is devoted to the developing of a homiletical methodology specific to hard passages, and a search of theological databases produced no results relative to the specific task of the preaching of texts with textual uncertainty. Therefore, this article endeavors

to answer the question: "What are the homiletical implications of textually questionable passages of Scripture?" The hypothesis that follows is that passages with questionable canonicity are not suitable for homiletical exposition, but that a reasonable approach to the discussion of these passages is both attainable and beneficial. At the outset, however, some terms need to be defined.

DEFINITIONS

First, when using the term "difficult text," a text is typically considered difficult for one of three reasons: 1) It is difficult in that, because of cultural or linguistic peculiarities, it is hard to understand.[1] As Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez says, however, "because all human beings and all human societies are unique, the difficulties will not be the same."[2] Some people will have greater difficulty understanding certain passages than others will. 2) A text can be difficult because its teachings or demands are hard to accept. Gonzales says, "because all human beings . . . are sinful, some of the demands or expectations set forth in Scripture will be difficult for people to accept."[3] Likewise, Peter Davids says, "They are hard because we do not like what they say."[4] 3) Other texts are doctrinally difficult, meaning they seem to contradict other Scripture or a previously held doctrinal position.[5]

These definitions are important for the discussion at hand since some of the homiletical principles will apply across the spectrum. However, for the purposes of this article, a fourth category of difficult texts is proposed relative to preaching: the textually questionable. These texts are difficult because their textual uncertainty raises questions of canonical reliability and authority. Homiletical implications exist for all preachers who are aware of text-critical issues, but the presence of reference notes in modern translations has transferred the awareness from the study to the pew.[6] Therefore, the textually questionable passages referred to in this article are those passages either that warrant such a translator's comment or that, having appeared in older translations, are omitted from modern translations.[7]

STATE OF RESEARCH

Exploring literature relative to this topic resulted is a mixed bag. When it comes to commentaries and articles dealing with John 7:53-8:11, literature abounds. So plentiful is the material, in fact, that I cannot cover it here. The task at hand, however, is to review any literature relative to the preaching of difficult texts, looking for an approach to the textually questionable, which will reveal that the larger field is relatively untouched and that the more narrow topic is neglected altogether.

Several books have been published in the field of interpreting difficult texts. Some dated works include Martin Ralph De Haan's *508 Answers to Bible Questions*, which touched on some of the hard texts in the course of

answering some of the questions.[8] J. Carter Swaim's *Answers to Your Questions About the Bible* dealt mostly with factual questions rather than interpretive ones.[9] Then, in the 1970s two very brief works were published: F. F. Bruce's *Answers to Questions*[10] and Robert H. Mounce's *Answers to Questions About the Bible*.[11] Still, it wasn't until the 1980s that subject of difficult passages became a separate field of study when Gleason Archer published a large work titled *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*.[12] Archer tackled numerous issues beginning in Genesis and following the canonical order. He answered numerous objections and dealt with controversies surrounding authorship, apparent contradictions, and difficult interpretations.

Following Archer, F. F. Bruce published his classic work *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, in which he explained seventy sayings that are considered hard, either because they are hard to understand or because they are "only too easy to understand" but are "hard to take."[13] Three authors followed suit with more contributions to what is called the "Hard Sayings Series."[14] In 1996, these four writers combined their respective works into one significant volume titled *Hard Sayings of the Bible*.[15] In addition, Robert H. Stein contributed to the field with *Difficult Passages in the New Testament: Interpreting Puzzling Texts in the Gospels and Epistles*, which was later republished as *Interpreting Puzzling Texts in the New Testament*.[16]

Each of these volumes is helpful for the reader struggling with a particular text, for more than three hundred passages are explained. However, on no occasion is the concept of a textually questionable passage addressed.[17] In fact, the weakness of all the aforementioned books is that, though they deal with a large number of passages, they fail to provide a workable methodology for approaching difficult texts. Stein, in his introduction, contends that his desire is that his reader "will not merely come to 'solve' specific difficult passages but to develop a comprehensive methodology of interpretation that can be applied to other passages as well."[18] Nevertheless, he merely tackles specific texts (arranged by category), explaining various principles, all the while leaving the reader on his own to piece together a hermeneutical strategy.

When it comes to literature relative to the preaching of difficult texts, the field is barely touched. Only three books have been published, none of those by Evangelical authors, and none dealing with textual uncertainty.[19] The first of these is *Preaching the Hard Sayings of Jesus* by John T. and James R. Carroll. As the title suggests, this 1996 work focuses only on sayings of Jesus, specifically those that are difficult to reconcile with their christology.[20] The authors tackle certain texts, grouped according to "a few especially important themes in Jesus' teaching," and they admit that they are taking pains "not to impose on the sayings an interpretive grid that is contrived and distorts meaning."[21] The end result is a collection of explanations of various texts. Missing is any kind of methodological approach to interpreting or preaching Jesus' sayings.

Next in line is the 1998 work of Elizabeth Achtemeier titled *Preaching*

Hard Texts of the Old Testament. Achtemeier examines thirty-one passages that present various kinds of difficulties. At the outset, she seems to have a deep conviction rooted in a high view of Scripture when she states, "I have always thought, and in fact taught, that if we have some problem with a passage in the Old Testament, it is not the Bible's problem. It is ours."[22] She goes on to advocate an acceptance of difficult truths, honoring the Bible and the God of the Bible, encouraging the interpreter to read the Old Testament in view of New Testament passages that can shed light on the meaning. Nevertheless, she betrays her own biases by indicating that some portions of Scripture are less authoritative than others.[23] In addition, aside from her basic methodology of "plumbing the text" and "forming the sermon," she merely gives examples without proposing a transferrable strategy.

The third offering is the 2005 book by former Columbia Theological Seminary professor Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez entitled *Difficult Texts: A Preaching Commentary*. This latest work is the first to suggest a methodological approach, which is done briefly in the introduction (and again in the final chapter), then fleshed out in brevity in five different passages. However, her approach is primarily concerned with cultural issues affecting the interpretive process, which renders her method largely irrelevant to textually questionable passages. The one helpful element is her contention that the sermon itself should follow a "scholastic method," in which the preacher considers various objections to the text, then presents his own, having dispatched with counter-arguments.[24]

Four articles have been published relative to the subject of this article. The first two deal with the topic of preaching difficult texts, and they stand in theoretical contrast to each other. Clyde T. Francisco wrote "Preaching from Problem Areas of the Bible" in 1975, and, his approach is to determine what he calls "the thrust of the passage," then take that thrust "farther in the same original direction."[25] In 1983, Thomas G. Long argued against looking for a main "thrust," or "meaning," in a text in his article titled "The Fall of the House of Uzzah . . . and Other Difficult Preaching Texts."[26] He takes to task the notion that a text "contains one or more meanings" (emphasis in original), arguing that many texts seem to "contain 'meanings' which are either of little current interest . . . or in some way 'substandard' in regard to gospel presentation." Historical-critical interpretation is what he calls "micro-exegesis," and as such only yields "meanings we can just as well do without." Instead, he advocates for a "macro-exegesis" that "stands back from the text and ask[s] questions of function rather than merely questions of content" in order to determine, not the "meaning" of the texts, but the "roles they play in the literary and cultural fabrics in which they are found."

The others constitute a two-part series in 1951-1952 by Roderic Dunkerley titled, "The Textual Critic in the Pulpit."[27] These articles do not deal with the subject of preaching, however, but instead serve to provide a brief introduction of textual criticism to preachers. In fact, the author even states, "Of course, I am not suggesting that the technicalities of textual

criticism should be dealt with in the pulpit."[28] He does mention John 7:53-8:11 and some other textually questionable passages, but not in a way that directly addresses the homiletical implications.

HOMILETICAL IMPLICATIONS

As we see, the homiletical implications of textually questionable passages is a topic largely untouched. While some small attempt has been made to address the preaching of difficult texts, the particular subject of this article has escaped mention. Therefore, in order to begin the discussion, two primary implications are herein addressed: first, the importance of textual reliability to the homiletical task, and then the incorporation of textual issues into the homiletical event.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEXTUAL RELIABILITY TO THE HOMILETICAL TASK

The beginning of a discussion of whether a given textually questionable passage is suitable for the homiletical task must center on one's philosophy of preaching. In other words, does the authenticity of a preaching text matter? For some, this question is not significant. For example, as previously mentioned, Achtemeier is not concerned with a passage's authenticity.[29] For her and others, the question is irrelevant. However, if one contends, as I do, that one of the primary reasons for expository preaching is the authority inherent in the text as God's word, then authenticity is crucial.[30] If the heart of preaching is the exposition of holy canon, then any passage that does not meet the challenge of canonicity is not acceptable as a preaching text, for it is devoid of divine authority.

Therefore, in order to evaluate a passage's suitability, the preacher must have at least a basic understanding of the field of textual criticism. While he need not necessarily be an authority in the field, he must at least be able to evaluate the analyses of those who are. He should consult critical commentaries and other relevant literature so that he can arrive at a conclusion on his own.

John 7:53-8:11 presents a perfect example for the discussion. Also known as the Pericope Adulterae, this is a text known and loved for generations, yet brought into question through modern textual studies and the inclusion of reference notes in contemporary translations. At first glance, it might seem that the inauthenticity of the passage is a foregone conclusion, but the issue is not a simple one.[31] While most do not argue for Johannine origination, the story's authenticity is much debated.[32]

Although the Pericope Adulterae is absent from the earliest of Greek, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts, some external evidence exists that the story was part of early tradition. Most notably, in the early second century,

Eusebius references a story mentioned by Papias as appearing in the Gospel according to the Hebrews that resembles the pericope. Another version of the story appears in the third-century Syriac Didascalia, and yet another form is found in the writings of Didymus the Blind, a fourth-century Alexandrian exegete.[33] These witnesses indicate that a story of a woman caught in some unspecified sin and defended and absolved by Jesus was present in the church at least by the second century, but its present form is a significantly expanded version.

When it comes to the presence of the pericope in ancient manuscripts, its earliest appearance is in Codex Bezae of the fifth century. Here, as in the majority of manuscripts, it is placed between John 7:52 and 8:12, but others insert it after 7:36, after 7:44, or after 21:25. Family 13, however, from the twelfth century, places it after Luke 21:38. Ian McDonald, who holds to the story's historical authenticity contends that the passage is most likely a part of early oral tradition that is looking for a home in the Gospels.[34] One is left to question, then, why the story needed to look for a home, and why its appearance in the Gospels is at such a late date. Aside from Augustine's explanation that it was removed by men who thought their wives would consider it license for adultery,[35] the most obvious reason is that it was only a part of oral tradition that was inserted later because "it was increasingly seen to reflect the ethos of Christ and the Gospel."[36]

Linguistically, the placement of the pericope in the Gospel of John is particularly problematic, since the vocabulary is decidedly non-Johannine. For example, the word "scribes" and over one-sixth of the words in the story are unique to this passage in John. Rather, the language most strongly resembles that of the Synoptics.[37] This has led many to conclude that the pericope has its origin in Luke.[38] An examination of the textual evidence, however, renders such a conclusion tenuous at best with no more evidence than stylistic similarities. Conjecture is suitable for academic discourse, but it falls short of determining canonicity with any certainty.

When one considers the internal and external evidence, the most obvious conclusion is that the Pericope Adulterae is not original to the fourth Gospel. However, its origins remain a mystery. Its appearances, albeit inconsistent, in early external sources have led some to conclude that the story is authentic and thus authoritative. The rationale is that the tentative acceptance of the pericope by the early church grants the passage canonical status, even though its placement is still in question.[39] Others, however, consider it to be non-canonical.[40] For the exegete who holds to biblical inerrancy, arriving at a conclusion is not simple, but because of the level of uncertainty attached to the passage, and because the current form of the story almost certainly is not the original, the most reasonable opinion is to regard the pericope as it stands as non-canonical. Therefore, according to the position of this article, the text is not suitable for the homiletical task.

THE INCORPORATION OF TEXTUAL ISSUES INTO THE HOMILETICAL EVENT

What, then is the preacher to do with such a problematic passage? Of course, he could simply ignore the passage by never crafting a sermon from it. However, if the preacher systematically preaches through a book that contains a textually questionable passage, his listeners are going to notice that he has skipped a portion of the text. In addition, any textual comments in their modern translations are going to raise some significant questions that should be addressed. For the preacher to ignore or dismiss the issue could serve to undermine his listeners' confidence in the Bible.

Therefore, the preacher will need to address the textual issues and explain his rationale for not preaching the text in question. Gonzalez's scholastic method provides a good basic paradigm that can be developed further and applied to a variety of difficult texts.[41] She recommends first identifying the problem and its origins. Does the textual uncertainty undermine the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible? This will require the preacher to know and understand his listeners so that he can address them on their level of faith and knowledge.

Once the problem is identified, the preacher, from his own textual study, can outline at least the main positions on the text.[42] He should not be afraid to discuss positions opposing his own, as there is a probability that some in his audience might have similar positions. The preacher will establish credibility by admitting that the problem is difficult and that there are varying positions. As he mentions the diverse perspectives, he can point out both strengths and weaknesses, which will lead into a presentation of his own conclusion with its strengths and weaknesses. Then, realizing that he has provided his listeners with some information that will likely be difficult to process, he can make himself available for questions and assure them of his own confidence in the authority and reliability of the Bible.

For example, when preaching through the Gospel of John, the preacher, on the day his sermon begins in 8:12, can point out that he is passing over a large portion of Scripture. He should acknowledge that the story of the adulterous woman is indeed a wonderful story that accurately reflects the character of both Jesus and the Gospel. As he explains that the story might be authentic, he can point out that even the early church considered its canonicity to be questionable and that it did not appear in any Greek manuscript until the fifth century. He must assure his listeners that the insertion of this story into the text does not in any way affect the truth of the Bible or undermine its authority. After all, the overwhelming majority of the Bible has ample textual support. If the preacher himself trusts the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible, he can instill confidence in his audience. On the other hand, to preach a passage that is as questionable as John 7:53-8:11 could actually diminish confidence by demonstrating that textual evidence and consistency are unimportant.

CONCLUSION

For the preacher with convictions about the inerrancy of Scripture and the necessity of expository preaching, textual authority is paramount. When a passage's canonicity is in question, homiletical integrity is compromised. Therefore, unless the preacher is convinced of a passage's authenticity, he should not use it as a preaching text. He should, however, seize the opportunity the questionable passage affords to educate his listeners and help increase their confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible. This will require a great deal of study and preparation time. conclusions will not be reached easily, but the homiletical task warrants such a high level of scholarship and diligence. The preacher who adopts this approach will show respect both to the Word and the listener. Moreover, I suggest that if handled properly, the listeners' confidence in the reliability of the biblical text will be bolsterd.

NOTES

1. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and others, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 29. Peter Davids comments: "in many cases [these] can be clarified simply by adding some background information."
2. Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, *Difficult Texts: A Preaching Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 1.
3. Gonzalez, 1.
4. Kaiser and others, 30.
5. Kaiser and others, 30.
6. For example, after John 7:52, the English Standard Version includes the comment, "The earliest manuscripts do not include John 7:53-8:11" with a footnote that reads, "Some manuscripts do not include 7:53-8:11; others add the passage here or after 7:36 or after 21:25 or after Luke 21:38, with variations in the text."
7. An example is the Johannine Comma, which is simply omitted from the English Standard Version without comment. It is likely, however, that some in the pew will be familiar with the King James Version's inclusion of the Comma. Many modern translations, however, have some kind of reference to the variant (i.e., New International Version, New American Standard Version, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible, to name a few).
8. Martin Ralph De Haan, *508 Answers to Bible Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1952).
9. J. Carter Swaim, *Answers to Your Questions About the Bible* (New York: Vanguard, 1965).
10. F.F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972).
11. Robert H. Mounce, *Answers to Questions About the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).
12. Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids:

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13. F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), 16-17.
14. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988). Manfred T. Brauch *Hard Sayings of Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989). Peter H. Davids, *More Hard Sayings of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991). Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *More Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992).
15. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and others, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*.
16. Robert H. Stein, *Interpreting Puzzling Texts in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).
17. Gleason Archer actually dealt with John 7:53-8:11, but only in the context of whether Jesus advocated capital punishment. He never breached the subject of the passage's textual issues.
18. Stein, 14.
19. The denominational affiliation is mentioned only to show that the all of the books in the field flow from the same theological stream–-a stream not known for theological conservatism.
20. Carroll and Carroll, 1-2. For example, with reference to passages that speak of judgment, the author asks, "Does the mercy of God not nullify such outmoded ideas of a vengeful deity?"
21. Carroll and Carroll, 2-3.
22. Acthemeier, xi.
23. For example, her explanation of baby bashing in Psalm 137 is that "it is difficult to believe that the words of vv. 8-9 come from his lips. Rather I believe they are responses of others to the Psalmist's words in vv. 4-7, and they speak an entirely different message" (109). This might be true, but she gives no exegetical explanation for such an interpretation, and her explanation could be seen to encourage other unfounded interpretations to get around difficult texts.
24. Gonzalez, 10-12, 102.
25. Clyde T. Francisco, "Preaching from Problem Areas of the Bible," *Review & Expositor* 72:2 (Spring 1975): 203-214.
26. Thomas G. Long, "The Fall of the House of Uzzah . . . and Other Difficult Preaching Texts," *Journal for Preachers* 7:1 (Advent 1983): 13-19.
27. Roderic Dunkerly, "The Textual Critic in the Pulpit–I," *The Expository Times* 63:3 (December 1951): 75-77 and "The Textual Critic in the Pulpit–II," *The Expository Times* 63:4 (January 1952): 101-104.
28. Dunkerly, "The Textual Critic–I," 75.
29. Achtemeier, 109.
30. For example, Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix argue that the preacher's authority "lies solely in the authority of your message," which rests completely in the inspired nature of the Bible. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository*

Sermons (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 55. See also Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 4.

31. Keener states, "the vast majority of scholars view it as inauthentic." Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 735.
32. For those holding to Johannine authorship, see Zane Hodges, "The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11): Exposition," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:545 (January-March 1980): 41-53. See also, Charles P. Baylis, "The Woman Caught in Adultery: A Test of Jesus as the Greater Prophet," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146:582 (April-June 1989): 171-184. In addition to appealing to a majority text argument, Hodges contends that the pericope is Johannine in nature and that it fits the context of John 7-8. Baylis, on the other hand, simply dismisses the textual evidence. D.A. Carson, however, responds that Hodges' efforts fall short of making his case and that "the evidence is against him, and modern English versions are right to rule it off from the rest of the text (NIV) or to relegate it to a footnote (RSV)." D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 333. For more critical support of Johannine origination, see Maurice A. Robinson, "Preliminary Observations Regarding the *Pericope Adulterae* Based upon Fresh Collations of Nearly All Continuous-Text Manuscripts and All Lectionary Manuscripts Containing the Passage," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 13 (2000): 35-39. "The present writer holds to the theory of Byzantine-priority and considers the PA original to John on internal, structural, and external text-critical grounds" (36, n. 2).
33. Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 526.
34. J. Ian H. McDonald, "The So-Called *Pericope de Adultera*," *New Testament Studies* 41:3 (July 1995): 426.
35. Lincoln, 525.
36. McDonald, 427.
37. Keener, 735.
38. Josep Rius-Camps, "The Pericope of the Adulteress Reconsidered: The Nomadic Misfortunes of a Bold Pericope," *New Testament Studies* 53:3 (July 2007): 379-405. See also Fausto Salvoni, "Textual Authority for John 7:53-8:11," *Restoration Quarterly* 4:1 (1960): 11-15.
39. See F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 413. See also Gerald L. Borchert, John 1-11, The New American Commentary, Vol. 25a (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 369.
40. Carson, 413; Keener, 526; Lincoln, 736.
41. Gonzalez, 11. A reminder is in order that this article is not concerned with sermonic style and format. Only those aspects of the sermon that relate to the preaching of the difficulties in the text are considered.
42. The specific perspectives presented will be a judgment call for the

preacher, determined by his understanding of his audience. Some audiences will respond well to a large amount of information, while others might need a briefer sketch of the difficulties.

SEIZE THE MOMENT
RUTH 3

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He has spoken kindly to the young lady. His words have revived her spirit. He has caused her to breathe again. He has used his influence and power to protect her. He likes the girl. But to this moment he has not taken any steps to move their relationship to the next level. Perhaps lurking in one of the inner caverns of his mind is the nagging thought: "Maybe I'm too old for the girl; maybe someone else is more suitable." Now how do you get a man like Boaz to move, to say something, to do something, to show some kind of gesture beyond what he has already done? Intensifying matters is the fact that the time to seize the moment is running out. Tonight, tonight, tonight, is the last night of the harvest celebration, and consequently the regular contact between Boaz and Ruth will come to an end. Naomi realizes this, and this is where we join the true story in our sanctified imagination in Ruth chapter three, verse one:

> Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you will notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do.

A plan riddled with risk is simmering in the mind of Naomi. Ruth needs a husband; she needs rest – the rest and security that a woman finds through marriage to a godly man. And there happens to be a man available on the marital horizon. He is a good man, a godly man, a man of integrity, a man of means, a man of social standing in Bethlehemite society, a mighty man of valor, standing out in bold relief against the dark and crimson period of the Judges. Naomi recognizes the importance of mate selection. Ah yes, mate selection is critical.

And tonight Boaz will be threshing grain at the threshing floor. Some of his workers will take large forks and thrust them into the mixture of

straw, chaff, and kernel, and toss the mixture into the wind, and the wind will blow the chaff and straw away, and the kernels will fall back into the threshing floor. Realizing this, Naomi says to Ruth "this is what I want you to do;" she gives her some protocol about how to deal with man, one of us.

First of all, take a bath! That's what it says! It's in the Bible! Take a bath! And anoint yourself. You see, on festive occasions here in ancient Israel women anoint themselves with perfumed Olive Oil. In my imagination I hear Naomi saying to Ruth, "you remember that perfume you had down there in Moab? What did you call it, Midnight in Moab? Put on some that! Put on some of that! Put on your best clothes. This is no time for the ugly Betty complex. And you go on down to the threshing floor, but be careful. Don't get in the man's face. Let him eat first, and let him drink first, and let him have that sense of wellbeing that a man experiences after he has had a good meal. He's a man, you know." Naomi seasoned like vintage wine knows how we operate as men.

Ruth says okay, gets ready and leaves our walled city of Bethlehem and in our imagination we travel with Ruth as she makes her way down to the threshing floor.

In our mind's eye we see Boaz reflecting on God's goodness. The agrarian recession is over; God has visited us, giving us a harvest. We see him eating and enjoying his food, drinking and delighting in his beverage. And like many of us on a Sunday afternoon after a good meal, Boaz gets sleepy. He gets up, and I hear him saying to his servants, "gentlemen it is time for good men to go to sleep." And he makes his way over to the far end of the grain pile where nobody else is, fixes the spot, lies down, and in a few minutes Boaz is sound asleep.

Unbeknownst to Boaz, all this time Ruth's eyes have been glued on him because it is dark. And she is making her way over here to where Boaz is. You remember how you rocked that six-week old baby to sleep, and how you walked slowly to the baby's bedroom and you gently placed the baby in the pack and play, and you backed away slowly, and closed the door. Then you remembered "I left my wallet or my purse in the baby's bed room", and you go back into the room, and open the door ever so gently because you don't want to wake the baby up, and your little boy come up and say "Hey, and you say, Shhhhh! boy, because you don't want to wake that baby up. This is the scenario in our story. In our imagination we can see Ruth tiptoeing, coming over here, where Boaz is. Her palms are sweaty, her heart is pounding, and she finally does it—she uncovers his feet, catches her breath, lies down, and I see her lying down in humility at the feet of Boaz, looking up at the velvet black Bethlehemite sky that God has sprinkled with billions upon billions of stars, as far as her eye could see.

The seconds pass, the minutes pass, the hours pass at buggy and donkey pace. And finally the proverbial clock strikes midnight! And then the cold midnight air begins to summon Boaz from the world of sleep, and the summons become stronger and stronger and stronger and stronger and

stronger and stronger as the cold midnight air penetrates his feet. And he wakes up and he is startled. His feet are cold! You married people know what that is like when your husband or your wife wraps themselves in the blanket like it is a cocoon and the cold air of the night wakes you up, and you politely say, "share the blanket please." Awakened by the cold midnight air, his feet uncovered and cold, Boaz sees the silhouette of a woman and we can almost hear the shocked inquiry in his voice as he breaks the silence of the night in verse 9, "Who are you?" What is she going to say? It midnight! How is she going to respond to this question? And she says, "I am Ruth your maid." You did not say I am the Moabite woman who came from Moab with Naomi. She is a maid, eligible for marriage. Okay, but she has more to say. "So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a kinsman-redeemer." Spread your wing over your handmaid is a biblical way of saying "marry me." Ruth recognizes that Boaz is not merely an eligible bachelor, but a kinsman Redeemer, a close relative, with family responsibilities and the obligations of redemption that flow out this relationship. You see, Naomi told Ruth what to do, she did not tell her what to say. Naomi merely wanted Ruth to get married, but Ruth appeals to Boaz as a kinsman Redeemer, thinking not only of herself, but also of mother-in-law, and raising up an heir to continue the name of her deceased husband. Ruth says to Boaz in essence "marry me, redeem me, and spread your covering of protection over me. Fulfill your caring obligations to me." Ruth proposes to Boaz! Now you put that in your domestic pipe! Smoke that! Now ladies after service today, do not take that brother that you have been looking at out to dinner and ask him to marry you. Let him pursue you, or at least let him think he is pursing you as he is being reeled in. There is an art to this! These were special circumstances, but you get the gist. She asked him to marry her.

What is Boaz going to say to this bold and risky marriage proposal at midnight? Brothers, what would you say? Is Boaz going to accept Ruth's proposal? He is going to say "Yes?" He says in verse 10, "May you be blessed by the LORD my daughter." Boaz is not put off at all by this bold and risky proposition. He sees the LORD in the middle of all of it. He calls downs the blessing of Yahweh on the girl. He tells her this kindness, this hesed, this faithful love is greater than that which you showed earlier. You could have gone after the younger men and married one the rich ones for status, or one of the poor ones for love, but principle and covenant loyalty to your family guides you. You are not merely looking for a husband; you are looking for a redeemer. You want me to redeem you, to provide an heir for your late husband and make sure that Naomi is provided for. He says to her "I am willing to marry you. I am willing to redeem you. I want to do it because everybody in the town knows that you're a woman of noble character, a woman of valor, a virtuous woman. I would be blessed to marry a woman of your character. I can imagine the looks in their eyes as they think of the wonderful prospect of marriage. I can almost hear Boaz thinking to himself:

At last my love has come along
My lonely days are over
And life is a song!

But just when we thought the matter was settled, notice what verse twelve says: Look at verse 12:

> Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem you good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it.

Boaz takes a short oath, "As the LORD lives." He connects his promise to redeem with the LORD's existence, calling down God's judgment on his own head, if he fails to keep his word.

Ruth will get married. Ruth will be redeemed, but she may not marry the man of her holy dreams, she may not be redeemed by the redeemer she loves. Boaz, being a man of integrity will act, but he will be above board and will handle the matter in a righteous way and will leave the outcome with God. We sense the unexpected tension of this moment.

Now at his point I am compelled to take a typological excursus, a little typological aside, and do the very thing that I tell my homiletics students not to do. But Boaz, whose name means "in Him is strength," is a type Christ, our kinsman redeemer. He who is related to us through the incarnation without sin, who is willing to redeem us, able to redeem us, and who possesses all of the infinite resources and power necessary to carry out redemption; who has redeemed us through his death on the cross and his literal bodily resurrection from among the dead. Years ago, when I was in my early twenties, in the small assembly where I fellowshipped we used to sing the following hymn:

My Redeemer, oh what beauties In that lovely name appear;
None but Jesus in His glories Shall the honored title wear.

Mine by covenant, mine forever, Mine by oath, and mine by blood
Mine – nor time the bond shall sever, Mine as an unchanging God.
My Redeemer, my redeemer, Oh, how sweet to call Him mine.

When in heaven I see Thy glory, When before thy throne I bow;
Perfected I shall be like Thee, fully they redemption know
My Redeemer, my redeemer, then shall hear me shout His praise.

Now I must get back to the story line.

It is the dead of night. There are likely to be some unsavory characters -drunkards and thieves and dangerous animals lurking around

this threshing floor. It is too late, too dark, and too dangerous for Ruth to return to the city. As a gesture of concern and care in the dead of the night, he says, "lie down until the morning." Ruth is passing the reminder of this night at the feet of Boaz.

Let's change scenes for a moment. I wonder what kind of night Naomi is having over here in the little city of Bethlehem? Is sleep fleeing from her? Is her gown wet with tears as she revisits the dry bones of her grief, as she remembers the unexpected death of her husband and her two sons? Are her aged, wrinkled, and tired feet pacing the floor, asking the LORD to breathe on the dry bones of her risk ridden plan?

I can almost see the old figure bent over, the old women caged in grief, sorrow, and lost flinging her prayer upward to God, saying to the LORD, "we really need this one. I know we made bad decisions. I know, but we really need this one. Please." Well, we don't know what she went through that night, but I suspect that it was something along these lines.

But the hours of this night pass and now the rays of the morning sun chase the darkness of this night away. It's morning. Indeed, it may be morning, the breaking of the day in more ways than one for Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi. Ruth returns home.

This morning Ruth is telling her mother in law everything that happened. Boaz wants to redeem me, he wants to marry me, and these six measures of barley are proof of his desire and good faith, but there is this issue of the kinsman redeemer who is a closer relative than Boaz, who legally has the right to redeem and marry me before Boaz does. Listen to what Naomi tells Ruth in verse 18: "Wait, my daughter, until you find out how the matter turn out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today." These are the last words of Naomi and Ruth in the book of Ruth and their words end on the note of both of these women waiting on God for the outcome!

Now we know how the story turns out. We know that Boaz redeems and marry Ruth. We know that redeemed Ruth becomes the great grandmother of David, the greatest and godliest King in Israel. We know that in the providential grace of God, Ruth the Moabite finds her way into the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that the godly decision that Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz made was a part of God's plan to preserve the messianic line. But what is the point of Ruth chapter three? What is the moral of this story? I am not talking about moralizing the text, taking incidentals in a story, and raising them to a timelessand binding principle on God's people. That is moralizing the text, but every story has a moral. What is the moral or the point of Ruth 3? What is the theology that is communicated to us through this true account? It seems to me that it is this:

> Seize the moment and leave the results with God. We are to seize the providential opportunities that God grants to us and leave the results with Him. Grab the providential opportunity that the Lord places

before you in the context of obeying him, and wait on Him for the outcome. Seize the providential moment in faith and leave the results with God in faith.

We are in the process of witnessing the moral and spiritual decline of American Culture. And for the first time in American history, that Bible believing church is becoming marginalized in culture and society. But this very decline, this very darkness, the marginalization provides us with the God given opportunity to be the church in a fresh and powerful way, to reach out with the love of Jesus to people who are alienated from God, coming from broken homes, broken hearts, broken marriages, people who broken mentally, financially, and sexually. We have the opportunity to let our light shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse culture. We need to seize this moment with all of our might. This is not a time to curse the darkness as it is the time to seize the moment.

Year ago, I was at a Bible conference. Most of men had on black suits, white shirts, carrying Bibles big as wheel barrels. The ladies did not have on makeup, even though some of those dear sisters could have used some. We were sitting down stairs in a large fellowship hall, eating lunch when a prostitute walked in. When I say she walked in, I mean she walked in. She walked up that long isle between the tables, and one of the elders of that church stood up and crisscrossed his arms several times and said to her, "You cannot come in here." They escorted her out of the building.

After lunch, we went back upstairs and listened to sound orthodox, biblically sound preaching for two hours. Even theological "I" was dotted, and every exegetically accurate "t" was crossed, but that afternoon not one tear was shed for that women! Not one prayer was publically offered for her! She did even make a bleep on the screen of our evangelical radar; she was at best a marginal nuisance on the fringe of our conference that year! Almost twenty-five years later, the Spirit of God brought that incident back to my mind, and I concluded that was one of the unholiest things I have seen happen among God's people. We could have stopped our lunch and asked a group of seasoned godly women to pray for this woman. Our hearts should have been broken about sin; we could have heard her story and at least understand how she got here. We could have thanked God that she had the courage to come into a place with all of these pious looking people. Here, here, here, of all places she should have shown Hesed, the faithful love of Jesus. We missed that opportunity.

Some of you are here today and in the context of walking with God, the Lord Jesus has placed providential opportunities in your path, but you are afraid to act. You won't move because fear has paralyzed you! You will not make the phone call. You will not send the e-mail, you will not go and talk to the person you need to talk to because instead of facing your fear, it has paralyzed you.

For some of you seizing the providential moment will involve

a calculated risk. A survey was done of people in their nineties, and the question was asked "if you could live life all over again, *what would you do differently?* With death on the horizon, and with the clarity of hindsight and experience, three things keep coming up: I would pray more, I would leave a legacy, and I would take more risks. Twenty years after J.C. Penny experienced great success in business, he visited the store where worked twenty years prior. Twenty years later the manager who trained him was still there. Penny said to the man, "I thought you wanted your own store." The man said, "I did, but here I have a regular salary, I have security. The attempt to start my own store was a risk that I was not willing to take. Penny took the risk and the rest is history.

Many years ago, I was at a Bible conference. While I was there, I met a young lady. She loved the Lord. She was intelligent and beautiful in appearance and I loved her voice, her vocal dynamics. But I wasn't taking any steps to move our acquaintance beyond the conference. At the end of the conference, as everybody was leaving, Stephne walked up to me and says, "Winfred, I am getting ready to go." And she looked at me. You know what she is saying, "Son, if you are going to make a move, now is the time." I asked her for her phone number, and 37 years of marriage latter, and four children later, eight grandchildren later, the rest is history. Evangelical Homiletics Society, seize the moment and leave the results with God.

BOOK REVIEWS

Bringing the Word to Life: Engaging the New Testament through Performing It. Richard F. Ward and David J. Trobisch. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 978-0802868855. 110 pp., $18.00.

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

This concise book describes some of the theory of performance criticism and applies that theory to the nt, offering concrete suggestions on how to rehearse and perform nt texts. The authors claim that through performance, "interpreters explore possible authorial intentions, the basic structure of the argument, reactions from the audience, and subtexts of underlying humor and irony, some or all of which might have escaped their attention had they only studied the text sitting at a desk and read it quietly to themselves" (58). They are right. Experiencing the text aurally and visually does all of this and more. As a method of biblical criticism, performance theory is becoming established (as documented in an excellent, brief bibliography), and this short, readable book contributes to that body of literature.

The authors trace the history of performance theory in Quintilian (even though Quintilian wrote about oratory, not oral interpretation), the practice of drama in Rome, the rhapsodes' Isthmian games in Corinth, and the ubiquitous practice of public reading of literature in the ancient world. That world was an oral world, and it was the world of the New Testament, where authors wrote for the ear, not the eye, and for churches, not individuals. But having established the case for the ancient world, the argument may go too far in implying that the reading of Scripture in house churches used some of the techniques recommended in the second half of the book such as paraphrasing the text, telling the story from multiple points of view, arranging it for diverse voices, and staging it with simple props. At points, the homiletician (Richard Ward) and nt scholar (David Trobisch) qualify their argument, stating that we have only "hints" of what performance sounded like in the Roman Empire (6), and that most of the readers in house churches would have been "amateurs" (97); but it is certainly true that these readers would have had competency in reading the Greek text, crowded into unbroken lines on papyrus, and they would have done their best to embody the text.

After describing performance of literature in the nt era, the second half of the book presents concrete suggestions on how to create, memorize, rehearse, and perform scripts of nt literature, and then debrief after the

performance. This portion of the book summarizes procedures from the seminars the authors have conducted across the country—seminars that have opened vistas of meaning that were formerly occluded by silent, private exegesis: "a performed interpretation gives voice to what otherwise might not be heard . . . . Performances done well can render 'presence,' a lived experience that is laden with levels of meaning" (96). Apparently, the participants benefitted so much from the seminars that they asked for more help in using performance theory for interpretation; this book addresses their requests.

I recommend this book as a quick introduction to performance theory and how it can be applied in the church for nt interpretation.

Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic, 1932-1933: A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich. By Angela Dienhart Hancock. William B. Eerdmans, 2013. 978-0802867346. 356 pp., $42.00.

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

Angela Dienhart Hancock refutes the accusation that "if Karl Barth had been in South Africa and not Prussia, he would have told a figure like Desmond Tutu to keep quiet about apartheid" (xv). She demonstrates that Barth was not "so fixated on the Bible that he disregards the situation of the hearer" or that "his theology leads to a pulpit that is 'politely silent,' even cowardly, with regard to public and political issues" (324). Her well documented argument presents a Barth fully aware of, and strategically engaged in, the cultural convulsions that accompanied the decline of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazis.

The raw material for this book are notes from contemporaries who attended his "Exercises in Sermon Preparation" at the University of Bonn from November through July, 1932–1933. Though Barth was not a professor of preaching, but of theology, the fact that he volunteered to teach about "the sermon, the intersection of [theology and] church praxis" (39), was an act of resistance to the corrupting influences his students faced. His "Exercises" mirrored the themes of a sermon he delivered at the University in Bonn, of which Hancock concludes, "This was a sermon of resistance … a resistance, not in spite of, but because of, its disciplined attention to the way of witness of the biblical text" (310).

Barth taught his students to attend both to the Bible and to the times. "The spontaneous or subjective task [of preaching] involves the explorations of two issues," he explained. "One is the discernment of the 'particular way of witness' of a text; the other is the 'present situation' of 'this peculiar way of witness'" for "the Bible is both a historical monument and a living document" (281).

Even as Barth expounded his dialectical theology and affirmed the Godness of God, he laid the foundations for his critique of the growing intolerance that energized the German people. Both church and university were deeply affected by the deterioration of the democratic republic and the ascendance of a ruthless dictatorship. While pastors and professors responded in fear to the rising fascist regime, Barth allowed his theological commitments to distance himself from German nationalism, church triumphalism, and academic elitism. As Barth observed his students' reactions to those seductive calls, his "emergency homiletic was born of the conviction that how these novice preachers went about their task as Weimar crumbled mattered" (91).

Even before Hitler's rise to power newspapers, politicians, pastors, and professors spouted their radical agendas. As early as WWI, the consistent message heard within the Protestant churches of Germany—a message of political propaganda in praise of God's love of the Fatherland—suppressed the Christian gospel. Sermons of the day were not thoughtful, but baptized with emotionalism, nationalism, and symbolism. "If anything, it was the wider rhetorical climate itself—born of suspicion, desperation, fear, prejudice, and partisanship, and haunted by the specter of actual or threatened physical violence—that made rational debate about political choices so difficult at the time" (112). In contrast, "Barth's theologically grounded approach to the problem of communication in revolutionary times" was the basis of "how he encouraged and prepared his students to communicate as they took up their places as leaders" (120). Though fully aware of the realities of life, Barth countered that, "When they come to us [preachers] for help they do not really want to learn more about living: they want to learn more about what is on the farther edge of living—God" (181).

As Barth explained why he, a theologian, lectured on preaching, he was undermining extremist positions of both left and right. He called his students to humility, openness, and thoughtfulness. Even as the political, ecclesiastical, and academic climates stirred up the German people, Barth kept his classroom calm and contemplative. His homiletical insights are all the more powerful when seen in the context in which they were delivered.

Despite being based on a doctoral dissertation, this volume is not a difficult read. Through a helpful mixture of history, theology, homiletics, and personal struggle, Hancock deftly defends Barth's subversive and quiet resistance to the Nazi influence based on a theology of the Word. The book is well worth reading.

Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why It Matters Today. By Joseph H. Hellerman. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013. 978-0825442643. 313 pp., $14.70.

Reviewer: Bernie A. Cueto, Palm Beach Atlantic University, West Palm Beach, FL

Joseph Hellerman is professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Talbot Theological Seminary. This, his most recent work, is a user friendly (and cost-effective) version of his doctoral dissertation Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Hellerman's work is a welcome addition to an insufficient section of studies on Pauline ecclesiology. Surprisingly, there are few works devoted to applying Greco-Roman backgrounds to nt studies in a way that will pragmatically impact ecclesiological practices.

The book is comprised of three sections: Power and Authority in the Roman World (chapters 1–3), Power and Authority in the Early Church (chapters 4–6), and Power and Authority in the Church Today (chapters 7–9).

The first section provides an understanding of the first century social mechanism of class distinctions and hierarchy in the Greco-Roman world. A good portion of this section puts primary emphasis on how these distinctions would have impacted the life of early Christians. At the very core of Greco-Roman life was the race for honor, a critical component of the social context of Christianity. Honor was used to exalt oneself or humiliate another, especially if it brought notoriety to one's status (30). "The Romans delighted in advertising their status and achievements, and they were remarkably resourceful in devising ways to indicate where various individuals fit into the pecking order" (34). In a society where honor was such a prized commodity, any notion of humility, as seen in the teachings of Jesus and Paul, would have been outrageously absurd.

After having set the stage by providing the reader with a picture of the social power play in the Greco-Roman world, the second section presents Paul's insights on "power and authority." Hellerman avoids the typical interpretation of Philippians that focuses solely on Christology and begins to build a case for the ecclesiological tenor of the epistle, "that arises directly from the social context of the recipients in the town of Philippi and their preoccupation with honorary titles" (127). In this section he demonstrates how Paul is attempting to create a community that is working against the race for honor in man's eyes. The loving community of the church was to discourage competition for status and privilege, and authority was to be used in the service of Christian family (106). Using the description of Christ's humility found Phil 2:6-11, Hellerman astutely expounds upon Paul's vision for the church and its leadership. In addition, Paul's employment of familial language muffles the sting of the thirst for honor in the community. Honor and class distinctions did not play a large role, if any, in family life during this period.

The third section, Power and Authority in the Church Today, demonstrates Hellerman's ability to bridge the gap between the academy

and the local church. Having exegetically developed his case for Paul's vision for the Christian community and its leadership, he lays down a lucid indictment of the distortion and misuse of pastoral authority that does not align itself with the example of Jesus in Philippians. This section includes ministry case-studies that show an incorrect view of leadership (top down approach), resulting in manipulation and mistreatment of people. Hellerman presents a persuasive and practical argument for a plurality of leadership.

Students and ministers alike would do well to heed Hellerman's call to a "cruciform" vision of leadership (self-denial, and sacrificing, living and dying in the service of others). One cannot give this work a fair reading and not sense a recalibration of one's view of leadership. Hellerman's christological challenge to the Roman honor system is a fine demonstration of how the study of Greco-Roman backgrounds can inform readings of the nt to provide fresh insights. Besides, he makes a great defense of his vision of "shared leadership" in the church today.

Hellerman's expert and comprehensive coverage of these issues deserve wide readership in the classroom and the church. On the subject of power and leadership, Hellerman has skillfully led the way by shedding new light on familiar passages.

One Year to Better Preaching: 52 Exercises to Hone Your Skills. By Daniel Overdorf. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013. 978-0825439100. 320 pp., $17.99.

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

Every now and again we need a jumpstart, a course adjustment, or a few simple reminders. Those who preach with regularity will recognize seasons in their ministry in which they sense stagnancy or even that they have plateaued in their honing of their craft. Daniel Overdorf provides just that—a jumpstart, a course adjustment, and a few simple reminders for such occasions.

One Year to Better Preaching is a book by a preacher for preachers who have moved beyond basic homiletics training and have been in pulpit ministry. The book is divided into fifty-two short chapters that explain a skill and give a specific exercise for implementation. Overdorf clearly approaches preaching from an evangelical perspective and has strong leanings toward expository preaching as the preferred style. The skills addressed cover an impressive breadth of needs that arise for the preacher: some delve into the personal and spiritual development of the preacher, while others explore congregational involvement and intentionality in engaging specific demographics. A number of them encourage clarity in the use of language, the use of rhetorical devices, and utilizing all of the listeners' senses.

A significant strength of this book is Overdorf's ability to address

each skill in a succinct fashion without being overly simplistic. The reader is never left wondering what the author means and the skills represented in any given chapter are clearly directed toward immediate use in pulpit ministry. This level of specificity combined with the breadth of topics addressed leads one to believe his claim: if you implement these skills, in one year you will be a better preacher than you are today.

It is unlikely that every preacher will agree with every skill that the author presents. For example, one that is explored is to "Encourage Texting During Your Sermon." The author lists some potential pragmatic benefits of this practice in congregational life; however, the theological implications of this practice are not explored. Some preachers will desire more encouragement in skills in exegesis as it relates to sermon preparation, with the conviction that robust biblical exposition will produce better preaching. The book addresses at least four such skills, but the development of deeper content in the sermon clearly falls outside the scope of the book's purpose. Instead, the author largely addresses skills that relate to sermon construction and delivery.

One Year to Better Preaching is both encouraging and challenging. For some it will fill in gaps in their training; for others it will stimulate growth and enhance skill; and for others it will serve to give those simple reminders that all preachers need. This book can be used as a one-year guide or as a general reference and it will be helpful for many preachers in a variety of contexts.

Minding the Heart: The Way of Spiritual Transformation. By Robert L. Saucy. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012. 978-0825436659. 342 pp., $ 21.99.

Reviewer: Daniel D. Green, Moody Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL

Robert Saucy is distinguished professor of systematic theology at Talbot Theological Seminary where he has taught for fifty-two years. Among his impressive array of publications are The Church in God's Program (1972) and The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism (1993).

This current work represents an extensive biblical theology of the heart, the fruit of a lifetime of disciplined, methodical, and exegetical study. In his own words he grapples with the following questions: "How exactly does God communicate his life-transforming power? What does God do in this process? What do I have to do? In other words, how does growth take place?" (13).

Chapters are focused on the general areas of deviance of the heart, changing the heart, agents of heart change, and solutions, such as meditation on Scripture, personal action, community involvement, and relationship with God. Each ends with helpful questions that are summative and

reflective.

In the chapter titled "Living with Heart" the author essentially equates the terms heart and mind. The heart, he says, "is most frequently related to intellectual activities" (72). God has given the heart to know (Deut 29:4, Prov 23:12, Jer 24:7). Insanity and poor judgment are shown to be malfunctions of the heart (Eccles 9:3, Prov 6:32), and its thoughts and intentions are probed by God (Heb 4:12). The mind is also the seat of emotion, however, and what is important to us touches us at this level (85). It is multi-layered and cannot be fully understood. The crux of Saucy's thesis is his statement that "as long as we think that we believe something, but the real thought in the depth of our heart is something different, we will never experience spiritual transformation" (86). He finds the answer in guarding the heart, avoiding externalism, and living openly before God.

This work does not contribute anything new to the field of spiritual formation. Saucy retills ground already worked by Bruce Demarest, Neil Anderson, and Dallas Willard. The sources are generally dated, with relatively few coming from the twenty-first century. Nor is there represented here a breadth of theological traditions. The Reformed approach is well-attested, but one finds little from Anglican, Lutheran, or Wesleyan thought.

These issues notwithstanding, the work is valuable for its painstaking approach to the biblical text and conservative evangelical theology. It is methodical and exhaustive as it plumbs the various subjects related to the inner person. Useful word- and theme-studies abound. The amount of Scripture referenced, always in context, is impressive. Saucy's thoroughness reflects decades of study.

This work will be helpful for pastors who wish to engage in theologically deep preaching, Bible-based counseling and general pastoral care. The depth of the chapters and excellence of make it a worthy addition to the shepherd's library.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Numbers–Ruth. Edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 978-0310234944. 1360 pp., $49.99.

Reviewer: Gregory K. Hollifield, Memphis, TN

"By expositors for expositors," claimed Frank Gaebelein in his preface to the original Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC). Before setting out to review the second volume in the revised edition of this highly respected and widely used set of commentaries, I first wanted to know how it compared to a couple of other sets—The NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC) and Exegetical Commentary (EC) series—all published by Zondervan and marketed to preachers.

A manager from the company's academic and reference division answered my query. He described the EBC as the least technical of the three, succinct in exposition, and most geared to the needs of the preacher. The NIVAC is less succinct than the EBC, and less technical than the EC in its handling of the original languages, placing it in the middle on a scale measuring accessibility and ease of use. Its greatest strength, as the set's title boasts, is its focus on contemporary application. Of the three series, the EC is intended to be the most technical in its treatment of the original languages and most thorough in its exegesis.

I had been largely unimpressed with the volumes I consulted in the original EBC set. I felt they lacked the depth of analysis and practical insights I desired. But with the second edition, I have developed a fresh appreciation for the EBC. It is a valuable tool for summarizing the content and flow of a text as either an introductory step on the road to a more detailed exegetical study later, or as a trustworthy synopsis of a text that the preacher wants to touch on in his sermon without moving to a full-blown exposition.

Some of the revised EBC commentaries are new. Others are revisions and updates of commentaries from the original set. In this volume, Numbers–Ruth, four of the five commentaries are new; only the first, on Numbers, is a revision.

The back cover of the commentary touts nine features its publisher believes to distinguish the entire set and make it worthy of purchase. I will now comment briefly on a few of these features as they pertain to the volume under scrutiny.

Comprehensive introductions. Some are more comprehensive than others. The introduction to Numbers covers over fifty pages; the introduction to Judges, only twenty-two.

Detailed outlines. These are not preaching outlines, but good exegetical outlines.

Overviews of sections of Scripture to illuminate the big picture. This is something that I, a "Big Idea" preacher, found most helpful. Allen's wording for the theme of Numbers–"God has time; the wilderness has sand" (26)—is as chilling as it is memorable. I will never preach from Numbers again without remembering that God has plenty of time to wait for a people to arise who will trust Him, and the wilderness has plenty of sand to bury those who won't.

Notes on textual questions and special problems, placed close to the texts in question. As just one example, a brief note on Numbers 13:33 claims the ten spies' characterization of the Anakites as descendants of the Nephilim to be hyperbole, intended to dissuade their countrymen from attempting a hostile takeover of the land. Whether the reader agrees with this conclusion or not, it is a legitimate response to those critics who question the text's trustworthiness on the grounds that the Flood would have wiped out the Nephilim, ending their lineage back then. Helpful insights like this appear throughout the volume.

Transliterations and translations of Hebrew and Greek words, enabling readers to understand even the more technical notes. Like most preachers who took Hebrew in seminary but haven't kept up with it since, I find little help in those commentaries that give the original words but don't transliterate or translate them. True to its promise, this volume does both. As an added bonus, the Hebrew letters are printed crisply and are easy to read.

A balanced and respectful approach toward marked differences of opinion. Opinions of scholars who hold to the documentary hypothesis on the authorship of the Pentateuch are cited occasionally but are not endorsed. As a conservative evangelical, I found the inclusion of these opinions helpful, but especially appreciated how the commentaries' authors countered them. All in all, I found this revised volume to live up to its promises and to be a valuable tool.

The Gospel's Power and Message. Paul Washer. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. 978-11601781956. xi + 274pp., $20.

Reviewer: Raymond Johnson, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Washer's work, The Gospel's Power and Message, is the first of a three-part series that focuses on recovering the gospel message among modern homileticians. The series title, "Recovering the Gospel," hints at his concern, which he makes abundantly clear in the preface: "one of the greatest crimes committed by this present Christian generation is its neglect of the gospel" (viii). Neglect of the gospel message and its central themes—"the justice of God, the radical depravity of man, the blood atonement, the nature of true conversion and the biblical assurance of faith" (ix)—among Christian heralds forms the cesspool from which the spiritual maladies of our age spring forth. In order to accentuate the need for "Recovering the Gospel" in pulpits, Washer subdivides his work into three sections: 1) An Apostolic Introduction, 2) The Power of God for Salvation, and 3) The Acropolis of the Christian Faith. This review will highlight salient points from each of the various sections the reviewer found to be particularly insightful throughout Washer's work.

In section 1, Washer is concerned with emphasizing that the centrality of the gospel message to Christianity (3) and the inexhaustible nature of comprehending the gospel (5). The Christian gospel compels faithful heralding, impassions expositors (6), and demands a response from all the auditors to whom it is preached (9). Further, he defines the gospel as christocentric. By this Washer means that Jesus "becomes the center of our universe, the source, the purpose, the goal, and the motivation for all that we are and do" (11). The centrality of the gospel, then, means that through

it we have a new identity in Christ since it is the Christian gospel that bears the weight of our souls (15). For these reasons, the author states, "we cannot become too extreme with the gospel … it is the one message we must hold to tenaciously" (17). Thus, the centrality of the gospel message requires worship from Christians even in the most dire circumstances (19).

In section 2, Washer highlights the unusual power the Christian herald wields when proclaiming the gospel. He defines the gospel as "salvation from the condemnation of sin, from the power of sin, and, ultimately, from the presence of sin" (61). No one can improve upon this gospel (47); this gospel, which is offered to all, is radically exclusive—it is only for those who profess faith in Christ (51, 65–71). Further, he accentuates the significance of exclusivity for Christian preaching—the preacher must not seek to make the incredibility of God's redemptive work in Christ palatable to the modern hearer (53). To do so would strip the gospel of its power and would fail to communicate to sinful man his "absolute inability to save himself" (55).

In section 3, Washer hones in on what he labels the acropolis of the Christian faith—Rom 3:23–27. He exegetes Paul's teaching in Rom 3, noting that making much of the heinous nature of sin in preaching exalts the precious nature of the gospel of God's grace in Christ (80) and simultaneously enables the preacher to make much of God (83). Further, Washer seeks to instruct preachers on how to tackle the dilemma of Rom 3:25—that is, how God passed over former sins in his forbearance before the incarnation and substitutionary death of Jesus (159). He contends that God decisively dealt with the judgment that the sins of mankind merited by pouring it out on the crucified Jesus who had lived "in perfect obedience to the law of God" (165). A gospel independent of this message is no gospel at all.

Washer's work models faithful homiletics. Throughout his work he is lucid and provocative. Preachers longing for a book that inspires ministerial faithfulness will not be disappointed. Further, his emphasis on "Recovering the Gospel" emphasizes that preaching pivots on the atoning work of Christ—perfect life, substitutionary death for sinners, vindicating resurrection over death, priestly ascension to the Father's right hand (231–74). I have only one criticism of Washer's work. When challenging preachers to "preach the full counsel of God's revelation" (86), he gives no guidance on how homileticians can do this in texts that do not explicitly focus on the gospel. Other than that, preachers will be challenged to herald the gospel more faithfully by interacting with this work.

The Eloquence of Grace: Joseph Sittler and the Preaching Life. Edited by James M. Childs, Jr. and Richard Lischer. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012. 978-1610976473. 340 pp., $40.00.

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

Joseph A. Sittler (1904–1987) was a leading Lutheran theologian, preacher, and ecologist who served for many years on the faculties of Chicago Lutheran Seminary, the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, and finished his career at the Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago. Sittler was an eminent theologian and a recognized homiletical heavyweight in his day. This edited volume is a compilation of his essays on the intersection of theology and preaching as well as his sermon manuscripts, many of which have not been published.

In Part 1, The Preacher as Theologian, James M. Childs, Jr., the former Joseph A. Sittler Professor of Theology and Ethics at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and Richard Lischer, the James T. and Alice Mead Cleland Professor of Preaching at Duke Divinity School, begin by highlighting Sittler's view of theology as being inseparable from the task of preaching. Of particular significance was his embodiment of the preacher-theologian model. For Sittler, theology permeated all of life especially the pulpit. Childs and Lischer observe, concerning Sittler's preaching philosophy, that "[t]he scope of theology is nothing less than everything" (2). This being the case, Sittler's hermeneutic, described as "from text to trajectory," gave preachers the permission to be "freed from artificial dogmas of scriptural authority and artificial dogmas of method to let the trajectory of the text, powered by the Word, take you wherever you need to go" (7). In this first segment, Sittler's five essays display his commitment to Christology, the doctrine of grace, and environmental ethics, all of which reveal the theological underbelly of his public ministry and the eloquence with which he articulated his theological persuasions.

In Part 2, Preaching the Word, we learn about Sittler's view of the word of God and how preaching and biblical imagination are woven together. The following observation by Childs and Lischer conveys the crux of Sittler's perspective on these topics: "In our era preachers cannot count on the Bible being received as the unquestioned inspired and inerrant authority. Rather, the preacher needs to let the innate power of the biblical language and message, with its capacity to intersect with the deepest of human needs, establish the Bible's authority in the minds and hearts of the hearers" (115). That is, Scripture possessed an "intrinsic" authority that became fully realized when humans attached their experiential meaning to the text (116–17).

Finally, Part 3 provides a generous sampling of Sittler's sermons. Spanning topics such as suffering, caring for the earth, Jesus' parables, Holy Week, Easter, and the Person of Christ, these sermons give us a glimpse into his theological and homiletical framework. Here, one will quickly notice Sittler's facility in drawing preaching insights from a wide variety of sources: Scripture, Martin Luther, novels by Dostoevsky and D. H. Lawrence, poems by e.e. cummings and Keats, personal experiences, fellow preachers, magazines, historical and current events, films, and more.

The Eloquence of Grace is an apt title for Joseph Sittler's life and

ministry. His essays and sermons exude both of these qualities. Overall, the book is a helpful resource that sheds light on a prominent theologian and preacher of the twentieth century. Non-Lutherans will gain a better understanding of the Lutheran tradition. At the same time, evangelical readers will detect in Sittler's essays and sermons how his theological presuppositions and overt desire to connect with human experiences heavily inform his use of Scripture, interpretation of biblical texts, and homiletical style. As such, the book would be of interest to some mainline preachers and homileticians, church historians, and Luther scholars, but outside of those demographics, my assumption is that this volume would lack broad appeal.

Communicating The Faith Indirectly: Selected Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers. Paul L. Holmer Papers 3. Edited by David J. Gouwens and Lee C. Barrett III. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012. 978-1608992744. 178 pp., $32.00.

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

This is the third volume of the Paul L. Holmer papers, selections from the collection donated by the Holmer family to Yale University Library after Holmer's death in 2004. Holmer served as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Minnesota (1946–1960) and then as the Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology at Yale Divinity School (1960–1987). The editors distilled his papers into three volumes (volume 1 is On Kierkegaard and the Truth, and volume 2 is Thinking The Faith With Passion: Selected Essays) to "illuminate the important aspects of Holmer's contributions to theology" (xiii).

This volume was structured in two parts. Part 1 contained four papers presented by Holmer that represented his "reflections on the sermon, the functions of liturgy, and the tasks and challenges of Christian ministry" (xiii). The reflections are dense philosophical discourses replete with references to Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Aristotle, and other giants. There is a liberal sprinkling of Latin and Greek terms, as well as the occasional reference to Luther and Augustine. Being unaccustomed to this sort of discourse, most of what he said was obscure to me. In his reflections he seemed to be gently objecting to some great issues but, for me, reading these essays was like watching elephants pass by in the mist—all I could see were great gray shapes moving toward some unknown destination. Sadly, I was not illuminated.

Part 2 was ten sermons/addresses that Holmer gave on various occasions. These were clearly sermons that were meant to be read. Occasionally there was an oblique reference to Scripture, but there was no detailed exegesis, no careful work with structure, no friendly nod to genre, no exposition, and no evidence of any effort toward oral clarity. They are

not the kind of sermons that readers of this Journal would find appealing or worth emulating. Indeed, it was difficult for me to imagine these sermons being read in the context described. The sermon, "Remarks on the Occasion of a Baptism," ran to more than nine pages, and since this was delivered at an infant-baptism, it was hard to see a couple standing there holding an infant for the entire duration. The sermon, "Remarks on the Occasion of a Marriage" was not quite as long, but seemed to circle around Matthew 19 and remarks about divorce. I am curious to know how the bride and groom and their family and friends received these "remarks." Because these sermons were so alien to my experience, they were not particularly helpful.

Part 2 ended with three selected prayers, which were quite good. Clearly they were intended to be read, too, but the language was eloquent, the mood was solemn, and the reverence obvious. I was reminded of a story I heard about some African elders who met a young man from their village upon his return from theological training overseas. They did not ask him about his grades. They did not pose doctrinal questions. They asked the young man to pray. The elders knew that in prayer, the truth of his relationship with God would be revealed. I was not illuminated by Holmer's essays, I was not edified by his sermons, but I was blessed by his prayers.

Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works. Cultural Liturgies 2. By James K. A. Smith. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 978-0801035784. 224 pp., $22.99.

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

This is the second in a trilogy by James Smith, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, a prolific writer on matters hermeneutical, a polymath who can adeptly discuss literature, art, and film, alongside theology. His trilogy (at least the two-thirds in print) is turning out to be a magnum opus. This volume, like its predecessor, is a challenging work, but there is no question that Smith will cause readers to think, and stimulate them to grow, as a result of interacting with his ideas.

The author is attempting something vast, to see humans in a new light: "an alternative anthropology that emphasizes the primacy of love and the priority of the imagination in shaping our identity and governing our orientation to the world," as opposed to "an intellectualist model of education," that sees Christianity as "primarily a set of doctrines, beliefs, and ideas," and which ends up reducing Christian education to the acquisition of knowledge. This traditional view assumes that the way to life change is critical reflection: think correctly and all else follows (7, 10, 12). If I may put words in his mouth, Smith is, on the other hand, arguing: "love correctly and all else follows." How do we shape those loves, those desires, those longings, and how differently will this be from what culture does as it seeks

to capture hearts rather than minds? Needless to say, the implications of such an investigation are manifold, affecting a number of pastoral activities, not the least of which is preaching.

Smith observes that "[m]uch of our action is not 'pushed' by ideas or conclusions; rather, it grows out of our character and is in a sense 'pulled' out of us by our attraction to a telos." It is, therefore, "not enough to equip our intellects to merely think rightly about the world. We also need to recruit our imaginations" (6). Indeed! Preaching, after all, is the casting of a biblical vision of the ideal world of God (the telos). Thus, "Christian formation is a conversion of the imagination effected by the Spirit, who recruits our most fundamental desires by a kind of narrative enchantment—by inviting us narrative animals into a story that seeps into our bones and becomes the orienting background of our being-in-the-world" (14–15). For Smith, this means the worship of the church, that enchants the worshiper. While worship is certainly an integral part of this "enchantment," I would think a more fundamental and authoritative way of casting this ideal-world vision would be by preaching. Scripture offers us a blueprint of this world, and the community of God adopts the precepts, priorities, and practices of this world, which would, of course, include worship. Preaching is thus a kindling of our imaginations and a stimulating of our longings for that ideal world.

Drawing from the literature of character formation, Smith proposes the concept of habitus: "those 'dispositions' we have to constitute the world in certain ways—the habitual way that we construct our world" (81). Such a construction of a world is really what Scripture is all about, pericope by pericope projecting segments of God's ideal world. It is in this world that God bids his people live. And to do that one has to abide by the precepts, priorities, and practices of that world as prescribed by the text. Insofar as the community buys in to that divine view of the world and seeks to inhabit that ideal world, God's kingdom is becoming a reality. Habitus makes us inhabitants of God's world, the world projected by Scripture.

So, extending Smith's titles—Desiring the Kingdom (volume 1 of his trilogy) and Imagining the Kingdom (volume 2)—I'd say preaching is Conceiving the Kingdom, for it is the text of Scripture alone that gives the script for the new world of God—its precepts, priorities, and practices: it is in the exposition of Scripture by preachers that this kingdom is conceived. And, in the subsequent application of the script by the people of God, this world is realized—Realizing the Kingdom.

I wish more of Smith's discussions linked to this scriptural world, the only authoritative depiction of God's world. And I'd also have liked to have seen more attention to the work of the Holy Spirit, who imprints this world in our souls, that we might desire, imagine, conceive, and realize the Kingdom of God—"Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done!"

Christ-Centered Sermons. By Bryan Chapell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 978-0801048692. 241 pp., $21.99.

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

Teachers and students who appreciated Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching* will welcome this companion volume. In thirteen annotated sermons, Chapell models the redemptive-historical approach of his widely-used textbook. Scores of footnotes explain the homiletical choices made while preparing and preaching these sermons, many of them referring readers to pages in the earlier work where the theory behind such choices is discussed. The care and thoroughness with which this cross-referencing has been done makes the book an eminently practical tool for the classroom or independent reading by those who would better understand Christ-centered preaching.

A twenty-page Introduction discusses what it means—and doesn't mean—to preach Christ-centered sermons. Since Christ is not present in the same way in every text, he will not be preached in the same way in every sermon. But Christ is present in every Scripture and should be central in every sermon. All Christ-centered sermons will share some non-negotiable features: a fallen condition focus, grace, and redemption as the theological theme of Christian preaching; these key concepts and commitments of Chapell's homiletic are meant to keep preachers from mere moralizing and delivering sermons devoid of gospel power.

The first four sermons, Part One of the book, illustrate elements of sermon structure: "billboarding," "wraparound illustrations," "fundamental reduction," "raining" key terms into illustrations, and other homiletical strategies that Chapell introduced in *Christ-Centered Preaching*.

The five sermons in Part Two illustrate how biblical theology influences homiletical moves. Some texts explicitly predict, others prepare for, reflect, or result from the Person and work of Christ. Yet other texts function as redemptive dead-ends or bridges to Christ. These different kinds of texts will be handled differently by the Christ-centered preacher, and Chapell demonstrates how this is accomplished.

The final four sermons in Part Three illustrate the interplay of the Bible's indicatives and imperatives. Chapell shows how sermons can motivate obedience by fostering love for God and joy in Christ.

The author's advocacy of Christ-centered preaching in this book is more nuanced than is the pleading of others in the redemptive-historical camp. He does not think preachers should artificially make specific mention of Jesus (xiii, 90), or utter a positive statement of grace out of every text (xv). Chapell is open to "micro-interpretations"—paying attention to the

theological claims of the text at hand, instead of aiming to preach the broad sweep of redemptive history in every sermon.

Still, homileticians who have reservations about redemptive-historical preaching will wonder why we must "identify an aspect of our fallen condition that is addressed by the Holy Spirit in each passage"(xvi)? There does not appear to be a fallen condition focus in texts like Psalm 150. We may wonder why redemption is the privileged theological theme governing every sermon; what of creation and wisdom themes in Scripture? We may wonder why the Father or the Spirit can't be on center stage—why must it be the Son in every sermon? We may wonder if a perceived need to name and talk about grace in every sermon sometimes mutes the text at hand.

Chapell's sixth sermon, on Isaiah 44:9–23, provides an example. His introduction, proposition (94n3), outline, supporting material and conclusion, all emphasize free grace, forgiveness promised prior to repentance, and gospel joy. The emphasis of the passage, however, is withering scorn (not "gentle mockery," 95) directed at idolaters. A sermon on this passage that unsparingly exposed the folly of contemporary idolatries would be an act of grace even if it didn't feel gracious or use the word grace or end as Chapell does by celebrating Christ's grace. And it would be truer to the tone of the passage. There are other texts (including many in Isaiah) that are more warm and winsome. But sometimes God's word stings; faithful, grace-filled exposition will not seek to soften the blow.

Chapell is a seasoned and respected preacher. He has thought deeply about the craft of preaching, and writes about it clearly. In this volume he has given all preachers plenty to think about—especially, but not exclusively, those who share his commitment to Christ-centered preaching.

The Imposing Preacher: Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Black Public Faith. By Adam Bond. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. 978-0800699727. 245 pp., $23.60.

Reviewer: Winfred Omar Neely, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL

Adam L. Bond is assistant professor of historical studies at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University. In this book he provides readers with "the first major attempt to investigate Proctor's life and thought" (2).

Bond's account of Proctor is inspiring, and well written. He explains how Proctor was the product of the African American Evangelical Baptist tradition (36–43), and the liberal Protestant theological tradition of the twentieth century (48–54). Bond discusses Proctor's work as a public theologian who gave a nuanced contribution to black public faith (27–32), his place in the educated African-American preaching tradition (161–64), and the value Proctor placed on the preacher/pastor as an agent to transform

society (173–76).

Proctor was the product of several generations of pious and educated evangelical black Baptist Christians. Proctor's grandmother, Hattie Ann Proctor, born in 1855, was a slave but was educated at the Hampton Institute. She was a godly, poised, and cultured woman who taught Proctor a theology that would inform his thinking about race, racism, the nature of personhood, black theology, and racial integration: "God created all people; any inequalities among us were due to unequal opportunity …. No use fretting and crying. If you do your part, God will do the rest" (39). Years later, Proctor fought against the notions of black inferiority, as he embraced his grandmother's anthropology. As an educator, administration, pastor, and pastor of pastors, Proctor asserted, "At the root of racism was a devaluation of black personhood" (116). He declared that "a spurious anthropology plagued America" (115). A major plank in Proctor's thinking was his biblical and revolutionary view of people. He first learned this lesson at home and it stayed with him for the rest of his life!

Proctor's parents were devout Christians. His father, Herbert Proctor, took all six of his children to Sunday School at the Bank Street Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia, a church planted by Samuel Proctor's great grandfather, Zechariah Hughes. The Proctor home embraced the values of Christian piety, thrift, education, and political participation as means of racial uplift.

But the desert of the segregated and Jim Crow south surrounded the evangelical oasis of Proctor's family life. "Racism was a part of life in Norfolk Virginia, and it was something Proctor faced in his childhood and adolescence…. Segregated schools, churches, and neighborhoods were among the cultured practices that defined life in Norfolk" (36). In this context, Proctor finished high school at sixteen, received a scholarship to pay for college, and eventually earned a doctorate in theology from Boston University in 1950. He rose to become an educator, a president of two historic black colleges, an administrator, presidential envoy in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, a college professor, and the pastor of one of the most prestigious churches in the United States, the Abyssinian Baptist Church of New York City.

Bond's account of Proctor has some keen insights, but his account is biased toward liberal Protestant Christianity. This tendency prevents him, in some instances, from providing readers with a more nuanced and objective critique of Proctor. A case in point is Bond's comparative treatment of Proctor and the late Rev. E. V. Hill. According to Bond, Proctor maintained that "Hill's literal reading of the Bible could not produce the kind of consistent ethical insight that years of science and human progress have manifested." Ironically, it was a literal reading of Scripture that produced the theology of Proctor's grandmother and his parents, that formed Proctor in his early years, and that put survival strength in African-American Christians during the era of slavery and Jim Crow! Bond's prior theological commitments lead

to a refusal to address Proctor's lack of consistency in trying to hold on to his conservative roots, embrace the historical critical method, and deny the power of a literal reading of the Bible that transformed his own family for several generations.

Still, in the reviewer's judgment, Bond's monograph would be useful in a class on the history of preaching in the twentieth century. Samuel DeWitt Proctor's life and thought is worthy of study and reflection; Bond is to be commended for his investigation.

The Surprising Grace of Disappointment: Finding Hope When God Seems to Fail Us. By John Koessler. Chicago: Moody, 2013. 978-0802410566. 173 pp., $ 13.99.

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

John Koessler is chairman and professor in the Pastoral Studies Department at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Five of the ten essays (and part of the sixth) that comprise this volume are based on earlier articles in *Christianity Today* or PreachingToday.com. All of them cluster around the universal human experience of disappointment; each one helps us see our disappointments from a biblical perspective.

Koessler rejects the two common approaches to dealing with root of disappointment, namely the discrepancy between expectation and experience: "One approach is to assure us that we are mistaken. Things are not as bad as they seem." The other approach is that taken by the Marines: "'Life is hard, suck it up and get over it.'" In contrast, Koessler argues that we can "expect to meet Jesus in the most unlikely place—at the intersection of Expectation and Disappointment." Catchy chapter titles alert us to the sorts of disappointment to be explored: "False Hope and Unreasonable Expectations," "Jesus Disappoints Everyone," "Great Expectations or Delusions of Grandeur?" and "Take this Job."

Yet far from simplistically telling us how we can minimize disappointment by adjusting our expectations, Koessler grapples with big underlying issues with pastoral wisdom. He addresses the problems of evil, of unanswered prayer, and of narcissistic spiritual ambition, among others, in ways that show him to be an astute and perceptive pastoral theologian. He has been around Christians and churches long enough to see and experience the disappointments of which he writes, and how faulty proposed solutions need to be supplanted by more biblical ones. Moreover, the chapters, though they could stand alone, do take us somewhere in combination. They address the selected categories of disappointment with the history of redemption in mind, and so serve to place all disappointment in an eschatological perspective.

This book is not merely satisfying in its content, it is welll written. Sprinkled with personal confessions, anecdotes, humor, and memorable one-line understatements (like the one describing John the Baptist as "ill at ease in Herod's prison" [48]), the prose sparkles. Thoughtful citations reveal that the author has read widely and deeply, but they do not leave us with the impression of him as an ivory-tower academic. Koessler handles the biblical text carefully, sensitively applying its healing balm to real human ills, and deftly wielding the scalpel as a surgeon of the soul.

All of us who teach preaching would benefit from reading these examples of how to bring scriptural and theological insights to bear on a universal malady. If we have the luxury of teaching a course on pastoral preaching, or if we were preaching to address contemporary problems, this book would remind us all that heavy subjects can be addressed with a light touch without being superficial, just as sermons may be intensely personal without being theologically empty. All who preach will see here a model of transparency in communication that they will want to emulate. All who write will improve their styles simply by reading this book. And those who preach topical sermon series will be sorely tempted to take on this one next. This book would be an excellent companion volume for the church bookstore to stock for the duration of that series and beyond. We who know disappointed people will find ourselves recommending this book to them—as I did even before I finished reading it!

The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul. Edited by Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard Jr. Chicago: Moody, 2013. 978-0802409621. 288 pp., $29.99.

Reviewer: Glenn Watson, Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, Cochrane, AB

The Psalms may top the list of biblical riches most neglected in the contemporary North American pulpit. Unwilling and unprepared to navigate the unfamiliar waters of Hebrew poetry, most preachers steer their sermons in the direction of the more comfortable shores of epistle and narrative, missing the opportunity to plumb the depths of these texts that have provided "language for all seasons of the soul" to God's people throughout the ages. This volume can serve to sharpen our vision and stir our imaginations to appreciate and preach the Psalms by allowing us to listen in on the conversations of some of today's most passionate and knowledgeable experts in the field.

The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul is comprised primarily of papers read in the Psalms and Hebrew Poetry Consultation of the Evangelical Theological Society. The list of contributors is a "Who's Who" of contemporary ot scholarship, including Tremper Longman III, Bruce

Waltke, Walter Kaiser, Willem VanGemeren, and Robert Chisholm. The target audience of the book is "trained pastors and professors of the Psalms" (16), which assumes some level of familiarity with Hebrew language and poetry. However, while these authors demonstrate excellent scholarship, they do not leave us in the realm of the technical. Each chapter is intended to "illustrate the ongoing need to study and hear the Psalms from a holistic perspective, not separating exegesis from tradition, individual piety from community, interpretation from faith, nor biblical theology from preaching" (16). Virtually every author applies insights gleaned from his studies to contemporary needs of the church.

Part One of the book consists of three retrospective essays by three scholars whose careers span decades of ot studies. Bruce Waltke, Willem VanGemeren, and C. Hassell Bullock tell the story of ever-evolving Psalm studies in the past half century, each from his own perspective. Together, they paint a clear picture of the issues, the turning points, the key contributors, and the general trends in the field.

Parts Two and Three focus on the two primary genres within the psalms: praise and lament. Rather than a systematic treatment, these eight chapters afford excellent examples of the exegetical study of specific psalms, groups of psalms, or themes within each genre. Examples of insights from this section: Robert Chisholm reflects on the demythologizing of the sea in psalms of praise, depicting God not as the suppressor of hostile forces, but as the "unopposed creator, and the sea is simply a part of the created order" (84); Michael Travers analyzes Psalms 51 and 32 as the journey and the destination of confession, in which penitence is completed by praise, constituting a paradox of "severe delight" (125); Allen Ross studies the nature of "thou" language in the laments; and Daniel Estes explores theological meditation as the root of transformation from pain to praise.

Part Four deals with the canonical structure of the Psalms, exploring the debate begun by Brevard Childs three decades ago as to whether there is a distinct "story line" to be found in the five books of the Psalter. Voices from both sides of the debate are represented. David Howard presents a compelling case for divine and human kingship as the organizing motif, moving toward an eschatological expectation of a future king in Book V of the Psalms. Tremper Longman, on the other hand, while acknowledging the relationships of certain groups of psalms, the introductory function of Psalm 1, the concluding function of Psalm 150, and the general movement from lament to praise within the Psalter, rejects the idea that there is an intentional structure for the entire book. We are left with the impression that this discussion is both significant for our understanding and proclamation of the Psalms, and that there is much work left to do.

Finally, Part Five rounds out the book with a selection of four sermons from a variety of preachers, representing what the editors consider to be good examples of preaching from the Psalms.

This collection of essays is neither systematic nor exhaustive in its

treatment of the Psalms, but rather representative of current evangelical scholarship. For those who seek a primer on interpreting and preaching the Psalms, better texts exist. However, for the well-trained preacher who has a good hermeneutical foundation in the area of Hebrew poetry, this volume provides fresh perspectives, stimulating insights, and the opportunity to stay abreast of current thinking. The book would also be an excellent supplementary text for an advanced preaching course focusing on the Psalms.

The Best Method of Preaching: The Use of Theoretical-Practical Theology. By Petrus van Mastricht. Translated by Todd M. Rester. Reformation Heritage Books, 2013. 978-1601782304. 82 pp., $10.00.

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

Petrus van Mastricht penned his handbook on preaching in a time when texts on preaching were not as readily available as today. A Dutch pastor and theologian, van Mastricht lived from 1630 to 1706 serving Reformed churches and teaching Hebrew at the universities in Germany and the Netherlands. His call to piety accompanied with practicality influenced Reformed and Puritan pastors and scholars in Europe and America. The passion that drove his ministry to parishioners, students, pastors, and scholars was his conviction that "theology must be applied to God's people through practical preaching" (2). He saw no conflict between scholarly, theoretical-theological investigations and the application of such to the everyday thinking and practice of the believer. The pastor/preacher should inform the mind, inflame the heart, and exhort the will through a theologically grounded claim of truth that so stimulates the listener's hope that faithful obedience follows (18).

For van Mastricht, the best method of preaching—the method that served to edify the church—was the theoretical-practical. He held that his method was advantageous for the minister's preparation, as it established his message in the Scriptures; for the hearers' understanding, as it provided a theological indicative for the practical imperative; for the sermon's clarity, as it systematically arranged the flow of argument; and for the practice of virtues and the avoidance of vices, as it called for personal piety (25). "Not whatever seems intended to attract the applause of the common people, but rather what is most suitable for edifying the church … should be the guiding star of the entire sermon" (29).

Evangelical preachers and professors of homiletics will certainly affirm van Mastricht's convictions regarding the value of a theoretical-practical method. In addition, they will applaud his desire to place a set of tools into the hands of the parish pastor. Given the historical context in

which this text originally appeared, they will appreciate his contribution. Yet, the instruction that follows in the next ten chapters is brief to the extreme, scattered in its focus and content, and pedantic—even regimented—to the point of boredom. This reviewer cannot help but wonder whether van Mastricht took for granted that his readers were aware of William Perkins' *The Art of Prophesying*, which had been available in Dutch since 1603. That could explain his brevity and seemingly random choice of emphases.

This is not to say that van Mastricht has not proffered many golden nuggets of homiletical wisdom. For example: The sermon's theme (invention) should be related to the people, yet based on a suitable text (29). Emotions should be aroused in the introduction "since your hearers come to equip their spirits and stimulate their attention, which will hardly be achieved without the use of any affections" (35). "The explicated parts [of the exposition of a text] should be tied together again in a certain paraphrase so that the doctrinal argument emerges more easily" (39). The "doctrinal argument . . . should certainly be in the text . . . [and] evident to his hearer" (43). Doctrinal "controversies should not be sought out without necessity" (52). "So that we may cure those evils [sin], it is necessary to inquire into their causes . . . such as: blindness of the mind . . . aversion of the heart . . . excessive care and concern for earthly things . . . unbelief . . . effective enticements" (64).

This text could be read with benefit from at least two perspectives. First, one might read prayerfully and devotionally, gaining a renewed commitment for the majesty of preaching, and remembering that the best preaching demands reverent obedience. Second, the preaching historian will want to place van Mastricht in a long line of faithful disciples of the prophets and the apostles who prized the power of the sermon to change lives and taught others how to prepare and present the theological message of the Scriptures in a most practical manner. Since both Old (see *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, Volume 4) and Edwards (A History of Preaching) overlook van Mastricht, Rester's translation of *The Best Method of Preaching* serves the historian's agenda.

The Pulpit and the Press in Reformation Italy. By Emily Michelson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. 978-0674072978. 262 pp., $39.95.

Reviewer: Scott Wenig, Denver Seminary, Denver, CO

In his now dated but still magnificent overview of preaching in the late Middle Ages, Preaching in the Medieval Era, G. R. Owst promoted the almost unthinkable idea that some of the greatest homileticians in church history were Roman Catholic priests and friars in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Given the value placed on preaching by the mendicant

orders in the thirteenth century, particularly the Dominicans, this should not have come as a big surprise to historians of preaching. Yet for decades, Protestants in general, and evangelicals in particular, often simply accepted the traditional interpretation that great preaching actually started in the sixteenth century with reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Latimer. In her exceptionally well researched and persuasively argued monograph on the impact of Roman Catholic preaching and the use of the press in reformation Italy, Michelson now scores another point against the Protestant historiographies of preaching of the early modern era.

Like their Roman Catholic brethren throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, Italian churchmen suddenly found themselves thrust to the front lines of a religious conflict that most never saw coming. Terrified that a Protestant takeover of Italy was imminent, priests, bishops and friars dedicated to the preservation of the old religion launched an all out assault against the Lutheran and Reformed heresies they perceived to be running amok in the heartland of the true faith. Their primary weapons in this spiritual war for the sake of souls were the pulpit, the pen, and the new technology of the printing press. Michelson goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Protestants were not alone in using these critical tools to promote their religious convictions in the public square. Catholics did the same and often in very creative and imaginative ways. From their perspective, Protestantism was on the verge of tipping the entire homeland into a devilish grip of heresy, and any tool that could help re-convert souls and re-establish the true faith needed to be leveraged to the utmost.

Yet one of the ironies of this Catholic Reformation was the sense of conflict that many of its preachers felt regarding the use of Scripture. In the minds of some, especially those at or near the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, this approach played directly into the hands of the opposition. After all, wasn't sola scriptura one of the premises that almost certainly would lead to as many heresies as there were literate people? Nevertheless, Michelson shows how time and again Catholic preachers resorted to using the Bible in their sermons, homilies and printed counter attacks against the new faith.

This book has many strengths not the least of which is the author's skill at introducing us to various Italian preachers and church leaders totally committed to the re-imposition of Catholicism. Early on we meet Francesco Panigarola, one of the most celebrated preachers of the era, an orator of unquestioned gifting who not only preached, but also wrote treatises on how to preach so as to instill and reinforce orthodox doctrine in one's hearers. We're also introduced to Cornelio Musso, a Conventual Franciscan who dedicated himself to preaching up and down the Italian peninsula for decades, believing that at any moment all of Italy could slide into heresy. Like many of his peers, Musso enthusiastically used the press as well as his roving pulpit to communicate the ideals of traditional religion. As Michelson demonstrates from these examples and others, it was the

devotion of these now unknown men to the Catholic cause that, over time, reinvigorated traditional religion in Italy and created a religious culture that would survive the shocking intrusion of an alternative faith.

For historians of the early modern era who continue to grapple with issues of religious change, this book serves as an excellent example of how ideas, specifically theological ideas, factor into that whole equation. As the author shows, the Counter Reformation in Italy didn't just happen or evolve; it came about because dedicated Roman Catholic churchmen used the pulpit and press to win the hearts and minds of the laity. Moreover, for readers of this Journal, Michelson has done us a favor by demonstrating on almost every page the potential influence of both preaching and media, elements we would be wise to utilize in the our own era for the advance of the gospel. This book is a good example of fine scholarship in both the history of preaching and the power of the press during the Reformation.

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.

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

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Frequency of Publication:

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

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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.

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   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.

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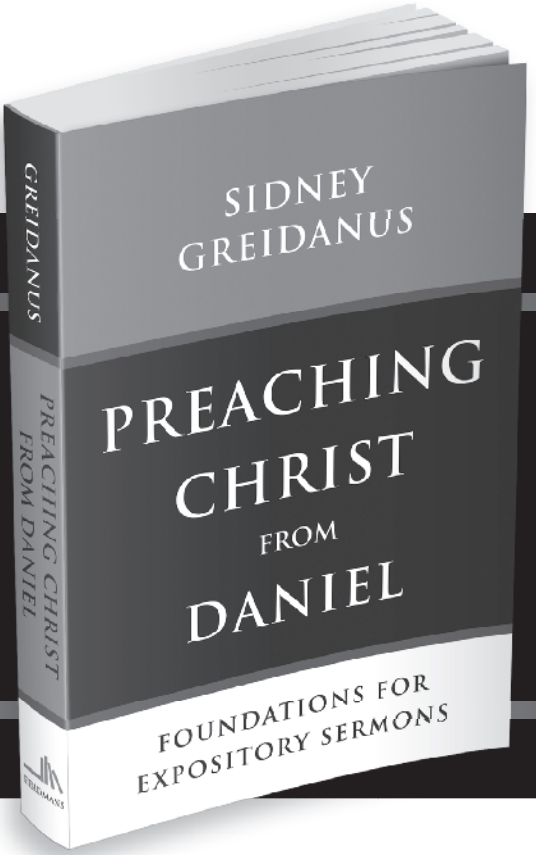

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