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

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

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.



PREACHING TO THE GENERATIONS

SCOTT M. GIBSON

General Editor

The task of preaching is one that has endured through generations. Preachers have preached in synagogues, on ancient plazas, in hidden catacombs, glorious cathedrals, humble stone churches, on hillsides, in forests, in urban storefronts or clapboard spired churches. Nevertheless, preachers have confronted their culture. They have had to calculate what it means to communicate the eternal gospel to their own particular context.

In this issue of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* the authors deal with the challenge of preaching to the age in which God has providentially placed us. The October 2015 annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society hosted by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, examined the theme, "Preaching and Biblical Literacy."

The plenary speaker for the conference was Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His two plenary sessions are herein combined to a single article covering his interesting insights into what it means to preach to our secular age.

The recipient of the Willhite Award is Jared E. Alcántara, from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Alcántara's challenging paper presses preachers to consider the impact of secularization on biblical illiteracy. The Willhite Award is chosen by the membership and leadership of the society that reflects the best scholarship among the papers presented at the annual gathering. The Willhite Award is named in memory of co-founder and past-president, Keith Willhite.

The next article is by Duck Hyun Kim of Chongshin University in Korea. Kim explores another hermeneutical approach to preaching engaging speech act theory as a tool for exegesis. His desire is to seek "the totality of God's speech act in Scripture." Kim's insights will stimulate our readers' consideration of this interesting approach to preaching.

The final article is authored by Robert L. Compere, III, from San Antonio, Texas. Compere explores the seminal work of nineteenth century homilician, John A. Broadus, of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Broadus designed his text for preaching with nineteenth-century men and women in mind. However, following Broadus's death, others including Jesse B. Weatherspoon and Vernon L. Stanfield produced editions of Broadus's *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Compere contends that these new editions do not fully represent Broadus's definition of preaching and eloquence. Readers will explore with Compere the noted changes and differences in these newer editions and the suggested impact on Broadus's

intended effect.

The sermon is by Victor D. Anderson of Dallas Theological Seminary. Anderson, in completing his tenure as president of the society, delivered the sermon on Friday morning of the conference. His text is 1 Samuel 4:1-22. Anderson carefully challenges preachers to consider the warning of putting at risk the very presence of God in our living and in our preaching.

The Book Review section follows. Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla has assembled a hearty collection of book reviews for readers to be stimulated, stretched, and even encouraged to purchase the books reviewed. Additionally, seminary or Bible College libraries will be benefitted by purchasing books reviewed in the *Journal*.

We are responsible to preach to our age—secular or religious. As preachers we want to be able to discern our times and preach to it in the midst of biblical illiteracy and other maladies that face the people of the cultures to whom we preach.



PREACHING IN A SECULAR AGE: PREACHING AS A STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

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INTRODUCTION

I began my chapter on preaching and postmodernism in *We Cannot Be Silent* with these words, "A common concern seems to emerge now wherever Christians gather: The task of truth-telling is stranger than it used to be. In this age, telling the truth is tough business and not for the faint-hearted. The times are increasingly strange." As preachers we recognize how strange the times have become. Almost anyone seeking to carry out a faithful pulpit ministry recognizes that preachers must now ask questions and engage issues we have not had to consider in the past. We recognize that preaching has been displaced from its once prominent position in the culture. Many of us are wondering, why is preaching even more challenging in our cultural moment than it has been in other times? The answer to question ultimately rests in this: we now live, move, and have our being in a secular age. In this lecture, I hope to survey the trends of secularization and advance the only authentic Christian response to the challenge of secularization is faithful, clear, and informed expository preaching.

SECULARIZATION AND ITS THEORISTS

Secularization, as representative of an ideological and cultural change, was not possible until very recent times. Secularization rests on the shoulders of a number of other ideological shifts that have preceded it. Without the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and even without certain technological advances, secularization never would have been possible.

Once these intellectual and societal trends were charted, secularization theory began emerging. Most of the contributors to this theory argued that secularization was the handmaiden to modernity. As these theorists explained, the modern age would necessarily and inevitably produce a secular society because modernity made God irrelevant. Modernism provided alternative answers to the most fundamental questions of life thereby rendering theism no longer necessary.

One of the most important theorists was professor Harvey Cox

who in 1965 published an enormously important work, *The Secular City*. The book was revolutionary for many in the church because many Christians had not yet fully recognized that society was fundamentally changing and growing more secular. Of course, many of the cultural signs pointing toward secularization were not as apparent then as they would be just a few decades later. Indeed, one need only consider that just ten years prior to the publication of Cox's book, Dwight Eisenhower was baptized, making a public profession of faith in Christ, *while* holding the office of President of the United States. This episode alone is enough to demonstrate just how significantly the culture and the political landscape has shifted between Eisenhower's presidency and our own day. Despite this, seeming evidence to the contrary Cox perceived a tectonic shift within Western society.

With great foresight in 1965, Harvey Cox made the point that the future of the Western world, particularly its cities, was predominantly secular. As Cox made clear, this secularism was characterized, at least in one way, by an eclipse of theism. Cox further argued that this coming secular city would provide a larger range of worldviews as alternatives to what had been offered before. This multiplicity of worldviews would be one of the hallmarks of the secular city. As a result, Christianity, the once ubiquitous worldview of western society, would be displaced—giving way to a seemingly infinite number of worldview options.

Another important theorist, German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber, argued that most people throughout human existence lived in an "enchanted" world. Weber meant that in the pre-modern era, humanity looked for the answers to all of the most basic questions of life by appealing to an "enchanted" or transcendent source. Weber was speaking, of course, about more than Western Christianity. Any religious answer, even one based in something as theologically undefined as totemism, appeals to "enchantment" and transcendence for the answers to life's biggest questions. But, Weber argued, modernity brought about disenchantment—a jettisoning of transcendence for a purely naturalistic worldview.

Secularization theorists in the last decades of the 19th century and in the early decades of the 20th century were confident that secularization would spread to the entire Western world. They were absolutely convinced that organized religion and its authority would disappear. And they were absolutely confident that they would live to see it happen. So did these things happen? In some sense yes, but also no.

The renowned sociologist Peter Berger, still producing academic works in the tenth decade of life, has considered why secularization achieved dominance in some parts of western society, but has yet to do so in others. As he notes, secularization happened just as the theorists predicted with respect to Europe—a continent that now registers almost imperceptible levels of Christian belief.

For example, in Great Britain the Church of England indicated that 16,000 parishes are now going to hold services only during Christmas and

Easter. As recent statistics indicate, at any given time less than 7% of the population in Great Britain has any contact with the Church of England—the established church of the nation. Yet compared to other countries in Europe, Great Britain seems revivalist. Pollsters in Belgium, for instance, note that they find it difficult to find enough theists to answer survey questions on their religious commitments. This trend is indicative of much of the rest of Europe where most people have genuinely lost the very memory of a Christian heritage.

Similarly, secularization happened at the same rate and to the same degree in American universities—which are, in many respects, isolated islands of Europe on American soil. One need only consider, for instance, the University of Tennessee which recently ordered that gendered pronouns be replaced by gender neutral pronouns like “zie.” While this administrative mandate was later overturned, the point remains that even in places such as Knoxville, Tennessee, major American universities are on the same trajectory of secularization as many of the most secularized parts of Europe.

But why has secularization not happened at the same rate in other communities in the United States as it has on American college campuses or in Europe? This question has consumed a great deal of discussion on the part of sociologists for the better part of three decades. Yet the most interesting response to this question came from Berger who argued that secularization did happen to the same degree in the United States, but the outward appearance simply looked quite different than what we see in Europe or on university campuses. Thus Berger has argued that America was and is far more secular than it looks. While America is not characterized by the hardline secularism and open ridicule of religion and theism often characteristic of the culture in European nations, Berger argued that the United States is still largely secularized.

As Berger explained, in 20th century America, Christianity and religion in general were transformed to something non-cognitive and optional. As a result, the binding authority of the Christian moral tradition or of any religious tradition was lost. Consequently, many of our friends and neighbors continued to profess faith in God, but that profession was ultimately devoid of any moral authority or cognitive content. From the outside looking in, America did not appear to be secularizing at the same rate as the European continent. In reality, however, professions of faith in God had little real theological or spiritual content.

Berger predicted that this collapse of cognitive religious commitments coupled with the collapse of binding authority would lead to the fact that, in the face of cultural opposition, adherents to belief in God or religious principle quickly gave way to the secular agenda—which is exactly what happened. Just ten years ago most polls reflected the fact that a majority of Americans opposed same-sex marriage. Yet in our day the very same people polled one decade ago rendered an opposite moral judgement on the same issue. Just as Berger explained, when the cultural tide turned against our

society's empty religious commitments, people were happy to jettison their moral judgment on homosexuality to retain their social capital.

As preachers, Berger's observations are tremendously important. We, above all others, need to realize that the culture no longer shares our worldview and as a result the very language we use may mean something entirely different in the ears of our listeners than what we intend. The meaning of words like morality, personhood, marriage, or virtually any other moral term has radically shifted for many postmodern Americans, making our job as preachers that much more difficult.

Additionally, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has also carefully traced the influence and effects of secularization on the Western world. As he explains in his important book, *The Secular Age*, the way people hold to theological convictions and religious principles in the modern era is fundamentally different than how people believed in the past. Modernity has made religious belief provisional, optional, and far less urgent than it was in the pre-modern world.

I had this notion pressed upon me in some force when I was a doctoral student and I had the opportunity to attend a seminar with Heiko Oberman, a prestigious history professor from the University of Arizona and one of the world's greatest scholars on the Reformation. Oberman was about seventy years old at the time; I was in my early twenties.

Halfway through the lecture, Oberman, through no fault of our own, became exasperated with the class. "Young men," he said, "you will never understand Luther because you go to bed every night confident you will wake up healthy in the morning. In Luther's day, people thought that every day could be their last. They had no antibiotics. They didn't have modern medicine. Sickness and death came swiftly." Oberman's point was that when Luther closed his eyes at night terrified he was afraid he might wake up in hell. Luther recognized that every day might be his last and he could very quickly find himself either face to face with God or the devil.

Taylor makes the same point, although not as anecdotally as Oberman. As Taylor notes, on this side of modernity when people believe, they are making a *choice* to believe that previous generations did not make. Belief is now a provisional choice, an exercise of personal autonomy. When people identify as believers in Jesus Christ they are making a far more individualistic statement than was possible in years past. Furthermore, they are doing so in the face of alternative worldview options that were simply unavailable until very recently. In fact, as I was doing research for my book on atheism I learned that the very first use of "atheist" in English came from Miles Coverdale who invented the word during his time translating Scripture. The remarkable thing to notice is that Coverdale had to invent a term for someone who did not believe in God because he did not know anyone who actually held that conviction. No one in the Elizabethan age would have denied God's existence.

Perhaps the central insight from Taylor's book is his categorization

of the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern time periods with respect to the worldview options available in a culture. As Taylor argues, western history is categorized by three intellectual epochs: pre-Enlightenment impossibility of unbelief; post-Enlightenment possibility of unbelief; and late Modern impossibility of belief.

In the pre-Enlightenment era it was impossible not to believe. One simply could not explain the world without some appeal either to the Bible or to “enchantment,” to return to Weber’s terminology. No other worldviews were available to members of society other than supernatural worldviews, particularly the Christian worldview in the West. While society had its heretics, there were no atheists among them. Everyone believed in some form of theism, even if it was polytheism. As Taylor simply states, it was impossible not to believe.

That all changed with the Enlightenment and the availability of alternative worldviews by which one could frame a comprehensive account of the world set over against the Christian worldview. These alternative worldviews made it possible for members of society to reject the supernaturalism of Christianity for a naturalistic worldview. Taylor’s careful phraseology here, however, is also important to note. While it was certainly possible not to believe, it was also the case that it was not likely that people would reject the Christian worldview because the theistic explanations for life were simply more pervasive, binding, and persuasive than non-theistic worldviews.

The intellectual conditions in Europe and on American university campuses have now secularized such that it is impossible for those under such conditions to believe in God. In other words, we have arrived at the third intellectual epoch of Western society: *impossible to believe*. As Taylor observes, to be a candidate for tenure at a major American university is to inhabit a world in which it is virtually impossible to believe in God. Under the first set of Western intellectual conditions, not everyone was a Christian, but all were accountable to a Christian worldview because there was no alternative. Secularization in American culture has reversed the conditions: not everyone is a non-Christian, but all must operate under a secular worldview that denies the legitimacy of a Christian worldview. In three hundred years, Western intellectual conditions have moved from an impossibility of unbelief to an impossibility of belief.

So what does this mean for us as preachers? We must recognize that these intellectual conditions now prevalent in Europe and in the American universities are quickly filtering down from the elites to the general culture. The mechanisms in this process are fairly easy to trace. In fact a number of polls reveal that the greatest predictor for whether you will find yourself in an increasingly secular space comes down to whether you live near a coast, a city, or a university. Given that the future of America is increasingly defined by most of its population being coastal, urban, and university educated, you can see that the future of America is also increasingly secular.

Given these cultural changes, we need to recognize we are not preaching to people who hear us in the same way as previous generations in Western societies. Furthermore, we are not preaching with the same authority, culturally speaking, as we once did because we no longer represent the dominant, established worldview of the culture. Instead we now represent a worldview that is not only considered marginal but subversive of the new intellectual and moral regime. Even the people in our churches believe in a way that is more provisional and less theologically grounded than in previous generations.

The question remains what does preaching look like in the secular city? How do we preach a binding authority when people do not even realize they are under authority? How do we preach the objective truths of a non-provisional gospel? How do we preach the authority of a single book, its singular Savior, and a faith once for all delivered to the saints when most people hold, even unconsciously, to a firm commitment to pluralization?

PREACHING: THE CHURCH'S MEANS OF SURVIVAL

With our cultural analysis behind us, I would like to move on to consider the role of preaching in a secular age, particularly preaching as a survival strategy for the church. Many today are reconsidering the role and nature of preaching, especially given the massive changes that now characterize our culture. All sorts of new plans and strategies have been created in order to reinvent preaching in light of demographics, sociology, and even management theories. But I want to posit that the only answer to our current crisis in preaching is to recall how many of our forebears approached the task of standing behind the "sacred desk."

In a secular age, preaching will be met with one of three responses. First, we will find ourselves preaching in a context of hostility. This will not necessarily take the form of overt action. But, at least in the immediate future, much of this hostility will look like cultural marginalization. Those who listen to us will now do so by paying social capital, not gaining social capital—a cultural situation notably different from our grandparents or even our parents. Second, our preaching will also often be met with befuddlement. For many among the intellectual elites, Christian preachers are not an object of hostility or derision as much as they are creatures of oddity. The plausibility structures of society are so different from our own that many people simply cannot understand us. Finally, we will find that we will not only be met with hostility and befuddlement, but also indifference. Many in our society will not even care enough about our message to spend their energies either in hostility or befuddlement.

One of the problems we encounter moving forward is that in many circumstances our approach to preaching in relation to other theological disciplines is wrongly skewed. For years in the theological academy, homiletics has been seen as something of a finishing school for clergy. We

have imagined that the true theological heavy lifting occurs in the disciplines of theology, exegesis, or church history, while homiletics was merely the practical work for those who were moving on to the professional and less theologically involved environment of the pastorate.

I would suggest to you, however, that this alienation between the classical theological disciplines and homiletics is misguided and detrimental to the life of the church. Historically, the tripartite division in institutions of theological education between theological studies, biblical studies, and practical ministry studies originated in Germany, but was concretized as the accreditation expectation for theological seminaries by the Association of Theological Schools by the middle of the last century. While there are benefits to specialization in academic disciplines, we should also recognize that segmenting theological study along the lines of specialization has come at a cost (perhaps even unintended) in the lives of many modern preachers. We must recognize that the preacher's task is an exegetical and theological one. Homiletics cannot be divorced from theology and exegesis simply by virtue of the fact that what we proclaim in the pulpit is a biblical theology that originates from the exegesis of God's Word.

Preachers need to be competent in many arenas of life. They need managerial competence. They need organizational competence. But above everything else, the preacher needs theological and exegetical competence. The curriculum in our seminaries and theological institutions must reflect this commitment to train preaching *theologians*, and not just men who are entertaining.

When we recognize the challenges posed to us by our current cultural climate, we will also recognize that preaching, doctrinally robust and exegetically rich preaching, is the only mechanism for the church's survival in a secular age. The faithful pastor is not a theologian at one moment, an exegete the next, and at other times a preacher. He is, instead, all of those things simultaneously and in equal measure. This means that in our churches and in our theological institutions we are not simply training religious professionals who happen to be able to speak in front of a crowd, we are bringing up theologians who know how to rightly handle God's Word and herald that Word in a way that is understandable to any given audience. The testimony of Acts and the history of the Church witness to the fact that preaching is the church's only strategy for survival and for multiplication in the face of cultural hostility. Acts regularly points to the fact that the church is a "creature of the Word," it is created by the Word and sustained by the Word. Preaching is not just one church growth strategy among others, it is the lifeblood of the church's existence. This is further highlighted by Paul's pastoral commission to his protégé Timothy, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2).

The early church fathers met the overt opposition of the Roman culture with faithful preaching—preaching that was deemed subversive

to the Roman Empire. Further, even after the fall of the Roman Empire preaching was central to the ministry of the church. Peter Brown, renowned historian of late antiquity, notes that the Basilica of Hippo was not just the place that housed Augustine's pulpit, it was also a place for business transaction. Brown points out that these transactions would occur even during Augustine's preaching and that Augustine would often be interrupted by interlocutors who objected to the content of his sermons, disagreeing with one point or another. And yet even in the noise of commercial activity and critics, Augustine was clear that preaching must not retreat but continue on as central in the church's mission and ministry.

As we fast-forward to the Reformation, we find that Luther understood preaching as the first mark of the church. For Luther preaching was the primary means by which sinners were able to come to know the truths of the Gospel first revealed to him in the words of Romans 1:17. Again, we must remember that Luther was no arm-chair theologian. Luther spoke about the centrality of preaching the gospel at the risk of his life. One need only consider the mortal peril he was in at the Diet of Worms to understand the seriousness of his commitment to the Gospel and to the proclamation of the Gospel in preaching.

Similarly, Calvin emphasized the union of Word and Spirit in the preaching event, reminding us that the Holy Spirit convicts and converts through the preaching of the Word, doing more than any preacher in his own power is ever able to achieve. This gave Calvin not only a theology of *how* preaching worked but also fueled his commitment to *why* one must preach. Without preaching the church simply could not survive, the Spirit would not move, and the flame of the Reformation would be extinguished. This commitment to the centrality of preaching, particularly with regard to the church's preservation and multiplication, continued throughout successive generations of faithful Christians like the English Reformers, Whitfield, Wesley, and Edwards.

The biblical witness and the testimony of church history clearly point to the fact that preaching is the church's survival strategy. By preaching the church expands and by preaching the church remains faithful in a hostile culture. In a secular age, we can no longer rely on the luxury of having other cultural voices do the work of instilling our people with a Christian worldview. The plausibility structures of the culture now work at cross-currents to the message we preach on Sunday mornings. No longer does the culture indicate one "ought" to listen to preaching or one "ought" to give credence to the Christian moral tradition. Those days are behind us. Indeed, the plausibility structures of our culture have so radically changed that the cultural "oughts" are now opposed to Christianity—one *ought* not associate with those so far outside the cultural mainstream, one *ought* not define the human predicament in terms of sin, one *ought* not speak in a way that the Bible speaks or believe the things the Bible proclaims.

The church's only recourse in a secular city is to continue to do what

it has always done, preach the Word. We cannot hope that somehow we might stumble upon a third epistle to Timothy, which gives alternative ministry options to what Paul exhorts his protégé to do in Second Timothy. Our only hope is to continue to do what Jesus and the Apostles' commissioned us to do. Whether we find ourselves in circumstances of cultural acceptance or cultural hostility, we must preach the Word.

CONCLUSION

We need to recognize that the age of cultural Christianity is disappearing right before us. The kind of preaching that made for "successful" churches is also disappearing because the people who came for that kind of preaching no longer feel bound to come. We must now recognize that preaching is not just an activity the church engages in on Sunday mornings. Preaching is not a trivial activity. Preaching is a matter of life and death—preaching in the secular city is a matter of survival.

Fundamentally, the survival of the church in the secular city comes down to a promise and a command given us in Scripture, an indicative and an imperative. First, we must remember that Jesus promised "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). Next, we must remember that we have been commissioned, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). We need to remember both of these words from Scripture in order to serve faithfully in the secular city. Jesus has given his church a strategy for survival in the face of cultural hostility. That strategy, it turns out, is the apostolic call to preach.



CHURCH IN THE WILD: PREACHING IN AN AGE OF AMERICANIZED SECULARIZATION

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ABSTRACT: Many pastors see firsthand the pervasiveness of biblical illiteracy in the church. In this paper, I argue that biblical illiteracy is symptomatic of a bigger issue: *secularization*. I unfold my argument by describing the phenomenon of secularization, discussing its effects in congregations, recommending four strategies for engaging secularization in our preaching, and asking “What resources are available to us in Scripture?”

INTRODUCTION

Human beings in a mob. What’s a mob to a king? What’s a king to a god? What’s a god to a non-believer? Who don’t believe in anything? We make it out alive. All right, all right. No church in the wild! These lyrics are the chorus to Jay-Z and Kanye West’s hit-song, “No Church in the Wild.” While this is probably the first paper in EHS history to frame its argument by quoting from rap moguls, the lyrics should at least give us pause. What Jay-Z and Kanye say about the church is serious. These lyrics confront us with what Mary McClintock Fulkerson calls a “wound in need of redress.”

Wilderness is a provocative image, one that arrests and even troubles the imagination. According to Jay-Z and Kanye, the “wild” is the place where the “nonbeliever who don’t believe in anything” goes. It is the *locus absconditus*, a site of contestation outside the purview of right belief and holy living, a place where one lives out a life wholly different from the one we preach about in churches. The rules are different because the place is different – it is *locus absconditus* because the church is *absconditus*. To Kanye and Jay-Z, this is neither good nor bad. It just is. As they see things, a world of pain and promiscuity, death and hopelessness resides outside the church’s reach, beyond the church’s control.

So, why frame an academic paper on secularization with a reflection on the wilderness? The reason: our conception (or misconception) of the so-called “world out there” – whether we call it society, culture, the “secular,” or the wild – determines whether we’ll engage with that world or escape from it. Our commitment to understanding and engaging the world in which we live rises and falls with an interrogation of the church’s *function* in it. “Is there a church in the wild?” is at its core a question about the church’s relation to

the world. And, for the purposes of this paper, it is a question that challenges us to consider whether our preaching engages with that world, whether it is or isn't a voice in the wilderness. We will return to the desert and wilderness metaphor later.

In this paper, I argue that listening congregations in the United States are impacted significantly by secularization and marked indelibly by its effects. The preachers of today and tomorrow should not only seek to understand this reality and its impact on congregants; they should also develop strategies for engaging secularization in their sermons. I unfold my argument by describing the phenomenon of secularization, discussing its effects on congregations, recommending four homiletical strategies for engaging with and confronting secularization, and asking "What resources are available to us in Scripture?"

1. WHAT EXACTLY IS SECULARIZATION?

The answer to this question comes in the form of an etymology, a process, and theory. We begin with etymology. The word "secular" comes from the Latin *saeculum* which originally meant "age" or "span of time." *Saeculum* is the Latin translation of the Greek word *aion*. When Paul writes in Eph 3:21- "to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen!," the phrase "forever and ever" reads *in saecula saeculorum* in Latin. It literally means "age of ages" or "century of centuries." Sometimes, *in saecula saeculorum* is translated as "world without end" such as in the *Gloria Patri*. But, *saeculum* by itself does not signify eternity but temporality. For instance, Paul writes in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world..." The word here translated as "world" is not the Greek *kosmos*. It is *aion* "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this age," Paul writes, which is another way of saying the age that is passing away. When the word occurs in the New Testament (by itself), it conveys the idea of temporality, that is, a this-worldly and particular age.

The word "secular" also gained new connotations over time. In medieval France, "secular" described a person who did not belong to a religious order. Members of a religious order were distinct and differentiated from the *seculer* or Modern French *seculier*, that is, the non-religious or non-clerical public. In some contexts, the word described the difference between church and state. A state official was considered a member of the *seculer*. When the word finally made inroads in English, it took on an additional connotation of being *anti-religious*. This nuance is important in that *anti-religiosity* helps us understand that secularization is not just a static phenomenon, it also as a process.

"To secularize" means to *move away* from God, religious expression, rituals of worship, and theology in order to *move toward* being either irreligious or anti-religious. When people self-report that they are "secularized," they usually mean that they live without any point of reference to the church or to

religious ritual. They are literally churchless and a-theological. A number of scholars interpret secularization-as-process positively, a sign that humankind has pushed past its tribal roots and primitive past. In *Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans*, David Niose writes: "If humans entered the theological stage because they were able to ponder big questions, the post-theological stage is the result of our acquiring enough knowledge to finally answer many of them."² Notice the polemical connotation. To be secularized can also mean to be set free from divinity toward humanism, from a theological to a post-theological frame of reference. Sometimes, anti-religious secularism is overt such as among New Atheists like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens.³ Other times, it is more covert. Parents might advocate on behalf of their children for schools to be "secularized." A professor in a university might make it an ambition to secularize students by the end of the semester.

The final layer of connotation is theoretical. Secularization theory arose in the 1950s and 1960s in mainstream sociology. It pertained to the study of secularizing influences in society, usually modern Western society. Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* and Peter L. Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* are two examples of books on the effects of secularization. In *The Secular City*, published in 1965, Cox writes: "The rise of urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movements." Cox goes on to define secularization as "man turning his attention away from worlds beyond and toward this world and this time." (1965:2).⁵ In *Sacred Canopy*, published in 1967, Berger defines secularization theory as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."⁶ Both of these classic secularization theorists argued for an integral connection between the process of secularization and the advances of modernization. Cox rooted this process in urbanization whereas Berger rooted it in a shifting worldview, namely, an irreversible movement from fate to choice and from one dominant meta-worldview to a proliferation of worldviews. For both Cox and Berger, the logic was as follows: as people became more modernized, they also became more secularized. Whether this is true is another question entirely, one outside the scope of this paper. It is worth noting, however, that both Berger and Cox backed away from some of these claims later in their careers. When one reads later Berger and later Cox, one discovers different and sometimes contradictory conclusions to the ones in 1960s-era Berger and Cox.⁷ Both seem to question the earlier assumptions they made in the 1960s. Steve Bruce and Charles Taylor are two influential secularization theorists who carry the mantle of secularization theory by attempting to bring theory into conversation with twenty-first century realities in the United States.⁸

One of the more fascinating theories of secularization comes from Brad S. Gregory, a historian at Notre Dame, who links the Protestant Reformation with the secular revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized*

Society, he writes: “incompatible, deeply held, concretely expressed religious convictions paved a path to a secular society.”⁹ In other words, the unexpected and *unintended* consequence of the Protestant Reformation was a proliferation of competing and contradictory accounts of reality. These diverse and divergent accounts of reality created the conditions in which secularization could grow and thrive. Actions and reactions produced an ecology in which new actions and reactions could take place. No one could have imagined at the time, Gregory argues, that the actions and reactions of the Reformation would create a climate in which secular and modern actions and reactions would proliferate.

Although scholars continue to debate the extent to which the United States has been or is being secularized and how to go about tracing its causes, at least one thing is clear. The United States *is* impacted in significant ways. To quote again from Niose, “The impact of secular emergence goes well beyond politics, into the personal and social realms that define America as a society.”¹⁰ Although a variety of definitions and descriptions exist in the literature, at least for the purposes of this paper and for the sake of delimitation, let me define secularization as *the recession of Christian faith from its civic role in society through privatization of religious practice and marginalization of religious conviction*.

2. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF SECULARIZATION?

A growing body of literature devotes itself to studying secularization’s *effects*, that is to say, examining secularizing forces and how they touch down in the concrete realities of daily life. To be sure, totalizing statements or absolute generalizations about secularization’s effects would prove unhelpful. One cannot say that everyone everywhere is impacted by secularization in exactly the same way.¹¹ For instance, in 2015, when the Barna Group surveyed American cities that met its criteria for “post-Christian,” San Francisco was ranked first at 66% whereas Birmingham, Alabama stood at 18% and was ranked 115th on the list of cities.¹² That stated, much of the recent research on secularization’s effects is not only insightful but also instructive, moreover, it offers us a window into how attitudes and even worldviews are shifting. For the sake of brevity, I will only propose five effects of secularization.

The first effect of secularization is the *marginalization of the church*. At present, the church is on a steady move away from the center and towards the periphery of American civic life. Each year, the church has less influence and less say over ethics, policy, and institutional structure. It does not have the ear of the State and, in some cases, it is seen as a nuisance to the State. This is not all-together bad development as the church has sometimes overstepped itself and forgotten its role as a conscience of the State. Being a prophetic minority vis-à-vis the State is more valuable and even faithful than being a sycophant of the State. I only mention it because it’s important to see the

ways that church is being marginalized and ostracized from its former place. Marginalization brings with it a greater possibility for misunderstanding, mischaracterization, and even condemnation. In his book *unChristian*, when David Kinnamen asked outsiders to Christianity about their perceptions of Christians, the most common responses were as follows: “anti-homosexual, judgmental, hypocritical, old-fashioned, too involved with politics, out of touch with reality, and insensitive toward others.” The three highest were the first three: anti-gay, judgmental, and hypocritical. To be sure, the church is doing a lot of things wrong if these are the main phrases outsiders use when they’re asked about Christians. The church should not only be known for what it’s against, but what it’s for. That stated, some of these characterizations make more sense in the context of a church moving toward rather than away from marginalization.

The second effect is the *loss of a salient “plausibility structure.”* My insights here are drawn Peter Berger’s *The Heretical Imperative*. Berger makes this significant observation when he writes:

There is a close connection between secularization and the pluralization of plausibility structures...A religious worldview, just like any other body of interpretations of reality will be firmly established in consciousness. The typical premodern society creates conditions under which religion has, for the individual, the quality of objective certainty; modern society, by contrast, undermines this certainty, deobjectivates it by robbing it of its taken-for-granted status, *ipso facto* [by that very fact] subjectivizes religion.¹³

The emphasis here, at least in this paper, is on the phrase “pluralization.” What happens when you have the proliferation or pluralization of plausibility structures as opposed to a set plausibility structure? That which was previously taken-for-granted – e.g., meaning, morality, objectivity, and truth – all come into question and are subject to interrogation. Even something as taken-for-granted as the existence of God is no longer a given in a society in which a multiplicity of plausibility structures proliferate.

The third effect is *the rise of irreligion*. In their new book *Churchless: Understanding Today’s Unchurched and How to Connect with Them*, David Kinnamen and George Barna discuss two subcategories – the de-churched and the un-churched – within the larger category of “churchless.” They define the de-churched as “those who have been churchd in the past but are currently on hiatus,” and, they describe the un-churched as “people who have never attended a church service.”¹⁴ Kinnamen and Barna’s study revealed that, in the 1990s, the number of churchless people (de-churched and un-churched) stood at roughly 30 percent. By contrast, in 2014, the percentage of people who were churchless stood at roughly 43 percent. The last twenty years has seen a 13 percent increase among churchless, irreligious people in the United

States. Interestingly, the largest growth has been among the de-churched.

The fourth effect is *the rise of anti-religion*. Kinnamen and Barna use the language of “anti-God evangelism.”¹⁵ As was mentioned earlier, thinkers such as Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens are proponents of what some call the New Atheism. In an article published in *Newsweek* in 2009 with the foreboding title, “The End of Christian America,” John Meacham observes:

...The percentage of self-identified Christians has fallen 10 percentage points since 1990, from 86 to 76 percent...the percentage of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith has doubled in recent years, to 16 percent...[those] willing to describe themselves as atheist or agnostic has increased about fourfold from 1990 to 2009, from 1 million to about 3.6 million. (That is about double the number of, say, Episcopalians in the United States.)¹⁶

Meacham helps us realize that numbers have risen not just among those who are indifferent to Christian faith, but also among those who have animosity towards Christian faith. While the number of atheists and agnostics is a relatively small percentage, theirs is a vocal minority that has grown significantly (more than threefold) since the 1990s.

It is not misguided to infer that anti-religious sentiment will increase rather than decrease in the future. In *Foolishness to the Greeks*, Lesslie Newbigin offers a prescient analysis of what lies before us. Western culture is not just a secular society marked by indifference but, according to Newbigin, it is also a pagan society marked by animosity. Speaking of Western culture, he writes: “Its paganism is far more resistant to the gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which cross-cultural missions have been familiar. Here, surely, is the most challenging missionary frontier of our time.”¹⁷

The fifth and final effect is *the rise of bad religion*. In his popular book *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics*, Ross Douthat writes: “America’s problem isn’t too much religion, or too little of it. It’s *bad* religion: the slow-motion collapse of traditional Christianity and the rise of a variety of pseudo-Christianities in its place.”¹⁸ Douthat’s claim is substantiated by the research of Christian Smith, the renowned sociologist at Notre Dame. In 2005, Smith and researcher Melissa Lindquist Denton published their research findings from the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR). In their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, they write:

We can say here that we have come with some confidence to believe that a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually only tenuously Christian in any sense that is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition, but has rather substantially morphed into Christianity’s misbegotten step cousin...*Christian*

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism....It is not so much that U.S. Christianity is being secularized. Rather, more subtly, Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith.¹⁹

Although many of Smith's research findings revealed positive trends, this one in particular is deeply troubling. As Kenda Creasy Dean observes, "It is hard to read the data from NSYR without the impression that many American congregations (not to mention teenagers themselves) are 'almost Christian' – but perhaps not fully, at least not in terms of theology or practice."²⁰

To summarize, the effects of secularization are numerous, among them: marginalization, loss of 'plausibility structures,' and the simultaneous, precipitous rise of irreligion, anti-religion, and bad religion. With these effects in mind, how might we as homileticsians respond and even strategize? In the next section, we turn our attention to proposed *homiletical* strategies for engaging with and confronting secularization.

3. WHAT HOMILETICAL STRATEGIES SHOULD WE CONSIDER IN LIGHT OF SECULARIZATION?

For understandable reasons, some express reticence and even wariness about over-attending to trends and trajectories in modern American society. These reservations are not only warranted but in some cases required. Whenever audience adaptation or analysis *replaces* careful study of and preparation in God's Word rather than accompanying it, or the timeless truths of Scripture take a back seat to the current needs of listeners, or the preacher de-tethers from Christian tradition in the name of being relevant, we should exercise caution and practice vigilance. To paraphrase a quote from G.K. Chesterton, "If you marry the culture today, you'll be a widow tomorrow."

But, ignoring these issues could also prove to be unwise. The gospel is both timeless and timely. As Scottish preacher James S. Stewart reminds us, "The gospel is not for an age, but for all time: yet it is precisely the particular age – this history's hour and none other – to which we are commissioned by God to speak."²¹ Ian Pitt-Watson argues that preachers must learn to be bilingual, conversant with the language of Canaan (the church) as well as the language of Babylon (secular culture). Pitt-Watson's larger point is this: we're good at the former, but bad at the latter. Those who hear us preach "live in Babylon not Canaan," Pitt-Watson writes.²² If preachers expect to be understood, they must learn to speak better Babylonian.

In *Biblical Preaching*, Haddon Robinson claims that preachers must "not only answer the questions our fathers and mothers asked; we must wrestle with the questions our children ask."²³ For many, secularization

poses one those questions. How do we respond? My answer comes by way of four proposals designed to help us “wrestle with” this question better. These proposals are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

Three Proposals

Proposal # 1: As preachers, take more responsibility for the church's reputation “out there,” i.e., do more “Mirror Work.” Romans 1 concludes with Paul's condemnation of sexual immorality, slander, idolatry, and depravity. Paul describes people who exhibit these vices as having “no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.” (v 31) They persist in their rebellion. (v 32) What we're less familiar with is what Paul says next. Romans 2:1 reads: “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things” – not exactly a ringing endorsement for those *inside* the church either. Paul is doing for the Romans what one might call “mirror work.” Preachers who shine the mirror back on themselves and on the church before they point out the faults, fissures, and fractures in the world “out there” have a greater chance of resonating with the secularized. The phrase to remember: “Shine the mirror before you point the finger.” Paul did this to the church at Rome, and so should we.

Proposal # 2: Find ways to critique “bad religion.” Tim Keller excels at this. He shows how the gospel critiques irreligion (the secular position), and he also shows how the gospel critiques *religion*.²⁴ He never uses the phrase “bad religion” to describe what he does, but his critiques are rooted in religion that is *bad*, that is, religion antithetical to the gospel. Phil Ryken, the president of Wheaton College, refers to bad religion as “The New Monroe Doctrine.” The old Monroe Doctrine goes back to President Monroe's refusal to get entangled in European Wars. The New Monroe Doctrine, according to Ryken, finds its genesis in a quote attributed to Marilyn Monroe. An interviewer asked her, “Do you believe in God?,” and she said, “I believe in everything just a little bit.” “People do not want to be intolerant, so they believe a little bit in everything,” Ryken writes. “A majority of Americans believe in God, the Bible, Jesus, the power of positive thinking, the basic goodness of humanity, luck, alien life forms, and checking horoscopes every day,” he continues. “The only way to believe all these things at the same time is to adhere to the New Monroe Doctrine: believe everything a little bit.”²⁵

Proposal # 3: Attend more to the power of narrative and testimony. Among a significant percentage of Latino/a Christians as well as among many Pentecostals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, testimonios or testimonies are a significant “source along with the biblical historical sources.”²⁶ According to Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, they are a form of “doing theology.”²⁷ What would it look like to bear witness to what God has done for

us in Christ, how God has spoken through the Scriptures, *and* to bear witness to what God has done for *us* in the present? In a climate such as ours, it is essential that we tell stories about God's goodness and faithfulness. Perhaps we should ask, "Where are people hearing the most compelling stories – from us or from others? As journalist Terry Mattingly observes, "Most people hear academic lectures at church, then turn to mass media to find inspiring tales of heroes and villains, triumph and tragedy, sin and redemption, heaven and hell."²⁸ In other words, when people hear only a lecture in a sanctuary, they are more likely to obey a story in the world. The Christian story is the best story ever told. It's time to work harder at telling it.

Proposal # 4: Better account for the pervasiveness of biblical illiteracy whenever we prepare sermons. How pervasive is biblical illiteracy? Perhaps the word "rampant" is appropriate. In 2014, the American Bible Society reported that nine in 10 Americans households had at least one Bible with the average household owning three. Contrast this finding with a *Lifeway Research* study, also published in 2014, which showed that 40 percent of church attendees read their Bibles about once a month or "rarely / never."²⁹ In other words, we live in an age of Bible ownership *and* biblical illiteracy. People own Bibles, but don't read them. Again, as a matter of nuance, the extent of biblical illiteracy in a congregation varies depending on a host of factors. That stated *it is better to assume less biblical knowledge than we used to assume.* As Andy Stanley observes, "Whenever pastors assume people in their congregations know certain things, they miss opportunities to teach. If a pastor makes assumptions year after year, then a whole generation has never heard [that truth] for the first time. If we assume too much, we communicate too little."³⁰

Perhaps an example would be helpful. In *Distance in Preaching*, homiletician Michael Brothers tells a story about going to church on Easter. A little girl from an un-churched home had been coming to Sunday School and services for several weeks, and she decided to invite her un-churched father to attend. It was obvious that her father didn't know his right pew from his left when it came to church – this man was sitting on the same pew as Brothers. When the preacher for that Sunday began to preach, and he got to the part of the Easter Story when the angel tells the women, "He is risen. He is not here," the father turned to his daughter, whispered in her ear, and asked, "*What happened to him?*" He didn't know what happened next. *Assume nothing*, even something as basic as what happened with the Easter story. Especially when we tell obscure biblical stories, we should assume that a lot of people don't know them. What does this mean for us as preachers? It means we need to think more strategically about preaching-as-catechesis, that is, as basic instruction on the rudimentary features of the Christian faith.

4. WHAT RESOURCES IN SCRIPTURE HELPS US THINK ABOUT SECULARIZATION BIBLICALLY?

Many resources are available to us in the Bible to help us think biblically about this issue. For the sake of brevity, let me suggest returning to the wilderness metaphor as a helpful starting point. When most Christians think about wilderness, they associate it with spiritual deadness, dryness, and thirst. To them, wilderness equals spiritual lethargy, apathy, or temptation. Why go to the same place where a whole generation of Israelites died and where the subsequent generation sent the scapegoat to die? In the desert, Jesus was tempted by the Evil One. Why go there? Interestingly, Scripture offers a broader perspective on the wilderness – it challenges Jay-Z and Kanye’s perception that there are somehow places outside the church’s reach. Two scenes are especially prominent.

The first scene is found in Ezekiel 37. “The hand of the Lord was upon me,” Ezekiel says in v. 1. The Spirit carries him out to the middle of a valley filled with bones. We learn in v. 2 he Lord led him “back and forth” among the bones, and that the bones were very dry. Ezekiel is not in a lush valley; he is in a desert valley. The Lord asks Ezekiel, “Son of Man, can these bones live again?” And, Ezekiel answers: “O Sovereign Lord, you alone know.” Then, the Lord says, “*Prophesy* to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.’” (4) God says: “Preach to the bones.” Interesting, isn’t it? In a place of deadness, dryness, and desolation, the Lord says, “Preach!” “*Prophesy!*” Tell the bones, “Hear the word of the Lord.” Often in Scripture, God speaks to His people on mountaintops: Mt. Sinai, Mt. Carmel, the Mount of Transfiguration. But, in Ezekiel 37, God speaks in the desert valley of dry bones. The Lord sends Ezekiel to preach in the wilderness, the place of dryness and desolation, the locus absconditus. In the desert, Ezekiel speaks a bold and prophetic message: “Hear the word of the Lord.” In effect, Ezekiel says to the bones: “In this valley, God is not Deus Absconditus! God’s rule and reign still apply. God still in the wild!” In Ezekiel 37, the wilderness is not a place of desolation or a place outside of God’s sovereign reach. Rather, it is a place of transformation, the epicenter of God’s plan to redeem a people to Himself. In this scene at least, the wild is the place where God makes a way.

The second biblical scene is found in Luke 3 and Matthew 3, both of which push back against the belief that the wild is a place of spiritual deadness. The first is Luke 3:1-2: *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracónitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.*

Notice which clauses are dependent and which are independent. All of the names of those in power provide historical points of reference, but they also set up the main verb and the main phrase. “The word of God came to

John...*in the wilderness*." It is as if the omnipotent autocrats are afterthoughts. The wilderness is the epicenter of God's redemptive activity, not the halls of power.

Also, in Matthew 3:1-3, we read about John the Baptist launching his public ministry in the "Desert of Judea." (v. 1) John behaves after the manner of Elijah wearing camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist and eating locusts and wild honey. (Mal. 4, Lk 7:27) John also fulfills the Isaianic prophecy, "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Isa. 40:3) Interestingly, Isaiah 40:3 has two different renderings in the Hebrew. The rendering Matthew uses reads: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord.'" But, most translations of Isa. 40:3 read: "A voice of one calling, '*In the desert*, prepare the way for the Lord.'" Notice that, in the second rendering, the emphasis is greater on the wilderness-as-place-in-which God's word and God's ways are revealed. In both renderings, the desert is not a place of divine absence or spiritual apathy; it is the locus of kingdom announcement, the site in which God's redemptive purposes and plans are inaugurated in the Messiah. In a sense, the church as we know it is born in the wild, its relevance to the modern situation revealed by its natal genesis in the wilderness. More often than we realize, the wilderness functions as a place of spiritual transformation and renewal. According to NT commentator R.T. France, in Jewish thought, "to be in the wilderness was to be prepared for a new beginning with God."³¹ The OT prophets testified to this reality. (Jer 2:2-3, Hos 2:14-15, Ezek 20:35-38) In Scripture, the wild can be a place where God raises up children for Abraham and makes dry bones live.

Like John, preachers are called into the wilderness to proclaim, "Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him," even when that same wilderness is profanely secular. Perhaps the reason Kanye and Jay-Z don't believe in a church in the wild is because none of the Christians they know are willing to go there? The *preacher's* calling is to announce the advent of the kingdom of God to those who will repent and those who will not, to proclaim in Babylon what is true in Canaan. Ours is a calling to a public ministry of life-transforming, world-changing witness in the desert as well as on the mountaintop.

CONCLUSION

An important caveat before concluding: secularization *does not mean* that the church is in a precipitous and irreversible decline. As was stated earlier, sociologists like Berger and Cox backed away from some of their 1960s-era claims that modernization *necessarily* led to secularization. Also, immigration changes the trajectory of the conversation in significant ways. Those who ignore rapid demographic changes in the U.S. among Christians do so at their own peril. According to Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, "new immigrant Christians are changing America's religious landscape" and

revitalizing large segments of U.S. Protestantism.³²

So, what can we conclude? First, we can conclude with confidence that it's time to think more intentionally about how we preach in a culture marked by the effects of secularization and plagued by biblical illiteracy. If the data are correct concerning the rampant prevalence of biblical illiteracy, then we have some work to do. If the starting point for some of the non-Christians who hear the Easter Story is, "What happened to him?," it might be time to re-think our evangelistic starting point.

Second, we can conclude from Scripture that God is at work in the wild. In Isaiah 43:19, the Lord speaks and offers to His people this abiding promise: "I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." The reason the church can be a church in the wild is because God can transform and renew it in the wild. In the wilderness, God is present. God is working. God makes a way.

NOTES

1. Fulkerson's larger point is that theologies that matter arise out of situations that matter. The situations that matter most occur at the site of a wound in need of remedy and transformation. See Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13–14, 22.
2. David Niose, *Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 93.
3. See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005); and, Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Hachette Books, 2007).
4. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 1.
5. *Ibid.*, 2.
6. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1969), 107.
7. In *The Desecularization of the World*, published in 1999, Berger writes: "The assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, with some exceptions to which I will come presently, is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled "secularization theory" is essentially mistaken. In my early work I contributed to this literature. I was in good company – most sociologists of religion had similar views, and we had good reasons for holding them." See Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 2. In *The Future of Faith*, Harvey Cox lists "the unanticipated resurgence of religion" as

- one among three distinguishing qualities that “mark the world’s spiritual profile” in the new millennium. The other two qualities, according to Cox, are the death of fundamentalism and a change in *how* people express religiosity. See Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 1.
8. See Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).
 9. Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2. To a certain extent, Gregory’s thesis is not new. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger claims that “the Western religious tradition may have carried the seeds of secularization within itself.” Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1969), 110.
 10. David Niose, *Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 29.
 11. Berger writes: “To be sure, modernization has had secularizing effects, more in some places than in others. But it has also provoked powerful movements of counter-secularization.” Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,” in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 3.
 12. The Barna Group, “2015 Sees Sharp Rise in Post-Christian Population,” accessed August 25, 2015, <https://cities.barna.org/america-more-post-christian-than-two-years-ago/>.
 13. Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980), 29.
 14. George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless: Understanding Today’s Unchurched and How to Connect with Them* (Austin, TX: Tyndale Momentum, 2014), 7–8.
 15. *Ibid.*, 8.
 16. John Meacham, “The End of Christian America,” April 3, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/meacham-end-christian-america-77125>.
 17. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 20.
 18. Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2013), 3. Emphasis in original.
 19. Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 171. Emphasis added.
 20. Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.
 21. James Stewart, *Heralds of God* (New York: Scribner’s, 1946), 11.
 22. Ian Pitt-Watson, *Preaching: A Kind of Folly* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 52.
 23. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of*

Expository Messages (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 48.

24. For instance, in a sermon on Psalm 39, a lament psalm, Keller demonstrates this two-fold critique: "The Psalms gives us a gospel third way with your feelings. It's a third way between what religiosity and secularity ordinarily tell you to do with your feelings. Religiosity is very uncomfortable with feelings. Religious people by and large want to deny the power and the depth and the darkness of their feelings. But, on the other hand, secular people tend to see discovery and expression of your feelings almost as a good end in itself. Once they discover them, they bow to them and they say, 'Well, that's my feelings, and I have to go to my feelings.' To bow to your feelings or to stuff your feelings, to be overawed by your feelings or under-aware of your feelings, that's dangerous. The Psalms does [sic] neither. The Psalms suggests [sic] neither. The Psalms does not say deny or vent, but pray your feelings. Pray your deepest feelings. Bring them before God and process them." See Timothy Keller, "Praying Our Tears," Sermon delivered at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, February 27, 2000. See also Keller's newest book, especially his chapter on preaching as worldview confrontation and construction. Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 121–56.
25. Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Kings: Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011), 454.
26. This quote is with reference to Latina women in particular whose voices are muted and silenced in congregations. *Testimonios* make it possible for "women in the church to act as catalysts in the process of the liberation of women." See Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Perez, and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evangelicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 98. For more on *testimonios*, see also Loida Martell-Otero, "Women Doing Theology: Una Perspectiva Evangélica," *Apuntes* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 81–82.
27. See Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "Latina Women and Immigration," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 3, no. 2 (2008): 64.
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31. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 129.

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32. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 83.

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REFRAMING THE HERMENEUTICAL QUESTION AS PART OF ITS HOMILETICAL RESPONSIBILITY: MAKING EXTENSIVE USE OF THE SPEECH ACT THEORY

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes an alternative hermeneutical approach that uses speech act theory as an exegetical method. It is shown that the preacher does not merely aim to reflect the same ideas or the same form as the biblical text, but also aims at being faithful to the same purpose of God's words in the text and at eliciting the same response, seeking the totality of God's speech act in Scripture.

INTRODUCTION

This article will explore the potential contributions of the speech act theory (SAT) as an alternative hermeneutical exercise for appropriating biblical passages in the preached text. Below, we shall offer a brief survey of the methods and terminologies associated with the speech act theory, particularly that of Austin and his student, Searle. The reason for focusing on these two linguists is clear: If Austin is the Luther of speech act theory John Searle may be considered its Melancthon, i.e. its systematic theologian.¹ In addition, reframing the hermeneutical reality in speech act theory will show how these insights apply to the particular process of movement from a biblical text to a sermon. In this hermeneutic approach, it becomes crucial to ask how the preacher recognizes both the illocutionary actions in the text as well as the perlocutionary action in the preached text. There is nothing for the preacher to say, until the preacher becomes aware of the illocutionary act.

SPEECH ACT THEORY

Speech act theory has to do with the use of language in a speech performance. It was initially introduced by John Langshaw Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and consequently systematized by his student John Searle in his volumes, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969) and *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (1979). This philosophy of linguistic theory proposes that a speaker is not merely uttering sounds, words or statements, but is performing an action. It is therefore appropriately named speech act theory².

J.L. AUSTIN'S PRELIMINARY ASPECT OF SPEECH ACT THEORY

Austin's initial suspicion regarding the linguistic function in speech acts serve to demonstrate that all instances of "making statements" in language perform particular actions. In other words, performatives are used when we say, "I do" (in a marriage ceremony), "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth" (in christening a ship), "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" (in a will), or "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow" (in a bet). "In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstance) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or the state that I am doing it: it is to do it."³

Thus, Austin begins his discussion of language in terms of a distinction between what he calls the "constatives" and the "performatives." Constatives are descriptive statements whose primary business is to refer, describe and state, while performative statements in their utterance want to do something rather than merely to say something.⁴ Performative statements also try to do something else altogether. Austin's view of utterances introduces the concept of speech act theory which indicates mainly that the use of language employs a performative action instead of simply uttering a certain informative fact. This performative aspect of language use in the speech act theory sharply distinguishes three categories of meaningful actions thus:

- (1) The locutions are subjected to the rules of the verbal and grammatical content of what is being said (e.g. "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age," in Matthew 28:20 NIV).⁵
- (2) The illocutions are subjected to the rules of the activities of the faithful community, that is, of what is being done when something is said (e.g. greeting, warning, promise, command, etc.).
- (3) The perlocutions are subjected to the rules of the reasonable responsibility involved in saying something (e.g. deterring, persuading, surprising, etc.).⁶

Theoretically, successful communication, according to Austin, involves an agreement on all three of these levels of action (locution, illocution and perlocution) between the sender (statement/text) and the receiver (listener/reader). In other words, understanding the intention of the language user is not a matter of only recovering certain psychic phenomena but of reconstructing a public performance in terms that make its nature as an intended action clear. In this regard, Austin's understanding of intention is not the same as the so-called inaccessible inner mental process. To understand the intentionality in a text or an utterance is to understand what the person behind the utterance is doing. Accordingly, a theory of language must be part of a theory of action. It goes further to show how indispensable this concept

remains for hermeneutics and for the notion of “illocutionary action.”⁷ To put it simply, the receiver executes the intention of the sender, who produced the illocutionary action (that is, advised, ordered, and warned). The receiver gets the meaning of the sender’s utterance. In this case, to know is to respond to the illocution. Austin therefore distinguishes between the *meaning* of what we say and the *force* of what we say.⁸

The distinction becomes important in biblical interpretation and preaching. For example, James wrote, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (James 2:19). He not only wrote to assert their shared monotheism, but to warn fake believers who did not produce good deeds in the community. Even though the audience in this text already had knowledge on a locutionary level (“God is one”) we should note also that it is not necessary to reconstruct their socio or historic context in order to understand its locutionary level. However, since this well-known knowledge of God did not make any difference in their life, they were therefore no different from demons. To communicate this text faithfully, the preacher will have to be concerned not only with the locutionary level, but also of the illocutionary. This consideration will become the fundamental hermeneutic device for determining the intention of the biblical text as well as the normative task of preaching.⁹ Therefore, one of the most important benefits of the illocutionary action is rethinking the meaning of Scripture and a faithful response to it. The faithful preacher will move from text to sermon via the illocutionary action in the text by executing this action in the modern world.

JOHN SEARLE’S DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH ACT THEORY

In a persuasive way, Searle develops Austin’s initial model, the result of which is the study of speech act theory.¹⁰ Searle stresses that, “[t]he unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token of the symbol, word or sentence, but rather the... performance of the speech act.” In this case, “a theory of language is part of theory of action.”¹¹ From this perspective, speech act theory has to be regarded as a special theory of action, “the production of the sentence token under certain conditions is the illocutionary act, and the illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication.”¹²

Searle’s fundamental claims about speech act theory agrees with Austin’s idea of using language as the basic unit of communication not in its “constative” dimension, but rather as performing a speech act. However, he suggests a more detailed framework within the performative aspect of language usage. For example, Searle points out that Austin’s distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts has a pragmatic weakness. Earlier, Austin had predicted that, “it is the distinction between illocutions and perlocutions which seems likeliest to give trouble.”¹³ His initial distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts has therefore been reconfigured

and clarified by Searle.¹⁴ In Searle's analysis, no utterance of a sentence and its meaning are completely force-neutral. Every literal text contains some indicators of force as part of its meaning, which is to say that every locutionary act is already an illocutionary act. In this case, Austin's isolated locutionary act has proved unhelpful, since his "rhetic act" is already an illocutionary act.¹⁵ In Searle's view, "One cannot just express a proposition while doing nothing else and have thereby performed a complete speech act... When a proposition is expressed it is always expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act."¹⁶

Thus, three different types of actions are observed when people use the word/text, viz. (1) in *utterance acts*: to utter words (e.g., morphemes and sentences); (2) in *propositional acts*: to refer and predicate; (3) in *illocutionary acts*: to state, question, command, promise, and so on. Searle claims that the propositional acts cannot stand on their own; that is, no language can just indicate and describe without making an assertion, asking a question or performing some other illocutionary act. Propositional acts cannot occur alone because an illocutionary act is always simultaneously performed. This incorporation within a propositional expression and its illocutionary act means that most illocutionary acts will have propositional content. Searle states more clearly that what people do with a proposition is an illocutionary act: "The illocutionary force indicator shows how the proposition is to be taken."¹⁷ Therefore, Searle shows that the formulation of a speech act can be represented as $F(p)$ where " F " is the illocutionary force and " P " is the proposition.¹⁸ To put it simply, " F " creates a proposition and expresses it in terms of illocutionary acts (a warning " $W(p)$," blessing " $B(p)$," promise " $Pr.(p)$," etc.). Here, (P) stands for the propositional content and F for the stance adopted by the speaker toward it, that is, a proposition becomes a meaningful action through its illocutionary force.¹⁹

CLASSIFYING ILLOCUTIONARY ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTION OF FIT

According to Searle, the speaker's intention creates an illocutionary force in which some illocutions have a part in their purpose. This illocution point determines the kind of directedness between the propositional content and the world in order to represent the place of the object in the world. In this case, "the direction of fit" becomes the important concept used for establishing a taxonomy of illocutionary acts.²⁰ It is a matter of how the propositional contents match the world through the purpose of illocutionary points. As Searle also stresses, the author intends $F(p)$ to be both a propositional content and the purpose of an illocutionary action. Thus, whenever an elementary illocutionary act is satisfied in an actual context of utterance, a success of fit between language and the world is required.²¹ This requirement is called "the direction of fit," and it helps in understanding the logic of the illocutionary action.²²

Searle notes that there are basically five types of speech acts $F(p)$ which people do with language (i.e. *assertives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives* and *declarations*). Often, the speaker uses more than one of these in the same utterance: (1) *assertives*: utterances to say how things are; (2) *directives*: utterances trying to get people to do things; (3) *commissives*: utterances which commit us to do things; (4) *expressives*: utterances expressing our feelings and attitudes; (5) *declarations*: utterances which bring about change.²³

Therefore, the classification of illocutionary acts is based precisely on the distinction between different illocutionary points. This distinction shows how the speaker's intention makes the same proposition count as an illocutionary act, for example, as a warning; " $W(p)$," blessing; " $B(p)$," promise; " $Pr(p)$," etc.. In order to explain the idea of directedness in speech act theory, Searle illustrates with the shopping list of both a shopper and a detective:

In the case of the shopper's list... to get the world to match the words; the man is supposed to make his actions fit the list. In the case of the detective... to make the words match the world; the man is supposed to make the list fit the actions of the shopper. This can be further demonstrated by observing the role of 'mistake' in the two cases. If the detective gets home and suddenly realizes that the man bought pork chops instead of bacon, he can simply erase the word "bacon" and write "pork chops." But if the shopper gets home and his wife points out he has bought pork chops when he should have bought bacon he cannot correct the mistake by erasing "bacon" from the list and writing "pork chops."²⁴

Searle's illustration above shows that even though the propositional contents (p) of the two lists are the same, their force (F) will be quite different. The difference is equated with the author's intention which determines the direction (and manner) of fit between words and world.²⁵ Earlier, we have noted that, in James' statement, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19), the purpose is to assert a point in the propositional content, "God is one," which contains a word that matches the world's direction of fit. However, in Paul's statement, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), the purpose is to show a promise, which has a world that matches the words' direction of fit. The two biblical passages have partly the same propositional content, "God is one"—however, the distinction between the different directions of fit is precisely the distinction between different kinds of illocutionary points.

In Searle's analysis, each illocutionary point consists of only four possible directions of fit (word-to-world direction, world-to-word direction, double direction or empty direction):

- (1) Illocutionary acts with an *assertive* point (e.g. assertions, conjectures, predictions) have the words-to-world direction of fit. This illocutionary point represents how things are (e.g. it is raining).
- (2) Illocutionary acts with the *commissive* or directive point (e.g. promises, vows, acceptance, and requests) have the world-to-words direction of fit. This illocutionary point aims to transform the world by the future course of the action of the speaker (e.g. Open the window!).
- (3) Illocutionary acts with the *declaratory* point (e.g. definitions, appellations, appointments, benedictions and condemnations) have the double direction of fit to bring about correspondence between propositional content and reality (e.g. You are fired!).
- (4) Illocutionary acts with the *expressive* point (e.g. apologies, thanks, complains, boasts) have the empty direction of fit. This illocutionary point is just to express the speaker's mental state about a represented fact. In this case, in expressive utterance, speakers do not attempt to represent how things are and they do not necessarily want to change things (e.g. I am so sorry).²⁶

Thus, the differences in intentionality in the direction of fit between words and the world is important in overcoming the homiletical problem of the so-called gap between the method of exegesis (what is meant) and what homileticians aim to do in preaching (what it means), when the preacher has correctly identified a preachable material (propositional content), appropriating it within a part of the sermonic content. It is important to determine how the biblical words (more strictly, their propositional content) fit with the world. In other words, if the biblical propositional content is sufficient to display a type of speech act $F(p)$, the difference in the direction of fit serves the homiletic distinction in terms of the homiletic goal.

The point here is that the relationship between the illocutionary act and its direction of fit will serve biblical preaching in an alternative way. The exegetical task should pay attention to classifying illocutionary acts in biblical passage in order to clarify the meaning of a text in the context of a preachable statement and then the direction of fit will extend to the preaching content. This process of reading and preaching Scripture is related to how the preacher executes an illocutionary action after he or she has successfully performed it within the appropriate direction of fit. The reading and preaching of Scripture in speech act theory, thus, aims to demonstrate how the illocutionary act in Scripture fits with the world. In fact, because of the weakness of the appropriation of the findings of biblical studies in preaching, many preachers use only the biblical content to urge the congregation to respond to the "how-toss" of its biblical ideas observed in the text. In this case, they concern only (p), which easily transforms the text into a dogmatic or moral lesson. The preacher can too easily find the moral vision or dogmatic essence in the Scripture, but not particularly pay attention

to the relationship between the illocutionary act and its direction of fit.

In order to achieve the goal of biblical direction of fit in the sermon, the interpreter-preacher should imitate the biblical author's attention as $F(p)$. This homiletic motif is produced when both the Scripture and the sermon concentrate on the same theme in the same way. In fact, the purpose of Scripture is not merely to inform, but to do something else such as giving a promise, comfort, warn, etc. True preaching therefore will endeavor not only to retell the same propositional content as the text, but will also aim at obtaining the same response as the original biblical author intended it to be necessary to evaluate the homiletic goal in which the hermeneutical and homiletical cogency between the appropriation of the text and its performance aims to overcome problems regarding the sealed gap between what the text "meant" and proclaiming what the text "means" how of it fit the world in the context of the illocutionary acts in the text. Therefore, the relationship between interpretation methods and the homiletic content is largely a matter of following directions – the direction of reading and preaching of Scripture takes place when both hermeneutics and homiletics attend to the same matter in the same way which in the context of the direction of fit matching the words with the world. This process provides the crucial connection between the biblical world and the sermon's direction. It is not the repetition of a past event, but a creative responsibility at the behest of the dynamic illocutionary force.

However, the homiletical emphasis on the dynamic illocutionary force is also not a new conception. Craddock has already adopted the merit of illocutionary force and its direction of fit in biblical language as a primary homiletical resource. Craddock notes that, "J.L Austin has reminded us of the creative or performative power of words. Words not only report something; they do something."²⁷ He claims that too often today words simply describe; they "serve only as signs pointing to the discovered or discoverable data." For Craddock, a word is "an action, something happening"; "words are deeds," and his goal is to recover the "dynamistic and creative functions of language." Nevertheless, recent preaching styles have simply missed the point of Craddock's critique of the carelessness of the biblical language used in the sermon. Craddock argues that "before they were smothered by a scientific and technological culture, words danced, sang, teased, lured, probed, wept, judged, and transformed." In other words, the illocutionary action in the text itself is a divine symphony, putting new dynamic life into dry sermons. The multiple speech actions lead to a change from monotonous preaching to God's life-giving breath to the dry bones of the sermon.

PRODUCTION OF MEANING IN SPEECH ACT THEORY

Searle goes further to demonstrate that meaning is produced and thereby it becomes available.²⁹ In considering the role of meaning in speech act theory, it may be useful to mention another speech act theorist, Paul

Grice. On the role of meaning in the utterance, Grice states that, "to say that a speaker *S* meant something by *X* is to say that *S* intended the utterance of *X* to produce some effect in a hearer *H* by means of the recognition of this intention."³⁰ This view of meaning shows clearly that the intention of *S* produces an effect on the audience. The definition seems plausible, yet it requires further examination, because it confuses illocutionary with perlocutionary acts. In other words, illocutionary acts through the sender succeeds in doing what he/she is trying to do by getting the receiver to recognize what the text or utterance *S* is trying to get across.

However, the "effect" on the hearer is not a belief or a response; it consists simply in the hearer/readers' understanding of the illocutionary act of the speaker/author. Searle argues that this effect is an illocutionary effect (*IE*). Therefore, he proposes an alternative definition of meaning in terms of speech act theory namely "the speaker *S* intends to produce an illocutionary effect *IE* in the hearer *H* by means of getting *H* to recognize *S*'s intention to produce *IE*."³¹ According to his definition, the meaning is specifically a matter of illocution, not of perlocution.³²

Specifically, Searle refuses to assign any function to perlocution in the foundation of meaning: "I will reject the idea that the intentions that matter for meaning are the intentions to produce effects on audiences."³³ For example, the Bible testifies to God's force in the world, regardless of how people respond to it, but it only persuades the people if they respond to its testimony in faith. Therefore, the meaning is the intention, as expressed in the illocutionary action. The illocutionary points are created by the author's intention which determines how the propositional context relates to the world. The disclosed reality is specifically a matter of the illocutionary action that is created by the author's intentional purpose, not by the reader's individual experience.

In this regard, biblical preaching is not preaching about individual experiences. When the preacher prepares a sermon using the illocutionary action of the text, he or she is not merely gathering propositional information about that text. Rather, the preacher tries to demonstrate how the propositional information works together as an illocutionary act simultaneously performed through biblical preaching. For example, the utterance of the centurion in front of Jesus: "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39) is neither simply *p* nor simply *F* but *F(p)*. Specifically, it is an *assertive* which entails presenting the messianic reality in the context of the Passion of the Christ. This reality is created by the illocutionary action which the author performed. It is not created by self-evident reading. The illocutionary force is "a living language voice in search of a hearer, a voice which seeks to break in upon us from beyond."³⁴ There is nothing for preachers to perform in a sermon until they recognize the illocutionary act in God's living language whereby their sermon relates God's living illocutionary voice to the broken world. This homiletical execution of the text in the speech act theory is the proclamation of what the Scripture has stated—the illocutionary act in the text

is a message through which the form and content of preaching are driven by the illocutionary force. With regard to this assessment of meaning in speech act theory, therefore, it becomes crucial to ask how people recognize the divine intention in producing the illocutionary force. It expects God's warning, promises, commands, healing, etc.

THE REALITY OF INSTITUTIONAL FACT

The study of texts in speech act theory often involves clarifying something which is not in the text, but part of the production of meaning by the text. This approach leads to one of the fundamental arguments in Searle's work on speech act theory. Searle states that:

[T]he semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules, and that speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expressions in accordance with these sets of constitutive rules.³⁵

Searle argues that the use of language is also explained by these constitutive rules, and it governs human behaviour. Consequently, the propositional content can be understood as having certain "constitutive rules," which constitute and regulate activities, and often have the form: "X counts as Y in context C").³⁶ For example, under the constitutive rules of soccer, when the soccer player kicks a soccer ball into the goal, it *counts* as one score. There are conventions involved in these constitutive rules, which are related to all kinds of non-linguistic criteria. Therefore, to perform illocutionary acts will be to engage in "a rule-governed form of behavior."³⁷ In this case, Searle proposes the notion of "institutional facts," which "are indeed facts; but their existence, unlike the existence of "brute facts,"³⁸ presupposes the existence of certain human institutions" (e.g. marriage or the rules of baseball). Furthermore, Searle differentiates between "brute facts" and "institution facts" in the context of producing meaning.³⁹ The particular sense of "institution" implied here is a "system of constitutive rules." Thus, "the fact that a man performed a certain speech act, e.g., made a promise, is an institutional fact."⁴⁰

In fact, the biblical text is itself "a rule-governed form of behaviour," for it contains certain "constitutive rules" such as honour and shame, kinship, the value system of purity, or the idea of ancient economy. The reading of Scripture clearly encounters a totally different world and it manifests in the discussions of the social, political and cultural dynamics of the world of Scripture. Cultural conventions involved in these constitutive rules are related to all kinds of "institutional facts." These non-linguistic elements help us to recognize where illocutionary action operates, and that the illocutionary action creates "new realities." For example, the statement,

"You are guilty," is an "institutional fact" that creates a social reality within a successful performance of the relevant speech act in a court of law. In this way, the benefit of Searle's formulation, "X counts as Y in context C," in speech act theory is that it calls attention to the central problem, being itself self-evident.⁴¹ For a long time in its history, the preacher has been aware of how easy it is to use Scripture to prove a particular dogma or to justify a particular practice, only to be accused of misrepresenting the text. Therefore, the preached text in the speech act theory should be more concerned with textual meaning as an institutional fact, and less concerned with his or her own subjective responses to the clear or abstract fact of the text.

PRACTICAL SERMON PREPARATION USING PHILEMON VV.15-16

Understanding the illocutionary points in the text will enable the preacher to express the homiletical ideas in Scripture can be regarded as "*biblical illocutionary forces*." This new terminology in the speech act theory will replace the idea of "biblical meaning" or "main idea," thus, rendering *biblical illocutionary force* as the normative task in homiletical exegesis. Furthermore, if the preacher pays attention to the preaching in the "*re-execution of the biblical illocutionary forces*" in its full speech act theory context, then he or she should pay attention to the perlocutionary action. We call this attitude "*perlocutionary homiletical response*," a concept which replaces the "sermon goal" or "preaching effect" in the context of the preached text. Thus, the *perlocutionary homiletical response* is granted the pragmatic task of the homiletical content in the speech act theory. The *perlocutionary homiletical response* as a mediating concept between the text and the preacher is also a part of the role of the congregation and the act of communication. The *perlocutionary homiletical response* is seen as a suitable perlocutionary action just as the intention of the *biblical illocutionary force* anticipates the truthful responsibility from homiletic obedience.⁴² The *biblical illocutionary force* and its *perlocutionary homiletical response* offer practical guidelines on the hermeneutical and homiletical reality for the application or performance of the biblical illocutionary action in the text and its perlocutionary action in the preached text, that is, an event performed as the living Word of God for a modern audience.

We wish to consider for example a possible exposition of Philemon vv.15-16 in the light of speech act theory-oriented homiletical exegesis. This passage has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, Philemon is one significant text that can be used to support illocutionary action. The fact that the text of Philemon could be understood in the sense of "persuading" in the illocutionary action has been reaffirmed by several scholars.⁴³ Secondly, a more crucial reason is that Philemon is hardly used in preaching because this short and undervalued letter (335 words in Greek) does not usually rank among the great Pauline compositions; therefore, it is not an attractive sermon material to preachers. However, the exegetical procedures in speech

act theory here could be seen as homiletical perlocution (response) on Paul's illocutionary action in Philemon 1:21b, which says, "I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask." To put it simply or to paraphrase the statement homiletically, one could say: what *the preacher will preach* is even more than what *a biblical author wrote in the Scripture*. If the preacher accepts this paraphrase, it would help us to refine homiletical exegesis in the light of speech act theory. The following three hermeneutical questions could provide a framework for our approach:

- (1) *Which constitutive rules and reality of institutional facts govern this biblical passage?*
- (2) *What kind of "biblical illocutionary forces" does the passage perform?*
- (3) *How do the biblical illocutionary forces in the text determine the character of the "perlocutionary homiletical response," opening up an alternative reality in the Christian life?*

Even though each question is distinct, the distinctions are interpreted as connected through the interdependence of our interpretative methodology. The preacher who applies speech act theory to homiletical exegesis in the light of the three aforementioned questions will show a different homiletical framework for Philemon vv.15-16, as explained below:

- (1) *Which constitutive rules and reality of institutional facts govern this biblical passage?*

The preacher of Philemon vv.15-16 would encounter a totally different cultural world that manifests itself firstly in the cultural manner in which slaves who ran away from their owners are treated. In particular, the letter of Philemon recommends the Christian way to solve this urgent household problem. The preacher should therefore ask questions such as whose responsibility it was to accept the escape of a slave and about its applicability in this context. In addition, the letter illustrates the potential tension between "household management" and "house churches" in the formation and growth of the early Christian movement.⁴⁴ The contrast between two kinds of institutional rules – "visible temporal property" and "invisible permanent property" – serves to clarify the notion of biblical illocutionary action as well as its suitable perlocutionary action as part of its homiletical content. In this regard, the institutional rules would help the preacher recognize the identity of the illocutionary action in the text as well as avoid subjective exegesis.

- (2) *What kind of "biblical illocutionary forces" does the biblical passage perform?*

In speech act theory, the literary structure contains some indicators of force as part of the meaning of a text, which is to say that every literary form in locutionary act is already part of the total illocutionary act.⁴⁵ Wendland's analysis of Philemon vv.15-16 is useful for understanding its literary structure, and for analysing the structure of the locution level to demonstrate *F(p)*:

Τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη		Perhaps this is why he was separated
πρὸς ὥραν,	A	for an hour,
ἵνα αἰώνιον	B	so that for all time
αὐτὸν ἀπέχης ,		<i>him</i> you might have back,
οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον	A'	no longer as a slave
ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ δοῦλον,		but more than a slave
ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν,	B'	as a beloved brother,
μάλιστα ἐμοί,		especially to me,
πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ		but how much more rather to you
καὶ ἐν σαρκί	A''	both in the flesh
καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.	B''	and in the Lord'' [<i>his emphasis</i>]. ⁴⁶

On the locution level, the structure of the above biblical passage clearly shows strong "textual unity" with the phonetic element (in bold and underlined above) and certain pragmatic elements (repeated personal pronoun). However, the preacher can find contrasts in this unit of utterance (e.g. "for an hour" / "all time;" "slave" / "brother;" "to me" / "to you"). In speech act theory, the textual structure must be viewed as a *pragmatic* use rather than being a kind of literary attire. In other words, the preacher must seriously ask the question: What is each contrasting set of words trying to do? To put it simply, Scripture has its own illocutionary action whereby a revealed written text is part of a past event but its energy and theological purpose are continuously being echoed through the unique sequence of *biblical illocutionary forces*. In the light of this hermeneutical possibility, the preaching imitates biblical author's illocutionary action and its own theological intention. It helps to distinguish between the preacher's intended meaning and the biblical author's intended meaning. Specifically, the contrast between an hour and all time in Philemon vv.15-16 will perform its own biblical illocutionary action as the promise. This *biblical illocutionary action* (the promise) and its continuous *biblical illocutionary forces* will be highlighted by an important biblical constitutive rule and its reality of institutional fact. To be precise, the constitutive rules in the house churches constitute and regulate activities, and often have the form: X (eternal time) counts as Y (invisible permanent property) in context C (God's promise in Christian eschatology). Indeed, the execution of *biblical illocutionary force* (the promise) in Philemon vv.15-16 represents and performs the reality of Christian value system.

(3) *How do the biblical illocutionary forces in the text determine the character of the “perlocutionary homiletical response” for opening up an alternative reality in the Christian life?*

Traditionally, it is often pointed out that the homiletical response in terms of the sermon goal is saying the same thing as the text or re-plotting the same plot as the text. However, with speech act theory, the preached texts suggest “doing the same thing as perlocutionary effects of the text.” Therefore, the *perlocutionary homiletical response* of Philemon vv.15-16 is not only an act of reconstructing contemporary meanings of the invisible permanent property in the form of a propositional theme, but rather of reconstructing the Christian life in the modern world, eschatologically, i.e., in terms of the invisible permanent property. In certain cases, the *perlocutionary homiletical response* argues that the task of biblical preaching is not to be viewed simply as finding a propositional statement from the Scripture, nor as simply giving the sermon the shape of the biblical narrative. Rather, the crucial matter in biblical preaching should be a testimony in the public domain whereby the preacher as a witness then rightly construes the *biblical illocutionary force* performed on the modern audience. The preacher should therefore preach the invisible permanent property in God’s promise which is fulfilled by the parousia of Christ. To accomplish this, the preacher should not only appreciate the hermeneutic of wisdom about invisible permanent property in the preached texts, it must also perform permanent legacy wisely through faithful discernment. Thus, the *biblical illocutionary force* in the text and its *perlocutionary homiletical response* in the preached text will continually create different effects of fright, alarm or hope on the congregation in modern contexts. This biblical linguistic force created alternative reality in the modern world.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In order to refine our exegetical procedure or to step back and utilize the theoretical re-conceptualization of our exegesis, we have investigated the views of Austin and of his student Searle. The philosophy behind their linguistic theory offers four important contributions that underline, *firstly*, speaking as the performance of an act; *secondly*, in the preaching of a biblical text, the ability to distinguish between the meaning of what we say (locution), the force of what we say (illocution), and the response of saying something (perlocution); *thirdly*, the cognition of the constitutive rules regarding the reality of institutional fact in language for it to count as an action; *fourthly*, the ability to explain that a proposition is always expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act. This is symbolized as $F(p)$. At this stage, the preacher is able to distinguish between the *meaning* of what we say and the force of what we say. This distinction can create a particular hermeneutical sensitivity for finding the illocutions in the text and its suitable perlocutions in the preached

text.

Thus, it is clear that speech act theory serves to refresh both the preaching material and the preaching praxis as *biblical illocutionary forces* and *perlocutionary homiletical response*. The homiletic theory in the light of speech act theory not only aims to reflect the same ideas or the same form as the biblical text, but also aims at being faithful to the same purpose and seeking to elicit the same response as that of the illocutionary force. To put it simply, the Scripture uses the preacher; the preacher does not use the Scripture. It becomes clear therefore that the homiletical exegesis in the speech act theory requires a response that shows a proper and responsible appreciation of the Scripture. The essence of the hermeneutical question and its exegetical availability in preaching recognize the *biblical illocutionary forces* in the bible because the *biblical illocutionary forces* create homiletical responsibility in the preached text.

NOTES

1. K.J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 209.
2. The study of what we can do with words has a long history, as the works of philosophers before Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle show. See Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*; Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, 1788; E Husser, *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901). Trans. by J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970). For a detailed account and references, see B. Smith, "Towards a History of Speech Act Theory" in A. Burkhard, ed. *Speech Acts, Meaning and Intentions: Critical Approaches to the Philosophy of John R. Searle* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990)29-61.
3. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 6.
4. Later, Austin rejected the "constative" and "performative" categories in favor of the categories of "felicity" and "infelicity," which determine whether constatives are appropriate or inappropriate relative to the conditions of their utterance. See Austin, *How to Do Things*, 133-147. Austin's work was subsequently refined and systematized by his student, Searle. See D. Vanderveken and S. Kubo, eds., *Essays in Speech Act Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001), 5.
5. Bible quotations in this article are taken from the NIV.
6. Austin, *How to do Things*, 98-108.
7. On this issue, Vanhoozer correctly observes that, "illocution need not imply a return to the traditional psychological model of the author's intention. Viewed in the light of speech act philosophy, author returns as a communicative agent." See Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning*, 213; also D. Patte, "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Exegesis," *Semeia* 41 (1988): 91.
8. Austin, *How to do Things*, 108. Austin begins by proposing a difference between statements and performatives, and then shows that it is impossible to draw a rigid distinction between them. He concludes that a statement is also in a sense performative. Therefore, he stresses that only the

understanding of the locution level in the statement is "roughly equivalent to meaning in the traditional sense." Austin, *How to do Things*, 109.

9. William Alston acclaims the importance of Austin's analysis of the illocutionary action. He argues: "If this is the line along which meaning should be analyzed, then the concept of an illocutionary act is the most fundamental concept in semantics and, hence, in the philosophy of language;" see William P. Alston, *Philosophy of Language* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 39.
10. Austin's idea of performative utterance has been employed most notably in the work of John Searle, who studied under Austin. Searle's major contributions to speech act theory may be considered under four main categories: 1) the amplification of locutionary-illocutionary distinction as $F(p)$; 2) the classification of different types of illocutionary acts; 3) the explanation of the direction of fit between words and the world; 4) the development of the role of constitutive rule in speech act theory. For more of his major contributions to speech act theory, see John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay In the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and John R. Seale and Daniel Vanderveken, *Foundations of illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). He also contributed to and co-edited the volume J.R. Searle, Ferenc Kiefer and Manfred Bierwisch, eds., *Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics* (Dordrecht: D Reidel, 1980). He developed aspects of speech act theory further in J.R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1995); and he offered various responses to critics in Ernest Lepore and Robert Van Gulick eds., *John Searle and His Critics* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991).
11. J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 16-17.
12. J.R. Searle, *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 39.
13. Austin, *How to do Things*, 110.
14. In 1968, Max Black and L. Jonathan Cohen already pointed out a weakness in Austin's distinction between illocution and locution before Searle did. See Max Black, "Austin on Performatives," *Philosophy* 38 (1963): 217-226. L. Jonathan Cohen, "Do Illocutionary Forces Exist?" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1964): 118-37.
15. J.R. Searle, "Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts," *The Philosophical Review* 77 (1968): 413, 405.
16. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 29.
17. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 29, 30.
18. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 31.
19. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning*, 210.

20. J.R. Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society* 5:1 (1976): 3-4.
21. D. Vanderveken, "Universal Grammar and Speech Act Theory," in D. Vanderveken and S. Kubo, eds. *Essays in Speech Act Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001), 32.
22. Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 3-4
23. Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 10-16
24. Searle, "A Classification," 2, 3.
25. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning*, 247.
26. Searle, "A Classification," 10-16; Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 12-20.
27. F. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 3rd edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 34.
28. Craddock, *As One*, 33, 44, 34.
29. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 43.
30. H.P. Grice, "Meaning," *Philosophical Review* 66:3 (1957): 385. This notion of meaning is proposed by Paul Grice who, in agreement with other speech act theory theorists, argues that meaning is primarily a matter of intention; others emphasize the role of conventions. The strength of Searle's theory lies in the fact that it includes both factors. See Grice, "Meaning," 377-388; cf. Searle, *The Philosophy*, 44-46.
31. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 47.
32. Searle, *The Philosophy*, 45.
33. J.R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 161.
34. S. Tostengard, *The Spoken Word* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 81.
35. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 37.
36. Searle, *The Philosophy*, 40; Searle, *Speech Acts*, 35.
37. Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 17.
38. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 51. The notion of "brute facts" which comes from the natural sciences and concerns facts about physical states of affairs, regardless of what anyone thinks about them was coined by Anscombe; see G.E.M. Anscombe, "On Brute Facts," *Analysis* 18:3 (1958): 69-72.
39. J.R. Searle, *Rationality in Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 58.
40. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 52.
41. Searle, *The Construction*, 54-55. In Searle's key formula, that the utterance X counts as Y in context C is an "institutional fact". It is clear that this kind of "counting as" operation creates a state of affairs. For example, 'You are guilty as charged' is an institutional fact that creates a social reality. This conceptuality is a fruitful idea for biblical scholars to explore in analyzing how the biblical world is constructed.
42. The new term *perlocutionary homiletical response* can be useful in developing one of the vital homiletical aspects of Buttrick's "homiletic obedience." See D. Buttrick, "Interpretation and Preaching," *Interpretation* 25:1 (1981): 58.
43. For further information on the purpose of Philemon, see N.R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World*

- (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 43-85; B.J. Malina and J.J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 323; B. Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 29.
44. For a detailed discussion of Philemon's "house-church", see J.H. Elliott, "Philemon and House Churches," *The Bible Today* 22 (1984): 145-50 and J. Harris Murray, *Colossians and Philemon: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 70-75.
45. J.R. Searle, "Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts," *The Philosophical Review* 77 (1968): 405. This linguistic aspect of the speech act theory offers a useful and interesting way of looking at homiletic theory and supports Long's approach to the literary structure of the Bible and its effect on preaching. See T.G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 30.
46. E.R. Wendland, *Finding and Translating the Oral-Aural Elements in Written Language: The Case of the New Testament Epistles* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 242. Wendland states that any hortatory discourse in the New Testament epistles operates as "an integrated communication system within the framework of the broader pragmatic theory of speech (and "text") act, which refers to what words (oral or written) actually do as distinct from what they overtly say" (*his emphasis*). Wendland, *Finding and Translating*, 248.



REVISIONS OF JOHN A. BROADUS'S CLASSIC WORK, A TREATISE ON THE PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS, MISS THE MARK: DEFINITIONS FOR PREACHING AND ELOQUENCE

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ABSTRACT: Jesse B. Weatherspoon's and Vernon L. Stanfield's editions of John A. Broadus's work, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, do not fully represent Broadus's views of the definition of preaching and eloquence. Two key components of Broadus's definition of preaching are persuasion and biblical exposition; both Weatherspoon and Stanfield inadequately amend Broadus's definition. Furthermore, neither satisfactorily discusses eloquence; in fact, Weatherspoon deleted a significant portion of Broadus's discussion and Stanfield omitted the section entirely.

INTRODUCTION

John A. Broadus's classic *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* was received with enthusiasm when it was published in 1870: "It is one of the most readable and interesting treatises on the art of oratory ever written,"¹ lauded J. P. Boyce. Thomas McKibbens wrote that his work "may have had more influence on the preaching of all Protestant denominations in America than any other book written during the last century."² James Cox was even more gratuitous: "Probably the most useful homiletics book in the history of the Church has been *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, by John A. Broadus."³ Part of the book's success can be attributed to Broadus's ability to delicately balance his work between scholarly and practical advice and his willingness to synthesize ancient rhetoric and argumentation with modern preaching principles, while maintaining a thoroughly biblical work. The book was so well received and useful that it was reprinted forty-two times, translated into several foreign languages, and revised three times.⁴

The revisions are the subject of this paper. Some scholars believe that the revisions are equivalent, or near equivalent, to the original. Al Fasol wrote, "You will find that there is a consistent pattern of reference, if not dependence, on *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* by John A. Broadus in either its original form or one of its revisions" (emphasis mine).⁵ Cox wrote, "The various revisions did not substantially alter the basic character of the book."⁶ Others are less optimistic about the veracity of the revisions. James Stitzinger believed that "subsequent revisions of this book have reduced its original

thrust and value.”⁷ Overstreet noted, “A close examination of the third and fourth editions reveals significant changes in the direction of the text.”⁸ Yet despite the suspicions about the later editions, scholars continue to use them. Overstreet continued, “Many contemporary scholars, though dismayed about the changes made through the third and fourth editions, still hold the volume in high regard.”⁹ Significant differences between Broadus’s original and the three revisions are found in seven sections of the book: 1. Definitions for Preaching, 2. Eloquence, 3. Invention, 4. Borrowing of Sermon Material, 5. Argument, 6. Imagination, and 7. Extemporaneous preaching.¹⁰ In this paper I will report the findings for Definitions for Preaching and Eloquence. In addition, I will discuss the incorporation of the “Lost” Yale Lectures into the revisions.

Broadus delivered the Yale Lectures in 1889; they were never published and were lost for many years. These facts are well documented by a number of scholars and publications.¹¹ A controversy surrounding Broadus’s book concerns whether or not Broadus’s Yale lectures were incorporated into a later edition of his book. Although the controversy did not exist when Robertson wrote, he asserted that Dargan incorporated the lectures into his edition: “[Broadus] expected also to incorporate some of them some day in his *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. He did not accomplish this himself, but his successor in the chair of homiletics, Prof. E. C. Dargan, D. D., has done it in a revised edition of that work.”¹² Huber believed Dargan’s edition contained the Yale lectures; consequently, he chose to use that edition for his study. Furthermore, he believed Dargan accurately conveyed the contents of the first edition and improved the book’s organization.¹³

An early opponent of this view was David McCants, who believed the Yale lectures were not incorporated into Dargan’s edition based on his comparison between two newspaper articles that were summaries of Broadus’s Yale lectures and Dargan’s edition. He used the newspaper articles as his source for the Yale lectures.¹⁴

David Allen Smith supported Robertson and Huber’s viewpoint. He also made an important finding. In a footnote to his dissertation he asserted, “McCants’s observation that Broadus’s Yale lecture notes no longer exist may be premature. Six notebooks containing extemporaneous notes that carry the titles of his first six Yale lectures are housed in the archives of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library at Southern Seminary.”¹⁵ Smith’s historic discovery of the “lost” Yale lecture notes marked the first time these documents appeared on the academic grid.

Approximately ten years after Smith wrote about the existence of the “lost” Yale lecture notes, Overstreet authenticated them while searching the archives at the James P. Boyce Centennial Library at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Library in Louisville, KY.¹⁶ In his dissertation entitled “The 1889 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching and the Recovery of the Late Homiletic of John Albert Broadus (1827-1985),” Overstreet compared the Yale lectures with Broadus’s and Dargan’s editions. He found that the

Yale lectures complement Dargan's edition and provided a late endorsement of Broadus's homiletic.¹⁷ Overstreet gave credence to the opinion that, among the four editions of *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, Dargan's edition is the best late example of Broadus's views on preaching and contains elements of his Yale lectures. I agree with Overstreet's analysis that the Yale Lectures were included in the first edition. Substantiating those lectures' inclusion into Dargan's edition shows that Dargan integrated Broadus's late life view of preaching into his work.

DEFINITIONS OF PREACHING

Broadus offered two definitions of preaching. His first is as follows: "What is good preaching? Or, more generally, what is eloquence? . . . to give powerful impulse of the will."¹⁸ His definition of expository preaching came later: "An expository discourse may be defined as one which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture."¹⁹ Broadus qualified this definition by saying that "there is no broad line of division between expository preaching and the common methods, but that one may pass by almost insensible gradations from textual to expository sermons."²⁰ The first definition indicates the importance of persuasion in preaching, and the second shows the importance of the exposition of Scripture. Persuasion and exposition are two key components of Broadus's theory of preaching. Neither Weatherspoon nor Stanfield stays entirely within the bounds of Broadus's two definitions.

Weatherspoon's Edition

Weatherspoon added two definitions of preaching, one from Philips Brooks and the other from A. E. Garvie; both emphasized the importance of communicating biblical truth through one's personality.²¹ Weatherspoon introduced their definitions:

What, then, are the requisites of effective preaching? Brooks said that preaching is

the communication of truth by man to man. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. . . . It must have both elements. It is in the different proportions in which the two are mingled that the difference between two great classes of sermons and preaching lies. It is in the defect of the one or the other element that every sermon and preacher falls short of the perfect standard. It is in the absence of one or the other element that a discourse ceases to be a sermon, and a man ceases to be a preacher altogether.⁵

To this, Garvie adds what was no doubt in the mind of Brooks:

Preaching is not merely a communication of knowledge. As it exercises the whole personality of the preacher, so it is addressed to the whole personality of the hearer as a moral and religious subject. As the truth with which it deals concerns God, freedom, and immorality, so its end is to evoke faith, stimulate to duty, and sustain hope.²²

These definitions were written after Broadus's original was published and were, therefore, not available to Broadus. They contributed to the context in which Weatherspoon inserted them—the importance of personal piety in the preacher. When they are considered amid the broader context of the book, the definitions do not contradict Broadus's overall thrust.²³ Nonetheless, they are broader in scope than Broadus's definitions and do not emphasize either of the two main components of Broadus's definition—persuasion and the exposition of Scripture.

Stanfield's Edition

Stanfield began chapter 1 by presenting eight different definitions for preaching from various preachers, and he culminated with his own definition: "Preaching is the proclamation of God's message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity. This definition gives three basic elements in preaching: God's message, the chosen personality or preacher, and the needs of human beings."²⁴ Later, Stanfield paraphrased Broadus's definition of expository preaching: "Following the pattern of the definitions of textual and topical sermons, the expository sermon may be defined as a sermon that draws its divisions and the exploration of those divisions from the text."²⁵

Stanfield's first definition lacks any reference to persuasion, which is crucial for Broadus. Smith, who compared these definitions, wrote, "Stanfield's introduction shows little consideration of the place persuasion holds in preaching."²⁶ A. T. Robertson noted Broadus's affinity for persuasion in preaching. Broadus used to remind his students, "Gentlemen, when you preach, strike for a verdict."²⁷ Bernard DeRemer also wrote about Broadus's strong affinity for persuasion in preaching: "He always sought to lead hearers to some spiritual decision: conversion, commitment, decisive Christian living."²⁸

Stanfield's second definition, which pertains to expository preaching, is a paraphrase of Broadus's definition of expository preaching. Broadus's definition is more general, whereas Stanfield's definition is more specific, yet Broadus's discussion in the chapter entitled *Different Species of Sermons* indicates that he would not have disagreed with Stanfield's definition; rather, Broadus chose to give a broad definition instead a specific one because "his guidelines for the preparation and delivery of sermons provided for variance of style and methodology."²⁹ In his *Lectures on the History of Preaching* Broadus said:

As to *methods* of preaching, you are entered upon a great *freedom* in composition, a time in which men are little restrained by classical models or current usage, whether as to the structure or the style of discourse. . . . You may freely adopt any of the methods which have been found useful in any age of the past, or by varied experiment may learn for yourselves how best to meet the wants of the present. Freedom is always a blessing and a power, when it is used with wise self-control.³⁰

Broadus may have preferred not to define expository preaching so specifically in order to allow for a broader application of the principles he taught in the book.

Stanfield's failure to include persuasion in his definitions of preaching is a step away from Broadus's original. Persuasion was a key component for Broadus; the careful reader will notice that Broadus ties persuasion into many other aspects of his book. Furthermore, Stanfield lacks any reference to scriptural exposition. Because Stanfield's definition lacks these two key components, it is void of the authority (exposition) and power (persuasion) found in Broadus's definition.

ELOQUENCE

Weatherspoon's Edition

Eloquence was essential to Broadus's view of preaching, and as a result, Broadus devoted an entire section in the introduction to exploring its importance. Weatherspoon, on the other hand, deleted most of this section from his edition; he did, however, paraphrase a small portion of the following quote and place it in a different context, under the subheading, "Dangers of Rhetorical Studies:"³¹

What is good preaching? Or, more generally, what is eloquence? This is not a merely speculative inquiry, for our fundamental views on the subject will influence, to a greater extent than we may be aware, our practical efforts. Without reviewing the copious discussions of the question, the following statement may be offered: Eloquence is to speaking as not merely to convince the judgment, kindle the imagination, and move the feelings, *but to give powerful impulse to the will*. All of these are necessary elements of eloquence, *but that which is more characteristic is the last* (emphasis mine).³²

This quote indicates that Broadus believed that eloquence and preaching were inseparable and that to move the will was crucial for preaching. Broadus's deep convictions regarding persuasion were recalled by Stanfield: "Still another element of his strength was the conscious purpose to lead

hearers to some spiritual decision."³³ Weatherspoon did not carry over to his revision Broadus's deep feelings of eloquence and persuasion. Smith believed that Weatherspoon's changes showed a "softening . . . of Broadus's position regarding the persuasive purpose of preaching."³⁴

By discussing eloquence early in the book, Broadus gave a precursor to other sections in the book where he would encourage preachers to persuade skillfully the congregation—whether persuasion by argument, illustration, application, style, or delivery. Weatherspoon's changes to this section do not contradict Broadus's views of eloquence; the changes do, however, weaken the overall persuasive tones of the book.³⁵

Stanfield's Edition

Stanfield deleted this section entirely. This omission is a significant and noticeable retreat from Broadus's view that eloquence plays an important role in persuasion.

CONCLUSION

Neither Weatherspoon nor Stanfield fully represented the definitions for preaching used by Broadus. They failed to retain in their editions the degree of emphasis Broadus placed on persuasion and the exposition of Scripture. Weatherspoon crafted his definition of preaching from the views of Brooks and Garvie; ultimately, his definition focused on communicating biblical truth through one's personality. Stanfield referenced definitions of preaching from eight various preachers before arriving at his own definition, which was similar to Weatherspoon's definition. In addition, both Weatherspoon and Stanfield deleted in entirety (Stanfield) or in large part (Weatherspoon) Broadus's section pertaining to the importance of eloquence in preaching. For Broadus, eloquence and persuasion should work together to move one's will to respond to biblical exposition. This emphasis of Broadus was minimized significantly in the updated editions of Weatherspoon and Stanfield.

NOTES

1. J. P. Boyce, *Phoenix* (Columbia, 1870); collected in the Archives of the Boyce Memorial Library at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Broadus Collection, Box 22, folder 7.
2. Thomas McKibbens, "Disseminating Biblical Doctrine through Preaching," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19 (July 1984): 50; see also "The Role of Preaching in Southern Baptist History," *Baptist History and Heritage* 15 (January 1980): 34.
3. James Cox, review of *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, by John A. Broadus, *Review and Expositor* 81 (fall 1984): 464.
4. Paul Huber, "A Study of the Rhetorical Theories of John A. Broadus" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1955), 1.

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PRESERVING THE BLESSING OF GOD'S POWERFUL PRESENCE

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1 Samuel 4:1-22

INTRODUCTION

I am glad that you cannot see me when I wake up in the morning. The alarm sounds, and my hand slowly reaches to the bedside stand to locate the *off* button. Slowly, painfully, I swing my feet over the bed—unfolding like a rusty accordion. My eyes, only slits on the top half of my face, reluctantly let in just enough light to allow me to stagger down a flight of stairs and stand in front of my coffee grinder. Brain activity has not yet begun. Physical motion is at the speed of a turtle stuck in the mud.

But a few months ago, the scene was much different. I was snuggled into bed in a deeeep sleep. Suddenly, our security alarm was screaming at us with its annoying, “Blah! Blah! Blah!” Instantly, my whole body was jolted into a state of hypersensitivity. An alarm had been sounded. The warning grabbed my attention: “Security Breach! Protect Yourself!”

My legs flew over the side of the bed and I was zipping down the steps at a speed that would make Usain Bolt jealous. My eyes were so wide open – I felt as though I had built-in night vision goggles. In 1 second, my heart rate went from 50 bpm to 150 bpm. My brain was processing a hundred possibilities as I saw the front door wide open and felt the wind whipping into my house. I was ready to take on any intruder to protect my wife and save our lives! There was no thought of ignoring that warning. If I had been a cat, my back would have been arched and my fur would all be standing on end.

When that alarm sounded—when that intrusion warning blared out, my immediate reaction was to go into protection mode. I did not want us to lose our lives to an intruder.

(Sigh) I wish I responded to warnings from God with the same kind of attentiveness. I wish that God’s alarms would propel me into action—as powerfully as did my security alarm. But I am not so responsive. And perhaps you also are not as responsive to God’s warnings as you would like to be.

This morning, I'd like us to be startled by a warning from God. My desire is that you and I are jolted into hypersensitivity because a warning of God catapults us out of our sleep.

What warning could have such an effect on us? What alarm could God possibly give to leaders of His church that would have such gravity? Here is the warning: In our ministries, we could lose the powerful presence of God! We can put at risk the very presence of God that we cherish.

Such a warning seems *unthinkable*. Objections immediately well up with us:

1. Jesus said, "I am with you always." He is always present. We have His Spirit in us & with us. So we can't lose the powerful presence of God.
2. We work with the people of God. We lead them in worship, teach them, & counsel them. *No way* God would remove His presence from our ministries.

Yet, Scripture indicates that God's leaders (even members of EHS) *can* put themselves at risk for losing the powerful presence of God.

This is not losing our salvation. We are not saying that God forsakes His covenant or plan. Rather, our wonderful, joyful, empowering, sweet intimacy with God evaporates. The ongoing blessing of God is removed. And God gives His people the "cold shoulder."

If that can happen, we don't want to go there! We don't want to endanger the blessing of God presence in our lives. Our desire is to preserve that relationship and that blessing.

SUBJECT, PREVIEW, AND ORIENTATION TO THE TEXT

How do we keep from losing the powerful presence of God? How do we preserve His presence in our lives and ministry?

To answer that question, we will first recall a story where Israel lost the presence of God. It is a tragic, sad, sobering story. Second, we will see how that story provides a warning for our benefit. And having received that warning, we will be challenged to respond. So a story of Loss, A Warning to Heed, A Response to Give.

It was during the time of the Judges when Israel experienced a tragedy beyond imagination – a loss of the very presence of God. This story surely sent shivers down the spine of the nation every time they recalled it. Israel never imagined that they could lose the powerful presence of God. Yet they did! Let's examine what happened to God's people in 1 Samuel, Chapter 4.

Our story begins with Israel losing a battle and then calling for the powerful presence of God. To defeat the Philistines, the Israelites called for the powerful presence of God—the Ark!

Follow along as I read the first three verses of 1 Samuel 4.

1. A STORY OF LOSS: ISRAEL LOST THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF GOD BECAUSE THEY FAILED TO HONOR GOD AS GOD.

The text reads:

Then the Israelites went out to fight the Philistines. They camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines camped at Aphek. The Philistines arranged their forces to fight Israel. As the battle spread out, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men in the battle line in the field.

When the army came back to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why did the LORD let us be defeated today by the Philistines? (1 Sa. 4:1a-3a)¹

The battle lines were drawn in Northwest Canaan. The Israelites at Ebenezer and the Philistines, just a few miles away at Aphek. And the Israelites likely anticipated a resounding victory. They would drive those Philistines right back to the sea! Or so they thought. But the text tells us that Israel was soundly defeated, losing four thousand (or four units of) soldiers. This had to be a terrible surprise for the Israelites. How could this happen? They were doing exactly what God had charged them to do; they were driving their pagan enemies out of the land. Plus, they were counting on the Lord fighting for them, just as He had done in the past.

When the elders received word of the terrible defeat, they called a committee meeting to assess the damages. Notice their important question in the first half of verse 3—"Why did the Lord let us be defeated today by the Philistines?" As indicated in the NIV translation, the elders seem to indicate that the Lord is actually fighting against Israel instead of against their enemy. They literally ask, "Why has the Lord defeated us before the Philistines?" God is fighting *against* Israel! What could they do to get God to fight for them instead of against them? They decided that the Lord needed a reminder that He was in covenant relationship with them. Then He would fight for Israel. So they decided, *Bring out the Ark!* Look at how the text says this at the end of verse 3:

Let's take with us the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. When He is with us, He will save us from the hand of our enemies (1 Sa. 4:3b).²

"Bring out the ark! Bring out the secret weapon!" For the elders reasoned that the ark would somehow prompt God³ to fight for the nation and bring them victory.

You will remember that the ark was a box measuring 45 inches by 27

inches by 27 inches. It contained a copy of the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. These important relics symbolized the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant and the deliverance of the people from Egypt. Yet, more than just symbol, the ark itself worked as a manifestation of the presence of God in the midst of Israel. As such, the ark was protected as holy – because God's presence was there. The ark, physically displaying the presence of God, led the people through the wilderness, across the Jordan, and around the walls of Jericho. No wonder they elders called for the ark to come to the battleground! With the ark in place, the glory of God would be evident and victory over the Philistines would be certain.

So we see in the story that the ark was brought to Ebenezer, and its arrival brought great encouragement to the Israelite warriors. Notice the description in verses 4-5:

So the army sent to Shiloh, and they took from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits between the cherubim. Now the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. When the ark of the covenant of the LORD arrived at the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the ground shook (1 Sa. 4:4-5).

After its 20-mile journey from Shiloh, the ark entered the Israelite camp. Ad it created quite a stir! There it was—The “ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned between the Cherubim.” The text's description draws attention to the Lord as a powerful warrior. And when it was set in place by the priests, Hophni and Phineas, Israel issued a battle cry that shook the ground and rattled windows. In fact, this cry for holy war was so loud that it got the attention of the Philistines over at Aphek. The following verses describe how the Philistines realized that Israel's God had now entered the battle arena. Knowing that this God was the God who defeated the Egyptians with plagues, the Philistines resolved to fight all the harder. They knew it would take no small effort to defeat Israel when Yahweh was fighting with them.

Israel was stoked for the fight and ready for victory. What would happen when they went into the battle with the ark as part of their arsenal? What would be the result now that they clearly had the presence of God in their camp? Sadly, Israel experience two great losses that day. Rather than victory, Israel experienced two major defeats.

Notice first how the Lord soundly defeated Israel. Yahweh won a victory – but it was not for Israel. See how the text reports this in verse 10:

So the Philistines fought. Israel was defeated; they all ran home. The slaughter was very great; thirty thousand foot soldiers fell in battle (1 Sa. 4:10).

Israel got whooped. Defeated. Slaughtered. Look at the text: 30,000 soldiers (or 30 units) fell! Compared to the first battle when the ark was *not* present, this second battle was more than seven times worse! When the Lord was present, Israel's losses were much greater than when His ark was not present. The survivors went running for their lives.

While this military defeat was tragic, a greater tragedy occurred on that battlefield. Worse than the loss of life was the loss of the ark itself. For God withdrew His presence from Israel. Notice the somber report provided in verse 11:

The ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were killed (1 Sa. 4:12).

The ark! The ark—the center of Israel's worship system was taken by the enemy! The ark – where God manifested Himself to His people; the ark – which held Israel's most sacred relics; the ark – which held the mercy seat where atonement was to be made for the nation—GONE! And with the ark, the active priests, Hophni and Phineas were killed. The worship system of Israel was devastated in this blow. Tragic!

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the immensity of this tragedy. The author will not let us slip away with merely a shake of our heads in a quick acknowledgment of disappointment. Rather, the text invests eleven more verses to help us grasp the depth of this national tragedy for Israel. These verses provide two vignettes to make our hearts grieve with the realization that the powerful presence of God has been lost in Israel. The first vignette climaxes in a death, and the second in a birth. We turn first to the description of the death of Eli, the father of priests Hophni and Phineas. Follow along as I read 1 Samuel 4:12-18:

On that day a Benjaminite ran from the battle lines and came to Shiloh. His clothes were torn and dirt was on his head. When he arrived in Shiloh, Eli was sitting in his chair watching by the side of the road, for he was very worried about the ark of God. As the man entered the city to give his report, the whole city cried out.

When Eli heard the outcry, he said, "What is this commotion?" The man quickly came and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes looked straight ahead; he was unable to see.

The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle lines! Just today I fled from the battle lines!" Eli asked, "How did things go, my son?" The messenger replied, "Israel has fled from the Philistines! The army has suffered a great defeat! Your two sons, Hophni and Phineas, are dead! The ark of God has been captured!" When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward from his chair beside the gate. He broke his neck and died, for he was old and heavy. He had judged Israel for forty years (1 Sa. 4:12-18).

We can imagine old Eli hearing the words of the messenger from the battlefield – each line bringing a piercing arrow to Eli’s heart:

Messenger - “Battle lost.”

Eli – “Oh No!”

Messenger - “Soldiers killed.”

Eli – “Terrible!”

Messenger – “Your sons, dead.”

Eli – “O Lord!”

Messenger (with stammering voice)– “And, and, and... the ark... taken!”

Eli – Silence – That news of the loss of the ark was the fatal arrow that killed him. He fell over, broke his neck, and died!

Eli did not die because Israel because Israel lost the battle. His heart did not stop because so many brothers in arms died brutal deaths by way of Philistine swords. Even when he heard that his sons had died, Eli did not keel over. But the ark, when Eli heard that the ark of God, that which displayed the glorious presence of God, had been removed from Israel, he fell over and his life ceased.

The manner of Eli’s death points to the depth of this tragedy of losing the presence of God. The author points out that Eli was “old and heavy.” From our western perspective, we do not see such remarks as very complimentary. We may dismiss Eli as a fat old man who did not take care of himself. But that is not the picture here. His age reminds us that Eli is the revered elder statesman of the nation. And while his sons were actively doing the work of priests, he himself would have viewed as the highest ranking priest in Israel. This revered man of respected position was labeled “heavy.” Heaviness likely would have been seen not as an indication of an undisciplined diet but as a sign of God’s blessing. More □ is essentially the same Hebrew word for “glory.” The author draws our attention to the fact that the loss of God’s glory brings about the death of this man of glory. In a real sense, life is diminished when the glory of God is not present.

This first vignette used a death to show the tragic nature of losing God’s glory. The second vignette recalls a birth. The boy who is born will be a living memorial to the loss of God’s glory. For he will be called “Ichabod,” “no glory.” The author tells of this birth in verses 19-22:

His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phineas, was pregnant and close to giving birth. When she heard that the ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she doubled over and gave birth. But her labor pains were too much for her. As she was dying, the women who were there with her said, “Don’t be afraid! You have given birth to a son!” But she did not reply or pay any attention.

She named the boy Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel,” referring to the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, “The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God has been captured.”

As with the death of a grandfather, this birth of his grandson would sound a tragic gong for the reader. Hearts normally rejoice with a birth announcement, but this story leaves our hearts saddened. A boy was born, and within moments of his birth, he would be a true orphan—no father, no mother, no grandfather. They all were killed in the train wreck that was the loss of the ark.

And like her father-in-law, this nameless, inconsolable woman would be most deeply impacted by the loss of God’s glorious presence. So to signify the depth of the tragedy, she named her boy, “Ichabod.” For the rest of his life, and even well into the future, with each calling of his name, the people of Israel would remember how tragic it was to lose the powerful presence of God.⁴

How important was the loss of the ark? Our author’s pen sounds out the magnitude of this event by his five-fold repetition of the ark being taken. Look back at the text.

In verse 11 – “The ark of God was taken.”

In verse 17b – “The ark of God has been taken.”

In verse 19 – “The ark of God was taken.”

In verse 21 – “On account of the ark of God was taken.”

And verse 22 – The final clause of the whole story – “The ark of God was taken.”

How tragic! This was not just the loss of a special box. It was not simply the capture of a treasure chest fit for a museum. It was God removing His presence from Israel. In effect God was saying, “I will not fight for you. I will not accept your worship.” Yahweh was still present, but He was not present for the nation. God was giving Israel the cold shoulder!

So, there’s your story. *In the midst of their battle, Israel lost God’s powerful presence.* Why did that happen? Why would God fight against His people and withdraw His presence? A closer look at the text will show us that Israel lost God’s powerful presence because the people failed to honor God as God. Israel trivialized God. They took Him lightly. They did not revere Him as holy, and so God removed His powerful presence from their midst. Please note. I am not saying that every instance of God being distant from His people is due to a failure of His people to honor Him properly. Sometimes, by being distant, God is testing us and building our faith. But in this instance in the days of Eli, God’s people were at fault, and the result was that they lost God’s powerful presence.

The text provides two ways that Israel failed to honor God as God. There are two actions that are particularly trivializing of God. First, Israel failed to honor God as God when they tried to manipulate Him

with the ark. Remember how they said it back in verse 3? “Bring the ark so God will save us.” They assumed that the ark could motivate God to work on their behalf, regardless of their spiritual condition. This was an attempt to use the ark as leverage.

Such reasoning is not irrational. After all, at other battles God had required that the ark be front and center. And as we noted earlier, the ark was prominent in the march to the Holy Land, crossing the Jordan, and circling Jericho. So we can imagine the elders reasoning, “It worked before; let’s do it again!” They felt that if they positioned the ark just so, they had the formula for military success.

But such reasoning belittles God. They reduced the *big-G* God who was enthroned above the world to a *little-g* god who could be carried around in a box. Instead of seeing Yahweh as the God who was in control, they fabricated a god whom they could control.

But our God will have none of that. Our God is holy. He is not part of this world. He is above it. Beyond it. Not steered by the events of this world. Our God is not bound up in a cause and effect system like we are. And when His people reduce Him to that kind of God, they are treating God not as God, but as their puppet. They abuse the holiness of God. For Israel, this brought loss of the powerful presence of God.

The text indicates a second way that Israel failed to honor God as God. The second way Israel failed to honor God was by choosing to honor Hophni and Phineas. Israel complied with evil Hophni and Phineas. Notice the seemingly innocent statement of fact in the last half of verse 4:

Now the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God (1 Sa. 4:4b).

Seems like a benign statement that these two priests simply were doing their duty to accompany the ark from Shiloh to the battlefield. But the informed reader would have known instantly that these men were a cancer destined for surgical removal. When they entered the camp, an alarm should have been sounded. A warning siren should have blared informing Israel of evil infiltration worse than the Philistines. These two priests were trouble with a capital “T.” You will recall how they were described earlier in this book:

- In 2:12 – These two are described as “wicked men.” They did not submit to the Lord’s authority.
- In 2:13-14 – They are seen to be selfish, irreverent meat-grabbers.
- In 2:17 – The text reports that their sin was great as they treated Lord’s offering with contempt.
- In 2:22 – They had sex with women at the entrance to the tent of meeting (just like pagans did).
- And in 2:31- A prophet reported that Hophni and Phineas despised

God and would be cursed with death on same day.

Then in 1 Samuel 3:11, the Lord made it clear that he was going to destroy Eli's household because of his wicked sons. The words are strong:

The LORD said to Samuel, "Look! I am about to do something in Israel; when anyone hears about it, both of his ears will tingle. On that day I will carry out against Eli everything that I spoke about his house—from start to finish! You should tell him that I am about to judge his house forever because of the sin that he knew about. For his sons were cursing God, and he did not rebuke them. Therefore I swore an oath to the house of Eli, 'The sin of the house of Eli can never be forgiven by sacrifice or by grain offering' (1 Sa. 3:11-14).

This is not about being a bad father. It is about failing to treat God as God. It is about trivializing the God of the universe.

According to 1 Samuel 4:1, this word of Samuel came to all Israel. They knew that the Lord planned to destroy Hophni, Phineas and Eli.

And the elders invited *these guys* into the camp! They were marked men. They had a target on their backs, and God was doing the shooting. They were walking time bombs sitting around the campfire with them. By asking for Hophni and Phineas to bring the ark, the elders were guilty by association,⁵ inviting the enemy into the camp. They were complicit in the crimes of their priests, acting as if nothing was amiss.

It seems that back in Shiloh, old Eli knew that God was about to strike. Verse 13 tells us that the man with no eyesight was watching for news and was trembling with fear on account of the ark. Likely he feared that having his sons in a holy war with the ark of God in striking distance was a dangerous position for them to occupy⁶. He was right! For God brought judgment to Israel because of their association with priests who failed to honor God as God.

It is a sad story of loss. Israel lost the powerful presence of God when they failed to honor God as God. Why is this sobering story here? What is the theological thrust of this tragic story? The story serves as a warning for God's people.

2. A WARNING TO HEED: BY FAILING TO HONOR GOD AS GOD, WE RISK LOSING THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF GOD.

When the people of God fail to honor their God, they risk losing the powerful presence of God. It was a warning issued for the original readers, and it is a warning for us as well.

The book of 1 Samuel was written to Israel as they were being run out of the land, exiled away from the presence of God. As described in Ezekiel 10:18-19, the glory of God had been pulled from the temple. God

was no longer fighting for them. He was not accepting their worship. He certainly had turned a cold shoulder toward Israel in the exile. In fact, the word commonly used in the prophets to describe the exile of God's people is chosen here in 1 Samuel 4:21-22 to describe the glory of God going into exile⁷. It could be said of this text that with the loss of the ark, "the glory has been exiled."

It is not unreasonable to think that Israel again asked the question of their forbearers at Ebenezer, "Why did the Lord defeat us today...(1 Sa. 4:3)? They were to recognize that the warning of God was still valid for them: By failing to honor God as God, they risked losing the powerful presence of God.⁸

Yet, the warning for God's people does not end with the Old Testament. We today also are warned. *When we fail to honor God as God, we risk losing God's powerful presence.* Such a statement seems almost unthinkable. We might be inclined to think that such a warning is not valid in this New Testament era. God does not work this way today. Or perhaps we muse, "This could never happen in my church!"

But my friends, this warning is for us, perhaps particularly for those of us who lead the people of God. Let us consider the recent sad story of Mars Hill Church. As we do so, we have tears in our eyes. For we speak of brothers and sisters who experienced a tragedy. We consider their story not to bash them or wag our fingers at them, but to recognize the importance of heeding this warning today.

Mars Hill Church, based in Seattle, was the model of church success, or at least it appeared that way. The church operated fifteen locations in five states. During the peak of its popularity, sermon downloads totaled 260,000. The annual budget was reported to be \$30 million. One might say that the glory of God was shining out from Mars Hill Church. But in October of last year, the following message was posted on the church's website: "As of January 1, 2015, the existing Mars Hill Church organization will be dissolved." Collapsed. Done! Ichabod!

In a December, 2014 article, "The Painful Lessons of Mars Hill," *Leadership Journal* attempted to document and explain the sad story of the church's collapse. The analysis revealed that there were multiple reasons that led to the dissolution of the church. However, one of the pastors spoke of how the church emphasized efficient business models more than honoring God. He said, "As the [church] structure became more refined, the driving motive became efficiency and growth, and those two factors began *dictating* church policy." Another pastor put it this way. "It all began as a work of the Spirit, but we quickly started to push harder and harder, trying to accomplish it with human efforts—bigger, better, faster, stronger" (Tertin, 2014). The pastors reported that the church took on the values of the surrounding culture, wanting to be like all things Seattle: Starbucks, Costco, Microsoft, and Boeing. The attitude was summarized in the journal article by Pastor Clem's statement, "Seattle is about power, expansion, and world

domination.” These became the values of Mars Hill Church.

And along the way, Mars Hill forgot they were dealing with the Sacred. To manipulate God, Israel brought the ark. Mars Hill adopted a Harvard business model and hired a duly qualified manager to run it. Like the leaders of Israel, those who led Mars Hill were blinded by their quest for success, and they failed to honor God as God.

We take no delight in recalling the downfall of a church that was positioned for such impact. Rather, we allow the tragedy to impact our hearts and sober us. A warning rings out today! God defends His holiness today! And when we fail to honor God as God, we are at risk of losing His powerful in our ministries.

Certainly, we do not *desire* to lose God’s presence. We want to enjoy God’s powerful presence in ministry. We want to sense that God is using us as a channel of blessing to others. We want to heed the warning so that we might preserve the powerful presence of God in our ministries. How do we respond? Having recalled the story of loss for Israel and realized the stern warning for us today, what response shall we give?

3. TO PRESERVE THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF GOD, HONOR GOD AS GOD.

Our response must be to honor God as God, in every element of our ministries. Perhaps the touchpoints are unlimited. Let’s briefly consider four areas.

First, in our preaching, honor God as God! How easy it is to elevate our preaching strategies and techniques so that they become the focus of our sermonizing! We labor to develop clever introductions, deliver riveting stories, and employ emotional appeals. And while such rhetorical techniques may be put to good use, they must NEVER trump our desire to honor God as God in our preaching. He gets the glory. He demands our submission. He alone is the source of our preaching success. And as we honor God as God in our preaching, we preserve the blessing of His powerful presence.

Beyond our preaching, we will want to honor God as God as we lead our churches in outreach. In our culture of marketing madness, it is so easy to adopt the world’s philosophy of getting customers to come into our church “store” to consume a spiritual product. We are tempted to rely upon appealing programs, slick advertising, and clever technology to the point where we are in danger of manipulating God to act on our behalf. We will be tempted to seek church growth by all sorts of pragmatic means and justify those means as long as membership is increasing. Yet, we must resist such temptations, remembering that when we bring the gospel to people we are handling the sacred. And as we honor God as God in our outreach, we preserve the blessing of God’s powerful presence.

As with preaching and outreach, so in worship we seek to honor God as God. Yet, how easy it is to treat the Lord’s Table as mindless ritual!

Our minds go into autopilot as we go through the motions of breaking bread, drinking from the cup, and reciting prayers before the people. The Lord's Table, like the ark itself, is to be a special manifestation of the presence of God. And like Israel of old, we may slip into a practice of using the Lord's table as a lever by which we try to manipulate God to show up for His people. May it never be! Rather, as we worship around the Lord's Table, may we honor God as God. And in doing so, we preserve the blessing of God's powerful presence.

Fourthly, let us recognize that even in our church administration, we must honor God as God. It is easy to get derailed here. For we look for elders and staff who have skill and charisma. It is a slippery slope, for we can be led to favor those who are wealthy or those who have demonstrated great success in business. Our appointments could quickly side with the physically beautiful or socially popular. But if we strive to honor God as God in our church administration, we will seek first to find individuals with the character that God considers valuable. Such staff and elders are appointed to their positions because they themselves are God-honoring. And as we honor God as God in our church administration, we preserve the blessing of God's powerful presence.

CONCLUSION

In my home—when that Security Alarm went off in the middle of the night—it scared the daylight out of me. I jumped to action. Ha! Rather funny now that I look back on it. On that particular night, it was only the wind intruding into my house. A big wind blew the front door wide open! Ha! No burglar. No intruder. It was kind of a false alarm.

But I was glad for that warning alarm—and when it sounded, I sprang into action.

Today, we have heard a true warning alarm from God: *By failing to honor God as God, we run the risk of losing the powerful presence of God.* May God help us spring into action!

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from *The Net Bible*.
2. Author's translation.
3. While it is possible that the Israelites thought the ark itself would bring victory, it seems more likely that the elders desired to employ the ark as a motivation for God to remember His covenant and win the victory. This is supported particularly by the unusual use of the moniker, "the ark of the covenant of Yahweh." "[T]he elders know that Yahweh has already been involved in the fighting, indeed, it was he who was responsible for their (initial) defeat. What the Ark of the covenant of Yahweh will do is remind Yahweh of his covenant commitments to his people Israel and particularly of his responsibility to ensure *their* victory in holy war (Stirrup, pp. 88-89).

c.f (Bergen, p. 91)

4. "More important than our philology is the popular etymology that lies behind the etiological statement in v 22. The dying mother named the boy Ichabod because the □) had departed or, more strongly, gone into exile from, Israel. In v 21 the word Ichabod is related both to the ark and the death of the woman's father-in-law and husband, but in v 22 the glory departing from Israel is related solely to the loss of the ark. The glory, that is, the sign of God's presence (Ezek 10:18; Hos 10:5) has disappeared" (Klein, p. 45)
5. (take/taken). It begins in Chapter 2 where Hophni and Phineas are described as *takers*. They *take* sacrificial meat for themselves. They *take* it before it was sacrificed on the altar. And they *take* it forcibly. The *taker* status positions them as enemies of God. This taker status will then be attributed to the elders in 4:3 when they say, "Let us *take* the ark." So the elders become enemies of God along with the priests. Then the loss of the ark is connected with this evil through the five-fold description of the ark as *taken* (see above). Later in Chapter 8, the author will return to this wordplay when he warns Israel that a king like those of other nations will be a *taker*.
6. Following P.R. Davies, John Woodhouse comes to a similar conclusion. "What Eli knew was that God had promised that his two sons were going to die on the same day, and he had learned that this was about to happen (1 Samuel 2:34; 3:11, 12, 18). It was not, I think, that he was anxious *for* the ark. Eli was terrified *on account* of the ark. He feared for his sons, who were carrying the ark of the God who had promised this punishment" (Woodhouse, p. 97).
- 7., used here in 4:21-22, is used to describe Israel going into exile in several prophetic texts, including Isa 5:13; Jer 13:19–22; and Ezek 39:23. I conjecture that the author chose this word to help readers connect the warning of this text to their exilic context. c.f. (Austin & Sutter, s.v "exile")
8. This story is instructive for the exiles. Before the exile, Israel takes God's presence for granted, thinking that Jerusalem will never be destroyed because God lives in the city (Jer. 6: 13– 14; 8: 11; 14: 13; 23: 17). This so-called Zion theology is rooted in the faulty notion that God's protective presence can be guaranteed by proper cultic ritual apart from obedience (Isa. 1: 11– 20). As the exiles look to the future and wonder how to be reconciled to God, they need to remember that loyalty and obedience are the only guarantees of divine favor and that God cannot be manipulated into bestowing favor upon those who disrespect him" (Chisolm Jr, pp. Kindle Locations 976-981).

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Mission of Preaching: Equipping the Community for Faithful Witness. By Patrick W. T. Johnson. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015. 978-0830840700, 237 pp., \$20.34.

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

There was a time when the church in America was an institution so revered that it naturally attracted the community into its company to receive its benefits. When the church gathered, outsiders would come to discover the good news that was offered in that sacred place. “Missions” was often viewed as a special work undertaken by special members of the church in order to reach, typically, into the far corners of the “unreached” world.

As American culture in the late twentieth century moved toward a post-Christian worldview, where the institutional church seemed to exert diminishing influence on those outside its walls, some abandoned the old paradigm of church and mission for a new model that viewed the missional church as a more biblical expression of the body of Christ in the world. Instead of expecting the world to “come and see,” the church began to instruct its own to “go and be.” In this way the church would participate more fully in the mission of the sending God who sends his Church, all its members, into the world to witness.

Although much has been written concerning the missional church, missional theology, missional action, missional communities, and so on, including critiques of all things missional, to this point there has been no definitive proposal for a missional homiletic. Patrick Johnson, pastor of Frenchtown Presbyterian Church in New Jersey, and adjunct professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, has stepped into that void with his *The Mission of Preaching*.

This text reads much like a doctoral work, as it is based on Johnson’s 2013 Princeton dissertation, *Preaching for the Witness of the Christian community: Toward a Missional Homiletic*. That said, readers will find clarity from numerous repetitions and summaries throughout.

Johnson proposes to address, among other things, the following question: “If we are now in a missionary context, then how does preaching in this missionary context differ from that in a Christendom context?” (18). He develops his thesis, “Preaching confesses Jesus Christ through a missional interpretation of scripture in order to equip the congregation for its confession to the world” (22, 217), in four chapters.

Chapter one summarizes Thomas Long’s *The Witness of Preaching*, Anna Carter Florence’s *Peaching as Testimony*, and David Lose’s *Confessing*

Jesus Christ, which conceive of preaching as witness, testimony, and confession respectively. Johnson generally affirms these proposals, yet views the preacher “not only as a witness, but as a witness who equips the congregation for its own witness” (29).

Chapter two considers implications from Karl Barth’s “The Holy Spirit and the Sending of the Christian Community.” From that portion of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, Johnson identifies an ecclesiology in which, “The doctrine of justification leads to the doctrine of the gathering of the community, the doctrine of sanctification leads to the doctrine of the upbuilding of the community and the doctrine of vocation leads to the doctrine of the sending of the community” (73). According to Johnson, Barth’s theology of the church and its mission demands that preaching be viewed as but one way in which the church witnesses, “when witness is a supercategory that includes every activity of the church” (103).

Chapter three summarizes eight “patterns” discerned in a variety of churches that strive to be missional as expressed by a variety of contributors in the 2004 volume *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Eerdmans). Although none of the eight patterns addressed preaching in particular, Johnson draws eight implications for missional preaching from that seminal work.

In chapter four Johnson brings together the previous three “conversations” to develop his missional homiletic. He concludes that a community of preachers should fill the local pulpit as a means of avoiding any hint of professionalism, arrogance, and authoritarianism. He holds that confessing Jesus Christ is the essence of faithful missional preaching. He defends a missional hermeneutic, by which he means that preaching texts should be approached with the following question in mind: “How does this text form the congregation into the people who will witness?” Finally, he conceives of preaching as a part of the greater witness of the community, and not the primary means of witness.

Although *The Mission of Preaching* is sometimes dissertation-dense, Johnson’s work is quite comprehensible and insightful. Readers of this *Journal* may therein be exposed to notions of homiletics, theology, and missiology not previously explored. Not all of the opinions and conclusions, however, will set well with evangelical homileticians. For example, the authority of Scripture suffers attrition, and the unique gifting, calling, and ordination of the preacher seems diminished. Still, the concept of preaching as a means of forming the congregation for maturity and ministry is fundamentally biblical.



Crossover Preaching: Intercultural-Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor. By Jared E. Alcántara. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015. 978-0830839087, 340 pp., \$28.00.

Reviewer: Patrick T. Smith, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA

Jared Alcántara, teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has produced a work of contemporary importance in *Crossover Preaching*. He sets the stage by noting the significance of the rise of global Christianity and changing demographics in both the North American context and many of our churches. Not only will there be an overall increase in the U.S. population, but also it will be characterized by a noteworthy growth in nonwhite persons over the next forty years. Moreover, during this time frame a younger nonwhite majority will outnumber an older white population (23–25).

These significant demographic shifts serve as the basis for two foundational claims. The primary claim is: *“If the church in the United States bears even a remote resemblance to the overall population, it will be an intercultural church with an intercultural witness to an intercultural society”* (27). The secondary claim is: *“If the homiletics classroom in the United States bears even a remote resemblance to the overall population, those who teach them will need to develop pedagogies that account for and engage with an intercultural church with an intercultural witness to an intercultural society”* (27). In light of these claims, Alcántara is concerned to identify resources that can inform twenty-first century homiletics in order to better equip preachers to speak in meaningful and persuasive ways. To this end he argues in favor of a *crossover homiletic* that “effectively deploys performative and metaphorical improvisation-as-intercultural negotiation” (28).

Alcántara draws from a significant preacher of the twentieth century, the luminary figure of Gardner C. Taylor in order to develop a *crossover homiletic*. In doing so, the author identifies those features of Taylor’s ministry, namely his improvisational and intercultural proficiencies, that exemplify his effectiveness as a homiletician who was able to navigate successfully multiple spaces. These insights are essential, Alcántara claims, to incorporate into our preaching and teaching ministries given changing demographics.

Chapter 1 begins by justifying Taylor as a case study and further expands on what he means by the improvisational and intercultural dimensions of a *crossover homiletic*. Alcántara leans on recent developments in three notable fields, particularly performance theory (Chapter 2), race theory (Chapter 3), and intercultural theory (Chapter 4). In each of these chapters, the relevant features of Taylor’s ministry are connected to important aspects of these disciplines in order to demonstrate how these resources inform a *crossover homiletic*. The goal is to move beyond mere strategies for *crossover homiletics* to embody the dispositional stance of a *crossover preacher*. That is, one who embraces a christocentric identity and focus in preaching and has a kind of openness that is expressed in a “generative way of being-in-the-world among those who are racially, ethnically, and ecclesially different” (303).

Some brief reflections on the work are in order. First, the depth and

breadth of scholarship in this book is impressive. Alcántara responsibly draws from the vast array of disciplines he engages. Second, and related to the first, the book should have broad appeal to those working across the spectrum in theological studies. Further, I appreciate the fact *Crossover Preaching* introduces the ministry of Taylor to a new generation of evangelicals. The lessons learned from Taylor's life and work are examples of how the Christian experience of African-Americans can make a unique contribution to the broader Christian church.

Not only will preachers and students of preaching benefit from Alcántara's work in order to minister to an intercultural church and society, his analysis should also have a positive contribution in shaping the future of seminary education by informing theological educators and administrators as they prepare church leaders for intercultural witness to the world. *Crossover Preaching* is bound to enlighten, challenge, and inspire those who thoughtfully engage it. All who take the future of the twenty-first century church seriously should read it.



Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion. By Os Guinness. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015. 978-0830836994, 272 pp., \$22.00.

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

Os Guinness has waited almost 40 years to write this book setting forth his approach to apologetics. When he left university he promised God that he would do apologetics before writing about it, and he would do it more than he would write about it (38). His long, fruitful ministry shows that he has kept his promise and now we have a thoughtful, even profound, description and defense of his "method" of persuasion.

I place the word "method" in quotation marks because Guinness's approach to persuasion is not a formula. He rebuts "technique," a one-size-fits-all approach to evangelism: "*Jesus never spoke to two people the same way, and neither should we. Every single person is unique and deserves an approach that respects that uniqueness*" (33). Disney and McDonalds may use technique with remarkable success, but the Christian's business is not entertainment and sales. "If anyone is simply looking for techniques, formulas, recipes, how-to methods or for any surefire ways of persuading anyone, they will be disappointed. There are no such things" (34–35). I agree with Guinness, but I also believe that it is possible to present would-be apologists with concise and usable principles. Persuaders need practical advice, especially when they do not have the 40 years of experience on university campuses and public forums that Guinness does. Many such principles are present in *Fool's Talk* for the reader who has eyes to see them.

The alternative to technique is "'advocacy of the heart,' an existential approach to sharing our faith that . . . is deeper and more faithful as well as more effective than the common approaches used by many" (18). This advocacy of the heart is thoroughly theological because Christian defense of truth "must have a life, a manner and a tone that are shaped decisively by the central truths of the gospel" (175)—the five great truths of creation, fall, incarnation, the cross, and the Spirit of God. For example, the truths of incarnation and the Spirit lead Guinness to conclude that persuasion works best when personalized rather than when relying on technique. Guinness's balanced Reformed theology has a robust view of our fallen, hard hearts, so that "we must recognize resistance to truth and hatred of God," but it also recognizes common grace present when a person has "conscious and unconscious desire for God" (41). For people in the first condition, apologetics probes their worldview, knocking out props and pointing out inconsistencies. For people in the second group, apologetics demonstrates how the desires of the heart are met ultimately only in Christ.

Guinness's attempt to recover the art of Christian persuasion is also thoroughly rhetorical, drawing especially on classical authors. Guinness will have none of the pious nonsense that says that Christian proclamation is merely informational: "The Bible knows nothing of preaching divorced from the needed work of persuasion. The two words *preach* and *persuade*, and the two ideas behind them, are indissoluble No one can drive so much as the beam of a laser between the two" (112). Some of the rhetorical truths Guinness advances are: beginning with the other person's presuppositions, identification, and the use of both rational arguments and artistic communication such as stories and parables.

The metaphor most congenial to Guinness's "method" is the way of the fool demonstrated by Erasmus in *In Praise of Folly*. Erasmus wrote in a time of epistemological relativism, ecclesial worldliness, and disintegration of authority, much like our day. "How did Erasmus attempt to get around these barriers?" Through "subversive persuasion," a mode of communication that "carries the power of the cross and contains the secret of creative persuasion that our Christian advocacy needs today" (66). Christ himself was a fool and we are "fool-bearers" (67). The truths of the incarnation and cross are essentially ironic. Christ the King is mocked as a false king. A fool for Christ is anything but a fool, yet he or she is ready to be seen as a fool and treated as a fool (68). Guinness seems to be saying that Christian persuasion should prompt our dialogue partners to collaborate in their own persuasion. It must draw in those partners, not alienate them; it must use their own presuppositions to undermine their worldviews; it must be creative; and it must rouse affect as well as reason.

Guinness's mature thoughts about Christian persuasion, well-grounded in theology and rhetoric, will serve the Church well. He shows us how to contextualize our mode of presenting the gospel. An added benefit preachers will derive from *Fool's Talk* is its abundant stories and quotations.

Keep your computer handy because you will find support material from history, recent events, and literature to fill your illustration file.



Connecting Pulpit and Pew: Breaking Open the Conversation about Catholic Preaching. By Karla J. Bellinger. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014. 978-0814637692, 180 pp., \$18.43.

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

Karla J. Bellinger is the director of the Center for Preaching, Evangelization and Prayer. She also serves as a certified ecclesial minister in the Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio. This work is part of her doctoral work that focused on surveying Catholic high school students. With a desire to help preachers reach their audience, specifically Roman Catholic teenagers, Bellinger nicely presents the results from her study while weaving anecdotal interactions she has had with a number clergy.

The work is divided into three main parts that comprise nine chapters. The parts are presented as follows: Part One: “The Search for Connection” presents and begins to diagnose the various homiletical challenges currently impacting Roman Catholic clergy. This first part was the strongest of the sections. Bellinger demonstrates the disconnect between Catholic clergy and their respective audiences. She stresses the need for audience awareness and taking time, not simply interpret a passage, but to interpret the audience. It is clear that this is no mere academic exercise for her; she communicates her burden for the prioritization of the sermon in importance and effectiveness. The section successfully opens avenues for conversation on what is missing in preaching and what are some ideas to move the ball forward.

Part Two: “Unpacking the Complexities of the Homiletic Encounter” presents the historical centrality of preaching in the Roman Catholic tradition by providing a brief historical survey (from Origen of Alexandria through Vatican II). Her formula for “Holy Preaching” connects spiritual formation (personal piety) with homiletical skill. One must keep in mind that for the writer, the essence of homiletics as presented in her work deals more with its rhetorical aspects of engaging audience and delivering sermon. The hermeneutical aspects that originate with the text is absent. If one were to define preaching as essentially the communication of Scripture, then Bellinger’s solution is helpful, while lacking. This section concludes that sermon preparation simply is not a priority for the preacher. The author presents a true-to-life picture of priests living under the “tyranny of the urgent.” Regretfully, sermon preparation often slips to the bottom of their list of priorities. This is a strong warning to all who preach regularly.

Part Three: “Sharing in the Story of Stories” covers some key themes in preaching, including the importance of memory, all providing helpful

avenues to improve the “connectivity crisis” presented throughout this work.

I was impressed by the level of pastoral intuition and authenticity that Bellinger displayed in approaching her topic. This is a lucid and helpful guide for lay preachers in need of encouragement and assistance. They will find this a satisfying read to begin the conversation on the “communicational” component of preaching. My quibble with the work had to do with the absence of any real focus on the content of the sermon. Choosing not to cover content is an attempt to overcome a gargantuan obstacle, but with limited mobility. Bellinger tries to be relevant to the audience without addressing the importance of being faithful to the text. For those whose goal is to simply “connect,” this is sufficient. For those whose preaching goal is to glorify God and change lives, both elements must be addressed, for both work together.

Bellinger presents, in a fresh way, a very concrete need for the minister of Catholic youth. Her discussion points are helpful and worth considering. She courageously leads the reader to think about the importance of preaching in an liturgical settings. Yet, in spite of thoughtfully presenting the need and authentically positing solutions, she has come up short in addressing the heart of the matter when it comes to creating a stronger connection with the pulpit and the pew. Focusing on “how” one is communicating, while sacrificing “what” is being communicated, leaves one with an incomplete picture. The “how” of preaching and the “what” of preaching must be addressed and implemented together in order to accomplish the “why” of preaching.



On Preaching: Personal and Pastoral Insights for the Preparation and Practice of Preaching. By H. B. Charles, Jr. Chicago: Moody, 2015. 978-0802411914, 160 pp., \$12.99.

Review by Benjamin D. Espinoza, Covenant Church, Bowling Green, OH

Seasoned pastor H. B. Charles, Jr., has written a book that will encourage and empower preachers to get back to preaching basics and recover the excitement and fulfillment that comes with effectively proclaiming God’s word to his people. After experiencing another “preaching crisis” as he calls it, Charles resolved to write several blog posts on various components of preaching, which later became *On Preaching*. The author does not seek to put forth a robust theology of preaching or articulate a new homiletical method—he is clear about that from the outset. Instead, *On Preaching* is a “handbook of best practices” for all preachers, ranging from freshly degreed seminary graduates to those with decades of ministry experience (11).

Charles divides his work into three sections, each comprising several short chapters. In Part I, “Preparation for Preaching,” Charles explores the embryonic stages of preaching, encouraging preachers to make ample

time to study, work with staff to plan the sermon calendar, and saturate the sermon-crafting process with prayer. In his chapter on sermon preparation, Charles provides a succinct approach to crafting sermons, concluding that the process of sermon preparation requires preachers to “Think yourself empty. Read yourself full. Write yourself clear. And pray yourself hot. Then go to the pulpit and be yourself. But don’t preach yourself—preach Jesus to the glory of God!” (39).

In Part II, “The Practice of Preaching,” Charles surveys the mechanics of preaching, offering practical advice on selecting texts to preach, choosing sermon titles, incorporating illustrations and transitions into sermons, and preaching without notes. He argues for consecutive exposition, and encourages preachers to continuously hone their skills in exposition. Charles’s advice on sermon outlines and choosing sermon titles are helpful and insightful for preachers who may lack experience in these areas. His conclusion on preaching without notes is an encouragement and challenge to preachers who are unsure if they can shift to extemporaneous preaching.

While Parts I and II provide the guidance one can expect in a seminary classroom, Part III, “Points of Wisdom for Preaching,” offers advice that only a seasoned preacher can extend. Charles touches on topics such as maintaining personality in the pulpit, avoiding personal exposure in sermons, protecting your voice as a preacher, and serving as an associate minister or guest preacher. His last three chapters encourage constant self-reflection, continual reliance on the Lord for strength, and the handling God’s word with reverence and excellence. This advice is worth its weight in gold for preachers, especially those entering into regular pulpit ministry for the first time.

This is not a book on the biblical or theological foundations of preaching. Neither is it a book that actively promotes a certain style or method of preaching. Rather, it is a book that encourages pastors in all stages of ministry to return to the basics of great preaching—in-depth preparation, intentional planning, and rich exposition, all bathed in prayer. While *On Preaching* steers away from the theoretical dimensions of preaching, it nonetheless deserves attention from professors and pastors alike, and should be used in the homiletics classroom, alongside classic preaching texts. While the latter provide the theoretical grounding students need for effective sermon crafting, Charles provides the practical, everyday guidance that young pastors will appreciate as they hope to succeed as heralds of God’s word.

In short, *On Preaching* deserves a spot on the bookshelves of both scholars and practitioners. Charles’s down-to-earth style blended with valuable, field-tested practices will be an encouragement to preachers everywhere. In fact, I plan on purchasing copies for each of the elders in our church.



Serving the Word: Essays in Honor of Dr. Chuck Sackett. Edited by Eddy Sanders and Frank Dicken. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015. 978-1625649799, 180 pp., \$23.00.

Reviewer: Gregory K. Hollifield, Lancaster Bible College at Memphis, Memphis, TN

Written by fourteen of Chuck Sackett's colleagues and former students in recognition of his thirty-two years of teaching at Lincoln Christian University, the essays in *Serving the Word* address various issues in the fields of hermeneutics and homiletics. Using a separatist approach, topics of scholarly or contemporary interest are addressed independently rather than woven together to advance a unified thesis. A book of this nature may be read either straight through from beginning to end or by skipping from one essay to another according to the reader's interests. But looking closely at the table of contents, one can detect the editors' logic in arranging the essays as they did—moving from the ancient to the contemporary, from hermeneutical issues to those that are more homiletical by nature.

Following its foreword about the book's honoree and a brief overview of its contents, the Festschrift opens with an essay on Augustine's hermeneutical approach dubbed "charity criticism" (3), and closes with another on how to lead a congregation through preaching. In between are essays pertaining to narrative and rhetorical criticism, educational and speech communication theories, comedy and theology, connecting preaching to hearers' hearts and the church's worship, the preacher's study life, and insights on multigenerational and multicultural preaching.

There's something here for every preacher. Those who think the pulpit is no place for lightheartedness might reconsider their position after reading Jonathan Hughes's essay "The Perpetrator and the Preacher: It's Sunday, Can You Come Out and Play?" Preachers longing to see more lives changed by the hearing of God's word will appreciate Kent Edwards's advice in "Transformational Preaching." If they're still mystified by how to prepare Christ-centered messages, Mark Scott helps preachers understand the move from exegetical analysis to theological synthesis in his essay "Microscope and Telescope: How Expositional Preaching Grows into Theological Arc." Not to be left out, those who struggle to understand how to identify a text's big idea will find a helpful tool in Eddy Sanders's "A General Topic as Part of Biblical Preaching's Hermeneutical Methodology." And these essays constitute only a third of the book's contents.

The two things the book lacks are related. First, there is no essay by Sackett himself. While Festschrifts rarely contain contributions from their honorees, in the case of *Serving the Word* it would have been a

welcome addition. Why? Because the book fails to identify precisely his unique contribution to the field of preaching. This is its second omission. Contributors praise Sackett's humble service (ix–xii), professional career devoted to teaching hermeneutics and homiletics (15–16), commitment to relevant preaching (43), skill in keeping a sermon's topic front-and-center throughout a sermon (67–69), his gifted Christ-centered expositions (85–86) that stay in the text and touch the heart (96), his commitment to ongoing study (124), his cultural intelligence (155), and his leadership (156). None, however, explains what separates Sackett from other homileticians. Reading the accolades, the reader can't help but admire the man and want to know him better. For this reason, the book would have been made stronger by including an essay from Sackett.

On second thought, perhaps Sackett's greatest contributions to the field of homiletics are the former students and colleagues who authored this collection of essays in his honor. As Paul said of the Corinthians, these are his letters (2 Cor 3:2). The people whose lives he touched, whose commitment to preaching he inspired and shaped, they will forever be Sackett's means of conveying his influence and ideas: he has served his generation and his Lord well.



Afflicting the Comfortable, Comforting the Afflicted: A Guide to Law and Gospel Preaching. By Glenn L. Monson. Eugene: Wipf and Stock. 978-0736953559, 100 pp., \$15.00.

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

Pastor Glenn Monson is a Lutheran writing for Lutherans. "We Lutherans," he writes, as he shows readers how to preach through the lectionary. He believes that law and gospel must be preached weekly. Each chapter of this slender volume (except for a brief conclusion) starts with "Law and Gospel . . ." so that the Table of Contents lives up to the book's subtitle.

Monson attempts something ambitious: melding traditional Lutheran theology with the new homiletic. It is "ambitious" not only because this is a brief book and much more could be said, but because the new homiletic's insistence that a sermon say and do what the text says and does is in tension with Monson's commitment to do something else in the sermon. Though he admits that both law and gospel are not present in every pericope, both must be loaded into every sermon. With the new homileticians, Monson wants to engage listeners; with his Lutheran mentors, he wants to be sure that what engages listeners is law and gospel.

Chapter one summarizes law-gospel thinking: how to do theology using this Lutheran grid. Chapter two advocates "Law and Gospel Exegesis,"

discovering how law and gospel function in various texts from the lectionary. Here Monson has his work cut out for him, “for it is rare that a text is fully law and gospel, self-contained” (14). Yet many preachers (and not just Lutheran preachers) have a tendency to preach law even when it’s not found in the sermon text (13). Monson’s example is a gospel account where Jesus praises faith, but the preacher exhorts people to have more faith or berates them for lack of faith, even though that’s not what the text is doing in that pericope. But given his commitment to a law-gospel theological grid, Monson must find some way to bring law into the sermon from other texts appointed for the same Sunday, from elsewhere in Scripture (86).

How to accomplish this goal is the burden of chapter three, on sermon design, and chapter four, on writing a manuscript. Monson urges preachers to be flexible: no one structure will serve every lection, and no one homiletician (Craddock, Rice, Lowry, Buttrick, and Mitchell are his conversation partners) has written the last word on how to craft sermons that engage listeners. Chapter five illustrates methodology by analyzing two of the author’s sermons.

Lutheran or not, preachers can benefit from much in these chapters. Some will want to experiment with new sermon structures, some will appreciate the concise summary of the new homiletic (two or three pages on each key figure), others will benefit from Monson’s counsel on writing an oral manuscript, or imitate his humility in identifying with listeners as fellow-sinners in need of both law and gospel.

The book contains two embarrassing factual errors: Mary’s words, “They have no wine,” are attributed to Jesus (41), as are James’s about the demons shuddering (5). But the chief weakness of the book is its attempt to do the impossible: make every sermon fit a grid that may or may not be native to its text.



Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space. By Sarah Travis. Eugene: Cascade, 2014. 978-1625645289, 168 pp., \$20.00.

Reviewer: S. Jonathan Murphy, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX

In *Decolonizing Preaching*, Sarah Travis summons Western preachers into a perspective and application of preaching built on postcolonial theory and Social Trinitarian theology. The book unfolds as seven chapters organized within three major parts.

In the first part of the book, *The Omnipresence of Empire*, Travis invites the reader to come to terms with the ongoing reality of colonialism and the challenge of preaching within this context. She argues that colonialism/imperialism is not a reality or ideology of the past. It is very much alive and well albeit under a new guise (Western globalization). Moreover, the Christian

church has been, and is, an active participant in the continued existence of colonization, intentionally or otherwise. Travis calls for the would-be preacher to speak into this multi-layered and diverse context embracing a new perspective *and* preaching practice: a *postcolonial* homiletic.

In the second major section, *Developing an Alternative Discourse*, Travis proceeds to ground her call for postcolonial preaching on a composite foundation. Firstly, she presents the *theological* foundation upon which her model rises, namely, Jürgen Moltmann's Social Trinity. The relationship within the Godhead of freedom, self-giving, self-differentiation, and openness provides the pattern for an alternative discourse to that of empire in the practice of preaching. Secondly, Travis explains the postcolonial theoretical framework upon which her proposal is also built particularly emphasizing the key concepts of ambivalence, hybridity, and Third Space.

In the final part of the book, Travis turns theory to practice by providing *A Toolbox for Decolonizing Preaching*. She recognizes that decolonizing preaching is not easy, but one must "imagine a human community shaped by discourses of love and freedom, rather than dominance and captivity" (90). So how is this achieved? Travis presents a substantial series of *how-to* strategies such as naming colonizing discourse, engaging difference and diversity, assessing power dynamics and inequalities, etc. But in the end, she accepts that the mystery remains. The author also offers a postcolonial hermeneutic as a key tool for decolonizing preaching. Travis demonstrates her hermeneutic on select passages from the Bible, and includes a list of practical questions an exegete can use to interrogate the biblical text through a postcolonial lens. The section ends with a return to the theological foundation upon which Travis builds part of her case, that is, the space—a Third Space—within the embrace of the Trinity, made for the created order and in which transformation occurs.

There are many ways in which this book is helpful. It introduces the reader to another lens through which to observe the preaching task. In so doing, it calls Western preachers to self-reflect upon their use of the pulpit, considering and correcting how they are heard, and reminding them of the complexity, histories, and scars of the gathered audience. This is an invitation to humility and audience sensitivity in preaching; it is a call for preachers to lead listeners to God but not dress them in the preacher's identity.

But this book is also often confusing, but the field of postcolonial theory, not Travis, is to blame for this. It is a puzzling field, a fact the author acknowledges (72, 73, 86). Somewhat ironically, it imposes a single lens on reality and so can only see Western imperialism under every stone. And it borders on projecting the very approach that it is supposed to correct—the "othering" of people, in this case white people of European ancestry. The results are sweeping and ill-informed claims that cast doubt on the theory's credibility. For example, to argue for contemporary manifestations of empire by appealing to places like Northern Ireland and the Canary Islands is disturbing to this reviewer (21, 86), who is from Northern Ireland and has

lived for over a decade in the Canary Islands! Such claims to build a case are biased, embellished, and simply inaccurate. They are not contemporary reality. All to say, the field Travis plows has many problems. Perhaps this is not surprising given some of the postmodern foundations on which it is laid.

In conclusion, this book is recommended for those interested in learning about a new perspective within the field of preaching. But the recommendation comes with a warning for those conservatives not interested in yet another postmodern dialogue and hermeneutic: this book is not for you. As a member of a large Northern Irish-Spanish family, I don't feel under threat by another voice with a different perspective at the table; but one can dialogue, disagree, and learn. *Decolonizing Preaching* is an engaging conversation.



Ephesians: A Theological Commentary for Preachers. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Eugene: Cascade, 2015. 978-1498203043, 254 pp., \$30.00.

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

Ephesians is the third in Kuruvilla's series of theological commentaries, following *Mark* and *Genesis*. Most serious commentaries are written neither by nor for preachers; this one is. In this commentary, the aim is to capture what each pericope—each preaching portion—is doing with what it is saying. Kuruvilla is convinced—and has ably documented in earlier works—his conviction that each textual unit has theological value. Stating the theology of each pericope is thus the crucial intermediary step between text and application, between text and praxis. The book's introduction makes a strong case for the value of this commentary for preachers and others, addresses issues of the letter's destination, authorship, purpose and its "drama"—an idea Kuruvilla adopts from Gombis. The twelve chapters correspond to the twelve pericopes Kuruvilla discerns in *Ephesians*. Each chapter contains a title, the verses in the pericope, a review of the preceding pericope (except, of course, in the first case), a summary of the pericope at hand, and a preview of the next pericope (except, of course, the last). Then, in a shaded box, the book articulates the theological focus of the pericope and breaks it into parts. Next, an overview is followed by a chiastic diagram of the pericope. Then the theological focus of each smaller unit of text is repeated, a translation is supplied followed by detailed notes that begin with a third statement of the theology of the verses just translated. When all the parts of the pericope have been translated and commented upon, a section called "Sermon Focus and Outline" repeats the theological focus of the whole pericope, offers some explanatory words, and supplies two possible preaching outlines. The volume ends with a conclusion, a bibliography, and indexes of ancient sources, modern authors, and Scripture.

This volume admirably succeeds at addressing the gap it aims to fill. It does so for several reasons. Primary among these is that Kuruvilla observes the Greek text itself in a disciplined and methodical fashion, noting meaning, connectives, repetitions, verbal links, and whatever else the text is doing. Furthermore, he is exceptionally aware not only of the rest of the Bible, but also of the best commentators and journal articles, as well as the ancient sources that shed light on the text's meaning. He carefully interacts with all these quoting and using easy-to-consult footnotes. The author's excellent grasp of the text together with his knowledge of the literature fosters judicious assessments of interpretive issues. Kuruvilla consistently refrains from overstating things or skipping cruxes.

Other winsome features include clear and compact style, the inclusion of a translation and transliteration after Greek words for those who need them, good summaries, and careful connections with the rest of the book, the corpus, and the canon. For all of its detail, the volume is exceptionally clean. Wisely, the outlines are "deliberately skimpy; they are intended to be suggestions for further thought—rough-hewn stones to be polished by the preacher" (36n56). All homiletics have to decide to what extent they will employ and recommend alliteration. Kuruvilla values it (199n40) in a way that perhaps subtly sets up the listener to recall the outline more readily than the theology of the pericope. Also, "Outlines in this commentary will have an imperative of some sort as a major outline point—the application" (37n58). In my view, this is not always necessary unless the pericope is an exhortation. A response is always required; but it is not necessarily an imperative. I also found that sequentially numbering all the main parts of the outline including the final applicatory one could fail to convey that this final move is actually designed to call for a response to all the previous ones; it is more than merely the last item in a series. I would have liked each final element to begin each time with a "so" as in one outline (85).

These are minor concerns that should in no way minimize the significant value of this volume for preachers. The wise expositor who carefully consults this volume may be tempted to skip other commentaries altogether since it does such a commendable job of distilling the valuable thoughts! Like all temptations, that one should be resisted, but preachers *could* and *should* use this commentary as a sort of insurance policy against missing something important that scholars have noted. Preachers and homiletics alike should be grateful to Kuruvilla for this careful and scholarly-yet-accessible contribution, and pray that God gives him health and strength to continue this masterful series.



Preaching to Multiethnic Congregation. By Woosung Calvin Choi. New York: Peter Lang, 2015. 978-1433129506, 169 pp., \$76.95.

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

Diversity is ubiquitous. The question is whether preachers will choose to acknowledge and engage the diversity of their listeners or ignore it. Choi, in this revised doctor of philosophy thesis that was submitted to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and London School of Theology, has responded both academically and practically to the lacuna of works on preaching in multiethnic settings. Choi serves as the senior pastor of Watertown Evangelical Church, an international congregation in Watertown, MA. Besides, he has lived in South Korea, Iran, Turkey, India, and the United States, and has spent his entire life thinking about ethnic and cultural diversity. He is amply experienced and well positioned to speak into what preachers need to know about communicating God's word across ethnic and cultural differences. Choi commences the study by making the case for the necessity of multiethnic preaching and culminates with a proposed homiletical paradigm for how preachers can communicate Scripture cross-culturally.

The book is partitioned into seven major chapters. Chapter 1 exposes the lack of homiletical consideration with respect to multiethnic and/or cross-cultural preaching. In chapter 2, "An Intercultural Model for Use in Homiletics," the author provides a brief taxonomy of recent intercultural communication theories focusing primarily on Muneo Yoshikawa's four-fold model of intercultural communication and Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. He critiques the deficiencies of these models and later introduces, in chapter 3, his new homiletical paradigm called "positive marginality." This concept of positive marginality is his original contribution to homiletical scholarship and practice. He defines it as "the ability to *Embrace* two or more ethnic and/or cultural groups, *Engage* in an intentional cross-cultural dialogue, *Establish* relationship with others by fully utilizing the assets and strengths of those groups, and thereby, *Embody* a communal identity and *Exhibit* a renewed vision for society" (32). Chapter 4 elaborates on how preachers can employ these five stages of positive marginality in their preaching practice to demonstrate greater ethnic and cultural sensitivity. In chapter 5, Choi presents examples of biblical characters who modeled positive marginality in the Bible, and offers a theology of positive marginality. Chapter 6 discloses findings from the semi-structured qualitative interviews he conducted with seven preachers (in six different countries) who preach to multiethnic congregations. Lastly, in chapter 7, Choi analyzes his findings to determine how effective the concept of positive marginality is for preachers in multiethnic contexts.

Preaching to Multiethnic Congregation is an important contribution that fills a major gap in homiletical research. Choi has written a landmark study that presents a helpful and workable paradigm for preachers to connect with listeners from other ethnic and cultural groups. My minor

critique of this book regards its research methods. The study would have benefited from conducting interviews with a larger sample of preachers. In addition, I wonder what data might have arisen by focusing on preaching in multiethnic churches in the United States only, rather than seeking to engage a limited international sample. Regardless, Choi's homiletical concept of positive marginality is an indispensable communication tool that will equip preachers to reach more effectively their diverse listeners on Sunday morning. It is a valuable work of scholarship that merits much academic and ecclesial attention. We are indebted to the author for providing this gift and resource to the Church.



Preaching the Farewell Discourse: An Expository Walk-Through of John 13:31–17:26. By L. Scott Kellum. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2014. 978-1433673764, 350 pp., \$24.08.

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

Kellum is associate professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. This book appears to be a reworking of his dissertation published by T. & T. Clark (2004). What caught my attention was the title: here at last was a book claiming to help preachers go from text to sermon from a specific biblical passage. Not having come across one of this ilk, and knowing the old adage—"Don't judge a book ...!"—I was concerned: Would Kellum deliver on his cover?

The first 66 pages address the author's exegetical method: "An Expository Theory"—that attempts to bridge the "unmistakable and disturbing gap between our hermeneutics and our preaching" (5). He seeks to give us "a list of basic tasks to complete" to traverse this bridge: "Examine Literary Context, Identify Historical Context, Identify Canonical Context, and Proclamation" (15). Most of this is fairly familiar to readers of this *Journal*, but a few comments are in order.

Eleven-plus pages describe in some heavy detail "SSA"—"semantic and structural analysis," the linchpin of Kellum's determination of the meaning of the text (55–66). Derived from work done by the Summer Institute for Linguistics, this is a somewhat mechanical approach to interpretation that relies on linguistic structure. While there is some benefit to using this tool, it is immediately apparent that there is more to what authors do than that is apparent in just textual structure. Besides, the methodology and labels end up being quite complex. Even Kellum's "simplified" version of SSA (65) was dauntingly complicated, and the results less than convincing. There did not seem to be anything that SSA accomplished, at least in the examples we are given, that could not otherwise be arrived at. Kellum admits that "[r]egarding other genres [other than didactic, that is], I find that a semantic

and structural analysis [SSA] is not as particularly helpful although a close inspection of the text is always valuable" (225). Thankfully, Kellum confesses that "the method I have proposed is a way, not *the* way" (227).

On "proclamation," here's how Kellum sees it: One must identify the "main idea of the text (MIT) and the purpose of the passage, and "convert the MIT into the main idea of the message (MIM)" [I'd have preferred "main idea of the sermon (MIS)"]; that would give us "MIT" and "MIS"!]; then each movement of the sermon is developed by "explicating, illustrating, and applying the text"; finally, the conclusion and introduction are composed (29). In fleshing out the outline of the sermon, Kellum encourages us to constantly move from "Text" to "Today" (33). I agree: the frequent passage from revelation to relevance is what makes a sermon a sermon.

The remaining 300-odd pages of the book dealt with the analysis of John 13–17. On that scale, what would be the size of a commentary on the entire Gospel—1,000 pages? John 13–17 is broken up into an uneven 14 pericopes for preaching—uneven because they range in size from one verse (John 16:33) to 33 verses (John 17, the entire chapter). In general, Kellum's analyses of the passages appear sound. But there seems to be a repetition of MIMs when texts are sliced too narrowly. Here are a few:

John 14:1–4: "To have untroubled hearts, people today should trust Christ because his word is true" (96).

John 14:5–7: "You ought to believe on Christ because he is the only way to the Father" (103).

John 14:8–14: "Today we should believe in Jesus because of his unique relationship to the Father" (112).

It appears to me that all three of these sermons are exhorting listeners to believe (the imperatives in each are similar), giving them three reasons to do so (and the last two of the given reasons are virtually identical).

Two appendices close out the book. The first discusses tools for sermon prep, such as atlases, introductions, charts, commentaries, theologies, lexicons, electronic resources, etc. In the second, Kellum addresses the same pericopes in John 13–17, this time seeking to "fill in more application and illustration and weave it into a coherent series." Some of the illustrations are useful, but much of these appendices could have been fruitfully omitted and parts of it incorporated into the main body of the book.

All in all, *Preaching the Farewell Discourse* is a valiant attempt to produce what all preachers would love to see more of. However, I am not entirely certain that that attempt has been successful. Still, it is worth a look, if you are preaching through the Fourth Gospel.



Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Mark. By Daniel L. Akin. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2014. 978-0805496857, 387 pp., \$14.99.

Mark. By David Schnasa Jacobsen. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. 978-0800699239, 233 pp., \$22.00.

Mark. By Grant R. Osborne. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 978-0801092190, 340 pp., \$39.99.

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

The year 2014 was a good year for the Gospel of Mark, with at least three commentaries showing up in bookstores. How useful are they for us preachers?

In the *Christ-Centered Exposition* Series is Akin's work on the Gospel (Akin is president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary). With very little ado with respect to the usual preliminaries like authorship, genre, and backgrounds, Akin dives right in. And right away I noticed something unusual. Mark 1:1–4 is outlined as "We Can Trust God to Keep His Promise" and Mark 1:4–8 as "We Can Trust God to Send His Preachers" (3)—theological statements of the trustworthiness of God. But Mark 1:9–11 is "The Baptism of Jesus Was a Declaration of Sonship," and 1:12–13 is "The Temptation of Jesus Was a Declaration of War" (10)—descriptive statements that recount the narrative. Then things change again. Mark 1:14–15 is "We Must Proclaim the Right Message," 1:16–20 is "We Must Find the Right People," and 1:17–18, 20 is "We Must Follow the Right Master" (17)—imperative statements that exhort action. The rest of the outline statements in the commentary—and elements of the actual commentary itself—are also equally scattered between theology, description, and imperative (at least in one instance, the outline points are all questions). But beyond that, I found that links between pericopes find no mention; each section/pericope is a standalone affair, creating a rather discontinuous Gospel account. In sum, this tome will help those unfamiliar with the Gospel, but preachers—they will find it insufficient.

The *Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries* Series gives us Jacobsen's Mark (the author is professor of homiletics at Boston University). As expected, this work follows the lectionary, though, thankfully, Jacobsen also addresses pericopes that are omitted from it. In his prolegomena to the Gospel, the writer wisely observes that Mark operates with a "narrative rhetoric"—"the way in which he tells his story, the perspectives with which he does it, and the style he uses to communicate" as he "seeks to have an 'effect' on his readers/hearers" (11). This immediately signals that Jacobsen will pay attention to what Mark is doing. He does: pericopes are connected, and structure is attended to. What is lacking is significant textual analysis. For instance, the description of the insider-outsider motif in Mark 3:20–35

would have gained a lot more if it had been substantiated from the text (“out” in 3:20; “out of his mind,” 3:20; the location inside the house, 3:22–29; “cast out,” 3:23; “enter,” 3:27; “outside,” 3:31; etc.). Another quirk: after appropriate pericopal divisions of earlier chapters of Mark, it was also disappointing to see 14:1–15:47 treated as a single chunk of 119 verses! But on the whole, Mark is a good read; however, preachers will not necessarily find in it anything they wouldn’t be able to discover in other commentaries on this Gospel.

From Baker’s *Teach the Text* Commentary Series comes Osborne’s *Mark* (Osborne is professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School). Glossy pages, colored text, photographs, and a more reader-friendly layout make this series attractive (and, needless to say, pricier). Each chapter (pericope) begins with a “Big Idea” (a descriptive reduction of the text); it then deals with “Understanding the Text,” that discusses the text’s context and structure, some “Interpretive Insights” (pointing out textual elements worthy of attention), and brief “Theological Insights” (dealing with systematic theology elements in the text). At the end of the chapter one finds “Teaching the Text” (a breakdown of the “Big Idea”) and “Illustrating the Text” (illustrations, object lessons, etc.). Connections between pericopes are occasionally made; for instance, the stilling of the storm is tied in with the healing of the demoniac, yielding a pericope that goes from Mark 4:35 to 5:20. Elsewhere, the reader finds that the themes of the two feedings, 6:31–44 and 8:1–13 are similar: the provision of God. In fact, they are quite distinct: the first deals with the empowerment of disciples to provide for the needy (Jesus’ compassion for the leaderless, 6:34), the second with God’s provision of daily needs (Jesus’ compassion for the hungry, 8:2–3). Overall, I don’t see anything new here either; preachers can save their hard-earned wealth for other works on Mark.

So, in closing, I stand corrected: The year 2014 was not exactly a very good one for the Second Gospel.



Preaching as Poetry: Beauty, Goodness, and Truth in Every Sermon. By Paul Scott Wilson. Nashville: Abingdon, 2014. 978-1426764042, 157 pp., \$18.99.

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

Paul Scott Wilson is professor of homiletics at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, and a respected scholar, author, and teacher of preaching. In his Introduction, he asserts that “[p]reaching needs to be artistic, creative, authentic, apologetic, and contextual, to find ways to speak to a culture whose basic values have changed, and to find fresh ways to speak of God” (xi). A remedy, Wilson suggests, is to accept the need for “theopoetic preaching, preaching that speaks of God in poetic ways” (xiv), and that “sings of the beauty, goodness, and truth of God in fresh ways for

a changed world" (xiv). The author uses these last three values to discuss preaching, each taking a section of the book.

On beauty, Wilson observes that "beauty is the experience of God and God's purposes, the in-breaking of the future now. ... Beauty is discovery of profound meaning beyond oneself, often in seeming contrast to the events of the day. Beauty is fruits [sic] of the Spirit" (7). So, Wilson wants preachers to focus upon "the beauty of creation, God's actions and character, the person and works of Jesus Christ, the ongoing work of the Spirit, and the voice of God in the present" (22), all testifying to the beauty of the divine. Such preaching of beauty, "and theopoetics in general, is a reaction to preaching that is excessively addressed to reason" (31), i.e., dogmatic preaching that systematizes bits and bytes of theology in any passage. But Wilson is not very clear about how to go about this practically. Preachers, he advises, are to "choose a simple idea as the theme sentence" (32); it was unclear how that aided the preaching of divine beauty. We are also to "choose an idea that strikes you as beautiful to be the focus of your sermon" (34); now I worry we are drifting from the thrust of the text, which ought to be the source of the Scripture's (and its Author's) beauty.

Then there is the section on goodness: "in theopoetic understanding, goodness is not separate from a relationship with God rooted in scripture and the church" (52). Wilson wants preachers and congregations to be open to "a more relational understanding of good" (54). Throughout this discussion I sensed a disconnect between "absolute good" and "good-to-me." More often than not, Wilson focused on the latter, and so preachers are to "be invitational and open to other meanings and perspectives" and "honor differences" (61). Four key elements of homiletics relating to goodness are then examined: good news (the gospel), good grammar (understanding the theology of good news in every text, primarily working off the "theme sentence"), good form (crafting sermons are relevant and contemporary), and good actions (application) (67–89). Much of this is undoubtedly "good" stuff, but left me musing: What exactly is "good"?

Finally, the section on truth: "Beautiful preaching deals in goodness, and it also needs to be true" (105). I wonder if all three—beauty, goodness, and truth—aren't integral parts of each other: without any two, the third cannot exist. In any case, Wilson is right about contemporary claims about truth: "Truth, like other values, is a social construct" and "Truth is fluid," etc.. But his solutions for preachers are not a whole lot more solid than the fluid truth of postmodernism: "Speak about truth not primarily as abstract ideas, but in terms of its effects, and what benefits it brings"; "the truth of a sermon cannot be reduced to one set of ideas"; "preachers and people bring meanings to the sermon"; etc. (107–109). The preacher is also "charged with making the text sound not like math, cut and dried, but real life, and that involves in effect making a movie of the text." I like that, but not how Wilson suggests we should go about accomplishing it: "it is painting the picture with details authentic to the time and period, creating as much of the original lived

context as possible." As an example we are told that the wedding at Cana "is filled with smells of wine and cooking food, though the text does not detail them" (117–18). But isn't this merely a reconstruction of the world *behind* the text? How is this "true" (or "beautiful" or "good")?

On the whole, we have here some decent but nascent ideas. In my opinion, they need more gestation, a complication-free labor-and-delivery and, above all, some careful upbringing. Until then, they remain merely twinkles in Wilson's eye.

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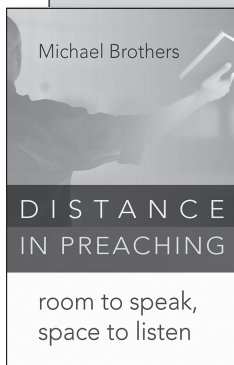
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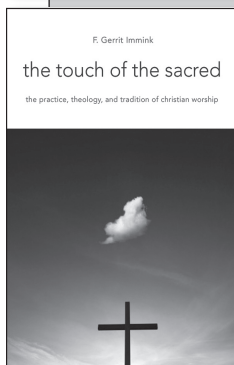
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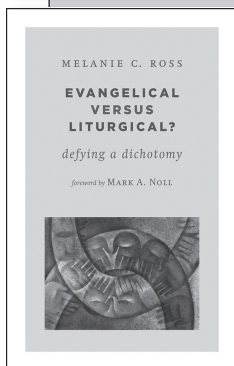
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