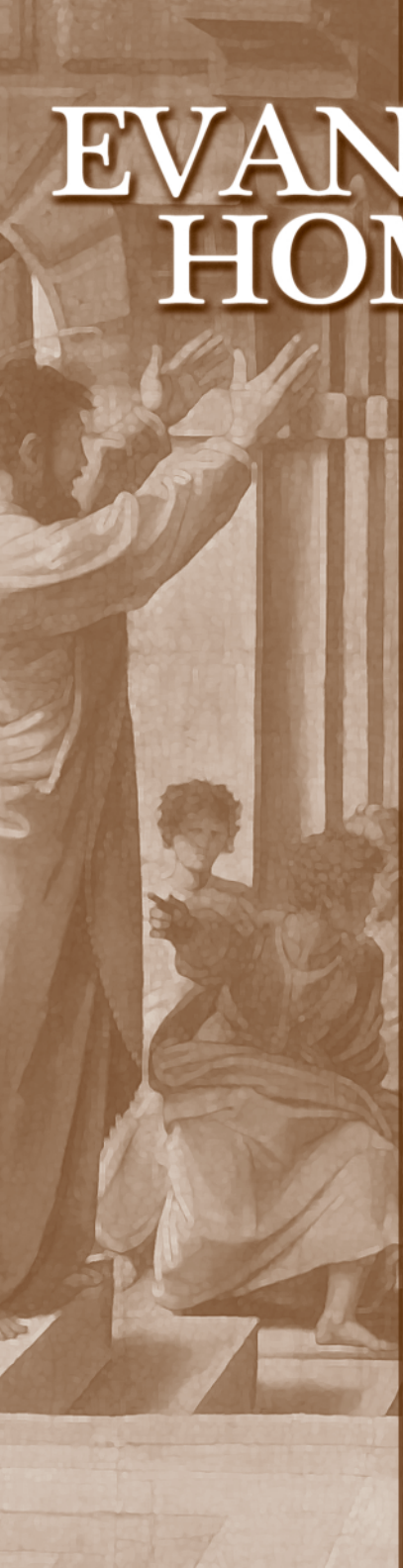

THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE CALL TO PREACH

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

The call to preach comprises the compelling, irresistible desire to reach men, women and boys and girls with the spiritual change and nourishment that comes from God's Word, the Bible, which tells of the saving work of Jesus Christ. We are called Ministers of the Gospel, Gospel Preachers, Gospel Proclaimers, Gospel tellers, Preachers, Teachers, Evangelists. We are called to preach.

The task of preaching is multi-layered and not without challenges. The articles in this edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* capture the varied ways in which the call to preach is expressed and lived out.

In the first article, Tim MacBride explores the minority group status (ethnic or cultural) of the early church and the impact it had on preaching. MacBride examines the rhetoric of minority status and makes compelling connections to the present—to our call to preach.

The next article is by Benjamin Blair Phillips who looks at the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to the task of preaching. Phillips contends that the doctrine of the Trinity conceives God as a speaking Being Who equips preachers to communicate Christ to the world as they engage in conversation with the Triune God.

The final article is written by Jeffrey C. Campbell. Campbell takes on the task of defining expository preaching. In his interesting study, Campbell's conclusion involves a commitment to the text of Scripture and a willingness to allow the text to shape the sermon.

The sermon for this edition of the *Journal* is by David Giese, the first-place recipient of the inaugural Haddon W. Robinson Biblical Preaching Award, established this year (2016) in honor of Haddon W. Robinson, one of the leading evangelical homileticians of the later 20th and early 21st centuries. The cash award is given yearly to first, second and third-place recipients. David Giese holds the Master of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and the Master of Theology from the University of Edinburgh. The sermon is from Mark 4:35-41.

The articles are followed by a fine selection of book reviews. These reviews provide readers with a range of recent publications in the field of homiletics. These reviews are provided to familiarize readers with the breadth and depth of books to be read and purchased for one's personal library and the library of the schools in which many teach.

The call to preach is reflected in the articles in this edition and in the preceding issues of this *Journal*. The call and the acting on the call is textured and varied. We have an incredible opportunity to act on the call in the church and in the academy as we faithfully preach and teach others how to preach. The call is worth it.

The Scott M. Gibson Emerging Scholars Grant

SPONSORED BY THE EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

From its founding in 1997, the **Evangelical Homiletics Society** has been committed to cultivating rising scholars in the field of homiletics. This Grant honors Dr. Scott M. Gibson, co-founder and first president of the Society.

The Emerging Scholars Grant is a means for the Society to assist and encourage developing scholars to fund their education. Awardees of this grant represent the best in current graduate educational scholarship in homiletics.

SCHOLARSHIP DETAILS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- This scholarship is open to all Associate Members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society enrolled at the PhD level of graduate study
- The submission must focus on research regarding a relevant issue in homiletics
- The length of the research will be 15,000 – 20,000 words, follow the current JEHS style guide for articles
- The target readers are evangelical professors of homiletics
- The student must submit the research to ResearchScholarship@ehomiletics.com by the stated deadline of APRIL 30, 2017
- A jury of EHS members will evaluate the essay "blindly" based on relevance to the teaching of biblical preaching and the EHS confessional statement, and determine a recipient
- The Board will notify the students of the decisions at least 90 days prior to the EHS annual conference
- The awardee is expected to attend the EHS annual conference
- Recipient will be recognized at the annual Evangelical Homiletics Society conference, may be given an option of presenting the research during the Evangelical Homiletics Society annual conference and possibly published in a future issue of the *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*

Cash scholarship of first place is $2,000, plus registration fees and meals to attend the EHS conference. Travel assistance to the conference may be available.

The submission deadline is 30 April 2017.

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

http://ehomiletics.com/competitions/emerging-scholars/

PREACHING TO ALIENS AND STRANGERS: PREACHING THE NEW TESTAMENT AS MINORITY GROUP RHETORIC

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PREACHING AND MINORITY GROUP RHETORIC

When Christians are aware of their minority status within the wider community—whether they are in the minority simply for *being* Christian, or are already an ethnic or cultural minority with the added dynamic of Christian faith—it tends to be reflected in their preaching. Their experience of being marginalised or persecuted causes them to pay particular attention to where Scripture addresses the marginalised and persecuted, and to appropriate this minority group rhetoric for their own context.[1]

We have seen this in the preaching of Christians in the majority world, who have been (often painfully) aware of their minority status for a long time. However, it has often been remarkably absent in Western preaching, with the minority group rhetoric of Scripture frequently "marginalised." This may well be due to the fact that believers in the West appear to have only comparatively recently become aware of their minority status within the wider community.[2] Yet for preaching to speak effectively into the Western church's new—or at least, newly realised—status as a minority group within a secular culture, this facet of Scripture needs to be reclaimed (following the lead of those brothers and sisters whose marginalisation has been far less subtle).

Now there is scope for this question to be asked in relation to *all* of Scripture, since it was all—at least on some level—produced in and for a minority context. For reasons of clarity and space, however, our focus will be on those New Testament writings which seem to be addressed to a minority audience *explicitly as a minority*, and are concerned with the group's survival in a hostile environment (most notably 1 Peter, Hebrews, 1 John, and Revelation). Drawing together some of the insights from biblical scholars who have employed theories from the social sciences, we will survey the strategies employed by the writers of these texts, and at each point discuss the ways in which they might be appropriated for use in a contemporary Western context.

THE PURPOSE OF MINORITY GROUP RHETORIC[4]

Minority groups are usually under constant pressure—either overt or implicit—from the dominant culture to conform. This is particularly so in collectivist cultures (like the world of the New Testament) in which a member's sense of self and moral values are heavily dependent on the attitudes of their reference group of others—and strongly maintained by the forces of honour and shame.[5] To survive, a minority group which deviates from the dominant culture needs to develop a way to protect itself from the shaming that comes from the wider community. In particular, it needs to articulate the reasons it is different from the rest of society, to develop strategies to insulate itself from the disapproval of the majority, and to inculcate a strong sense of belonging to the group over against the rest of society. Social scientists have often labelled this kind of discourse "minority group rhetoric."[6]

It should be no surprise that this kind of rhetoric is found in the writings of the New Testament. After all, they were addressed to small groups of believers who were being pressured—whether through overt persecution or more subtle marginalisation—to relinquish their allegiance to Christ and conform to the beliefs and practices of the wider community. Jewish believers faced this from their fellow Jews on account of Jesus' shameful death, his radical redefinition of Torah, and the influx of Gentiles into the church.[7] Believers from a Graeco-Roman background were similarly shamed because of their non-participation in the civic religion which was so central to the majority culture, and was perceived as a threat to the continuing favour of the gods and the emperor.[8] As the author of 1 Peter puts it, they lived as "aliens and strangers" (2:11) in both a socio-economic sense,[9] as well as in a theological sense. The early church was clearly a minority group under threat, and much of the New Testament has a clear interest in persuading its readers to resist the pressure to conform.[10]

The first task in preaching such minority group texts is simply to draw the parallels between the first century audience and our own. As noted above, many Christians in Western contexts do not appear to recognise the extent to which Christians are a minority, with some still believing that the West is a "Christian society." Our preaching, therefore, needs to encourage our audience to own the fact that they are in some ways marginalised, particularly by sections of the media and academia. This is not to argue for a return to an "us against them" mentality, but a simple naming of the fact that the majority of society thinks our actions and worldview to be odd and out of step. It should also be noted that there is the more subtle pressure—from cultural attitudes, advertising, and the like—to buy into the majority culture's way of seeing things, even if just by default. Our audience needs to be reminded that twenty first century followers of Jesus are still "aliens and strangers" in a very real sense.

DISTINCTIVE YET ATTRACTIVE

Like all pressured minority groups, the early church needed strategies to maintain its distinctiveness in order not to conform to the majority culture. Bryan Wilson, in his seminal work on religious minority groups, has shown that such groups have two options: isolation or insulation. For "conversionist sects" like Christianity, isolation is not an option; therefore, the only way forward is insulation. This strategy creates a tension between drawing a boundary between the group and the wider society, and making that boundary permeable.[11] The distinctive values and behaviours of the group—often seen as "shameful" by the dominant culture—are portrayed by the group in attractive terms, trying to win over outsiders by their very distinctiveness.[12] Commenting on this rhetorical strategy as it plays out in 1 Peter, Green describes group members as "bicultural, living between two worlds, with the one a source of tension with the other."[13]

Our preaching similarly needs to insulate against the majority culture while at the same time being attractive to it. It can also guide our hearers in determining where that balance lies in our own context. Often, Christians have done this backwards: we become distinctive where we do not need to be, and end up alienating the wider world; conversely, we slavishly copy culture in the very areas in which the gospel compels us to be different, and end up having no alternative to offer to the world. In preaching the New Testament minority group rhetoric, we can use these texts to help our audience figure out how to be "attractively different" in our own context.

MINORITY GROUP STRATEGIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

So how do the New Testament writers seek to create and maintain these strong-yet-permeable boundaries? The following discussion is a summary of what I have laid out in more detail elsewhere, building on the work of pioneers like Malina, Elliott, DeSilva, and others. It presents the rhetorical strategies used by minority groups in the form of answers to five key questions,[15] and then offers some suggestions as to how the strategies might inform our preaching today.

1. Approval: Whose Opinions Do We Care About?

In any culture, but especially in a collectivist one, it is difficult for a minority group to expect its members to simply ignore the shaming of the outside world. The group's "court of reputation"—the collection of significant others to which members look in order to know what values and behaviours are honourable—needs to be redefined, removing those who are opposed to the group's values, and replacing them with alternative sources.[16]

We see this frequently in the New Testament. Excluded from the

believer's court of reputation are both the synagogue community, which has rejected Jesus and seeks to shame his followers back into conformity (e.g. Rev 2:9), and the wider Graeco-Roman world, which does not know God and lives in ignorance (1 Pet 2:8; 4:3–5). Both these excluded groups may include family members, friends, and important patrons. In their place, the New Testament writers place God firmly at the centre as the only one whose opinion truly counts (1 Pet 1:13–17; 1 John 4:4–6), and who will be the source of their ultimate vindication (1 Pet 4:7). Also included within this redefined court of reputation are God's people, who are "the most visible and, in many senses, the most available reflection of God's estimation of the individual,"[17] which is one reason the New Testament authors are keen to nurture such a community. The collection of God's people—both past and present—is both an embodiment of the alternative values of the group (Heb 10:32–24; the faithful exemplars in Heb 11), but also a place in which those who are suffering acute rejection by the dominant culture can find encouragement (Heb 10:24–25; 13:1–3). In general, the New Testament writers use the characteristic strategy of deliberative rhetoric in appealing to *advantage*—urging the acceptance of the temporal disadvantage of rejection by the world in light of the eternal advantage to be had in being accepted by God and included in his people (Heb 11:26; 12:2; 1 John 2:17; the contrasted fates in Rev 14:9–13).

At its heart, weekly congregational preaching is a regular reminder of this redefined court of reputation. Its content reinforces the eternal benefit of standing against the pressure from the majority, and its setting is a reminder that there are others who share this worldview. This would be all the more powerful if more were made of the fact that this is *inherent in many of the New Testament texts* from which we preach.

2. Disapproval: Whose Opinions Can We Ignore?

The negative counterpoint to the previous strategy is to reinterpret the disapproval which comes from outsiders, providing reasons it can be ignored. We have already seen how the New Testament authors portray outsiders as ignorant of group values and dishonourable in their conduct (e.g. 1 Pet 4:4),[18] who will themselves ultimately be shamed in a great "divine reversal."[19] Disapproval from such an ignorant and shameful group, then, is recast in a positive light, as something that should be expected; after all, it is evidence that group members are *not* like the ignorant and dishonourable outsiders (1 Pet 4:13–16; cf. Acts 5:41). In fact, the group's narrative is further reinforced when disapproval occurs, since the group has been pre-warned to expect such disapproval (1 Pet 4:12; 1 John 3:13; cf. John 15:18–25).

This disapproval can also be viewed as an opportunity to display loyalty, precisely because at that point it becomes costly (1 Pet 1:6–7), and gives group members the chance to imitate Jesus in his enduring the shame of the cross.[20] This is variously depicted as "participation" in Christ's sufferings

(1 Pet 4:13), as following the example of Christ in the way he "despised" shame (Heb 12:2) by joining him "outside the camp" (Heb 13:3), and as a symbolic "re-enactment" of Jesus' own mistreatment prior to his vindication (Rev 11:8). Disapproval should therefore be seen as honourable in that it imitates Christ.

Disapproval from the dominant culture can promote conflict. However, if handled well, this can have a strengthening effect on the identity and unity minority group; as Coser notes, it "contributes to the establishment and reaffirmation of the identity of the group and maintains its boundaries against the surrounding social world."[21] More than that, however, it can also provide evangelistic opportunities by "binding antagonists" and drawing them into interaction.[22] We see this clearly in the minority group rhetoric of 1 Peter, encouraging struggle and resistance not simply to insulate against disapproval, but "as a necessary prerequisite for an effective missionary enterprise."[23] That which caused the group to be shameful in the eyes of the majority produced conflict leading to dialogue, allowing the minority the opportunity to influence or even attract the wider community.

Perhaps our preaching needs to reclaim this aspect of minority group rhetoric—at least to some extent. This is not to argue for a return to the older style, circle-the-wagons approach which saw the world as an evil place to avoid at all costs, and the role of the preacher was to rail against its immorality and godlessness from a safe distance. Rather, this is a call to remember the considerable difference between the values of this world and the values of the one who called us out of this world in order to be a light to it.

One of the unintended consequences of well-intentioned "incarnational" strategies informed by Paul's call to become "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22) may have been to encourage a higher view of the surrounding culture than is warranted. Further, the pluralistic worldview assumed in much public debate pressures us—if we want to be considered participants in such debates—to at least act as if all cultures and all religious worldviews are of equal worth, and contain a similar degree of enlightenment. While this might be a necessary starting point when engaging in marketplace debates, the danger is that we begin to accept this as a starting point for our own identity—something which runs counter to the biblical understanding of the fallen nature of humanity and the complete "otherness" of God's wisdom that cannot be grasped without divine help (1 Cor 2:11–14). This is not to advocate arrogance or disrespect (1 Pet 3:15), nor is it to suggest we adopt the *manner* of some of the more confronting anti-majority rhetoric of the New Testament (set as it is within the culture of bombastic Asiatic rhetoric delivered by a powerless, persecuted minority). However, as a means of insulating our audience against the pluralism of our own age, our preaching needs to rehearse the reasons we can ignore the world's opposition to God's values and its pressure to relinquish our characteristic beliefs and behaviours.

Furthermore, this is not purely for the sake of insulation. As noted above, conflict with the majority culture is at its heart missional. Our preaching can model how to disagree respectfully with the wider society, and to do so in a way that is attractive and invites dialogue. That is, we model how to speak of our "attractive difference" that refuses to give unnecessary offence *and* refuses to pursue a strategy that makes us the smallest possible target. Neither error is missional.

3. Identity: Who Are We?

Much minority group rhetoric is directed to the question of group identity. The New Testament writers nurture a sense of identity firstly through the use of a common language that promotes solidarity (referring to one another in kinship terms, and the "body" imagery of Greek politics appropriated by Paul in, for example, 1 Cor 12), as well as common rituals, such as baptism (1 Cor 10:7), and common symbols, such as the cross. There are also frequent claims to exclusivity, expressed through terms like "holy" and "elect"—and a reminder that this exclusive group is bigger than their immediate context, being part of a worldwide group of similarly elect people (1 Pet 1:11; 5:13; 2 John 13) and, eventually, an eschatological multitude too numerous to count (Rev 7:9).[24] Particularly significant is the New Testament's attention to the early church's group identity in relation to the parent body from which it initially split. The majority (synagogue Judaism) are seen as being responsible for the rift, having rejected Jesus and expelled his Jewish followers from the synagogues (1 Thess 2:14–15). The Christian minority is portrayed as being in continuity with the "true" form of the parent religion (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 2:9), and its symbols, stories, and promises are appropriated.[25]

Although the relationship between Christianity and synagogue Judaism is no longer a pressing concern in most contemporary contexts, our preaching still has a role in proclaiming our group identity. Perhaps being the "true Israel" is of little interest to most churchgoers today; but being part of a story as old as history itself that gathers together a people from all over the world in hope of a world set right may speak to those within Western culture who are experiencing a sense of alienation, and a longing for community and purpose. The New Testament language of kinship and unity, and of shared stories and symbols, can still be powerful. This kind of New Testament preaching on *identity*—not so much individual identity but being part of a shared group identity—may well be what strikes a chord with the values of younger generations.[26]

4. Practice: How Do We Live?

The next strategy we look at is probably the most obvious and well-understood: God's people are called to live differently from the surrounding culture, in a way that reflects God's values. This includes living in a manner

consistent with Christ's teachings, avoiding idolatry (1 John 5:21) and sexual immorality (1 Pet 4:3; Rev 2:14), and rejecting the Graeco-Roman value system which judged people on the basis of wealth, status, and outward appearance (1 Cor 3:3; 1 Tim 2:8; Jas 2:1–4). Much of this is obvious and well-worn, and has been the subject of much Christian preaching.

Of interest, however, is that right behaviour was not promoted merely by direct commands or exhortations (such as those in e.g. 1 Pet 4; 1 John 2; Heb 13). The New Testament writers frequently employed the strategies of "epideictic" rhetoric (one of the three genres of Graeco-Roman oratory), which sought to praise and honour those who exemplified the values and behaviours honoured by the wider society. The purpose of this was to reinforce these values among the community, and encourage greater adherence to them through emulating those who were thus praised. Although Christ is the obvious example (1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:2; 1 John 4:11; Rev 11:8), other such exemplars including the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11 and even the addressees themselves in former days (Heb 10:32–35; Rev 2:3,13), along with faithful witnesses such as Antipas (Rev 2:13), the martyrs under the altar (Rev 6:9), and the "blameless" ones who refuse to worship the beast (Rev 14:1–5). These—and others—are examples of people who lived counter-culturally in light of the eternal reward. The early church found its own examples to eulogise as a way of resisting the epideictic rhetoric of the Graeco-Roman world.

While much preaching has (rightly) focused on commanding and urging godly behaviour, perhaps this epideictic strategy of using *examples* of those who lived counter-culturally —both from Scripture and from people known to us—ought to be reclaimed.[27]

5. Worldview: How Do We See the World?

Minority group survival often depends on creating and sustaining an alternative worldview from that of the dominant culture. Its rhetoric establishes a "symbolic universe integrating values, goals, norms, patterns of belief and behaviour and supplying ultimate (divine) legitimation for the sect's self-understanding, interests, programme and strategies."[28] Examples of this in the New Testament include: the appropriation of the story of Israel as an elect nation of priests in 1 Peter; the Johannine symbolic world of starkly-defined opposites such as light/darkness and children of God/children of the devil; and of course the bizarre and subversive view of the cosmos revealed to John on Patmos.

There is often an attempt to take ownership of the narrative, the lexicon, and social conventions.[29] The Christian minority's story is told not in terms of deviance from the majority culture, but in being part of a different story—such as Israel's story in 1 Peter, and God's purposes in history in Revelation. The meaning of words are reframed, so that "Lord" refers to Jesus, not the emperor (1 Pet 2:13), and "fear" is not anxious dread of

a capricious despot but reverent respect for a sovereign Creator (1 Pet 2:17).[30] The world itself is shown from a different perspective, turning the narrative upside down, so that in Revelation it is the idol worshippers of the Empire who are the "deviants" (Rev 9:20–21) who will soon be destroyed, unless they come into conformity with the rest of creation that exists to worship the one true God.[31]

Similarly, our preaching would do well to help our audience imagine a worldview by appropriating the symbols of our own culture and taking ownership of the narrative. Terms like "security," "freedom," and "equality" are ripe for recasting in light of the gospel, in which they can be truly found only in Christ. The narratives of global terrorism, environmental catastrophe, and financial meltdown can similarly be retold not as challenges which we will overcome by our own effort, but as the outworkings of a world in rebellion against a sovereign creator that will only truly be defeated when he recreates his world—with us as his first fruits.

CONCLUSION

Consciously reading the New Testament writings through the lens of minority group rhetoric might seem most appropriate among persecuted believers today, but to limit it to such contexts is to miss much of the point. In fact, throughout history overt persecution has often strengthened the faith and resolve of the Christian minority. A bigger danger, especially in the West, may well be the social pressure which seeks to shame the Christian minority back into conformity. This includes rejection by members of one's court of reputation, along with the steady erosion of respect for Christian belief in academic circles and in the media. In this climate, followers of Christ need preaching that appropriates the New Testament's own rhetorical strategies, teaching us how to "despise shame," to go to our saviour outside the camp and bear the disgrace he bore, and to be confident that ultimately God will vindicate.

NOTES

1. Note, for example, Martin Luther King's appropriation of Exodus imagery during the civil rights struggle, detailed in Gary S. Selby, *Martin Luther King and the Rhetoric of Freedom: The Exodus Narrative in America's Struggle for Civil Rights*, Studies in Rhetoric and Religion (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008). Similarly, Jorge L. Presmanes, "The Juxtaposition of Dangerous Memories: Toward a Latino Theology of Preaching from the Underside of the Diaspora Experience," in *Preaching and culture in Latino congregations*, ed. Kenneth G. Davis and Jorge L. Presmanes (Chicago, IL: Archdiocese of Chicago, 2000), 14, speaks of Latin-American liberation preachers who approach "the scriptures

bearing in mind the whole experience of otherness and exile of Latinos" and preach "the hope and the grace being revealed in the ancient texts as well as the living texts of the Latino diaspora."

2. This has been evident for some time in more obviously secularised settings such as Europe and Australia, but is now also apparent even in the United States (despite many still clinging to its self-identity as a "Christian nation").
3. David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 50.
4. This next section is a summary of a more extended explanation found in Tim MacBride, "Aliens and Strangers: Minority Group Rhetoric in the Later New Testament Writings," in *Into All the World*, ed. M. Harding and A. Nobbs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).
5. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 62.
6. See Richard Andrews, *A Theory of Contemporary Rhetoric* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 59–61; Robert Wallace Winslow, *The Emergence of Deviant Minorities, Social Problems and Social Change*, Social Problems Series (San Ramon, CA,: Consensus Publishers, 1972), preface.
7. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 48–49.
8. See, for example, Isocrates, *Ad Dem*. 13; Plutarch, Mor. 1125E; a fuller discussion can be found in Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 62–73.
9. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1990), 48.
10. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 50.
11. Bryan R. Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," *American Journal of Sociology* 24 (1959): 12–13.
12. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 108.
13. Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 288.
14. For a more detailed discussion of these strategies and an analysis of how they are used in four of the later New Testament writings, see MacBride, "Aliens and Strangers." The focus here is on appropriating these strategies in our preaching of New Testament texts.
15. These questions have been used in preference to the three components of Tajfel's social identity theory—namely, cognitive, evaluative, and emotional—for two reasons: the focus is on the rhetorical strategies used to form social identity rather than the identity itself; and these questions have been formulated through an analysis of the rhetorical strategies found in the New Testament itself, rather than through imposing an existing social model on the biblical texts. However, there are, obviously, strong connections between the two models. (See Henri Tajfel, "Interindividual Behavior and Intergroup Behavior," in *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of*

Intergroup Relations, ed. Henri Tajfel (London: Academic, 1978), 28-29; and Philip F. Esler, "An Outline of Social Identity Theory," in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testamen*t, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 17.

16. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 40.
17. Ibid., 58–59.
18. Ibid., 62–63.
19. John H. Elliott, "Disgraced yet Graced. The Gospel According to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 24 (1995): 172.
20. Ibid., 172.
21. Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 38.
22. Ibid., 121–23.
23. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 117.
24. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 107.
25. John H. Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement: From Faction to Sect," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. Philip Francis Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 84–85.
26. See, for example, Eric H. Greenberg and Karl Weber, *Generation We: How Millennial Youth Are Taking over America and Changing Our World Forever* (Emeryville, CA: Pachatusan, 2008).
27. See further, Tim MacBride, *Preaching the New Testament as Rhetoric: The Promise of Rhetorical Criticism for Expository Preaching*, ACT Monograph (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 82–84.
28. Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement," 88.
29. Green, 1 *Peter*, 284–88.
30. Ibid., 287.
31. David A. DeSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 99.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE TRIUNE GOD: THE DIVINE CONTEXT FOR A THEOLOGY OF PREACHING

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ABSTRACT: The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the theology of preaching. It requires us to conceive of God as a speaking Being by nature. It enables us to understand preaching as a Trinitarian act, an extension of God's own communication to the world in Christ and Scripture. Finally, the intersection of the doctrines of Trinity and preaching shows that preaching brings people, both preachers and hearers, into conversation with the Triune God.

INTRODUCTION

> All preaching must be shaped by the active recognition that the God whose word is proclaimed is Triune. A Trinitarian mind-set must become as integral to the preacher as the air we breathe.[1]

Robert Letham's assertion that preaching must flow from a perspective shaped by the doctrine of the Trinity demands a theology of preaching shaped by that same doctrine. Systematic theologians such as John Frame[2] and Kevin Vanhoozer[3] have written theologies shaped by the recognition that God speaks and is Triune. Vanhoozer's contribution is particularly sensitive to the fact that God is a speaking God because God is a Trinity.

Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the theology of preaching. It requires us to think of God as a speaking, communicating Being. To speak is a part of God's very nature. God is eternally communicative *ad intra* and so it is incoherent for Christian theology to think of God as silent *ad extra*. In turn, the doctrine of the Trinity enriches the claim that God speaks through human preaching, pointing towards a view of preaching as a Trinitarian event. Preaching is not merely a human act, nor is it the sole province of either the Son or the Holy Spirit. Each of the Persons of the Triune God are at work as one agency when the Word of God is preached. Finally, a doctrine of preaching shaped by the doctrine of the Trinity takes

both preacher and congregation up into the fellowship of the Triune God. In preaching, both as hearers and speakers, we become participants in God's own Triune conversation.

THE TRIUNE GOD IS BY NATURE A SPEAKING BEING

Idols are mute. They are incapable of speech, and cannot act. This argument figures prominently in the polemic of the prophets[4] and the praises of the psalms.[5] The logic of these assaults hinges on the fact that idols are constructed out of inanimate materials such as wood, stone, silver, and gold. Yet a similar logic holds for mono-personal conceptions of God. Unitarian deities cannot be speaking beings in eternity, for by definition they have no other person/Person with whom to converse. What they are not in eternity, they cannot be by nature.

The God of the Bible, however, must be thought of as a speaking being by nature precisely because God is Triune. This assertion is not based upon the correlation of the doctrine of the Trinity and triadic features of specific communication theories. Rather, it is a necessary conclusion based on Scripture's accounts of speech between the Divine Persons.

INTRA-TRINITARIAN SPEECH IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY

The New Testament recounts several instances of the Father addressing the Son. Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism emphasizes the point which the witnesses of Jesus' baptism were to take from what they heard, "This is My beloved Son…."[6] But both Mark and Luke's account records the voice of the Father directly addressing the Son, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."[7] The Gospel accounts of the transfiguration all emphasize the significance of the Father's speech for the disciples, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"[8] But Peter reports that the Father was also explicitly and directly addressing the Son, "when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made *to Him*."[9]

The New Testament also records multiple examples of the Son addressing the Father, usually in prayer. Jesus was heard to praise the Father.[10] He reported on His obedience to the Father.[11] The Son also petitioned the Father on His own behalf[12] and for His disciples.[13] His intercession for believers continues now, in His heavenly session.[14] Jesus even asked the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him.[15]

The New Testament also indicates that the Spirit speaks. Jesus promised that the Spirit would speak what He has heard.[16] Since the disciples are to be the audience for the Spirit's speech, we are to presume that it is the voice of the Father and/or the Son that the Spirit hears. While this makes the Spirit a divine Speaker,[17] it does not yet make the Spirit a speaker to the Father or Son. Yet because "God as sent forth the Spirit of

His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!",[18] we may conclude that the Spirit addresses the Father (albeit through us in this case).[19] Further, the New Testament reports that, "the Spirit Himself intercedes for us" with the Father.[20] The Spirit, just as much as the Father or the Son, speaks within the economic Trinity.

Most notably, the distinction between divine Persons within the Trinity is marked by conversation between them. Such conversation is implied in Genesis 1:26 where the voice of God says, "Let Us make man in Our own image." It is made explicit, however, in John 12:28 where the Son addresses the Father, "Father, glorify Your name," and the Father responds, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Though Jesus goes on to tell those who overhear this intra-Trinitarian conversation that, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for yours,"[21] we may not conclude that the conversation they overheard was merely an act put on for their benefit. The Son really addressed the Father, and the Father really responded. Conversation is natural among the Persons of the Trinity.

God addresses humanity through speech. Indeed, as Vanhoozer points out, "no activity is as characteristic, or as frequently mentioned in the Bible, as God's speaking."[22] Yet Scripture also shows that the Persons of the Trinity address each other with speech. So we are to conclude that "the persons of the Trinity function as members of a language community among themselves."[23]

INNER-TRINITARIAN SPEECH IN ETERNITY

It is a theological truism that the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity. As God reveals Himself to be in the economy of creation and salvation, so God is eternally in Himself. To conclude otherwise would be to make God's revelation of Himself in history and the incarnation a lie. But this logic, while sound, is not in itself the only basis for concluding that the Persons of the Trinity communicate with each other in eternity.

Various Old Testament passages may be taken to imply conversation, or at least speech, by the Father to the Son (and Holy Spirit) about the divine plan prior to creation.[24] Stronger evidence in Scripture for communication between the Persons of the Trinity is found in the implication of a divine *pactem salutis* (covenant of salvation) made before creation, in which the Father and Son agreed, respectively, to send and be sent.[25] This is suggested by the "sending" language found throughout the Gospel of John.[26] This sending reflects an eternal purpose, rather than merely a temporal response to the Fall.[27] Further, the Son receives this mission as a command from the Father,[28] a command to which He submitted "*before* the economy proper gets under way, *before* he takes on 'the form of a slave'."[29]

The best evidence of inner-Trinitarian communication in eternity lies in the fact that the Father glorified the Son before creation and loved the Son in eternity.[31] These statements give some sense of what is communicated

within the Trinity in eternity. Vanhoozer develops the inner-Trinitarian communication through the categories of light (glory), life, and love.[32] What the Persons of the Trinity communicate in eternity is mutual glorification, infinite love, and the divine life by which they indwell each other. Love becomes foundational for Vanhoozer, for whom God is "the one who lights and lives in love."[33]

The assertion that God "spoke" in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity must be understood as an analogical assertion. As a spiritual being, God does not have vocal cords. Nor would we be justified in speculating as to what language God speaks when He's at home. Nevertheless, the Biblical evidence of divine planning or covenanting in eternity, combined with the intra-Trinitarian speech in the economy of creation and salvation, requires us to think of God's eternal, inner-Trinitarian communication in terms of speech.

It is only as Trinity, and eternally as Trinity, that God is by nature a speaking God. Though God speaks creation as a unique and contingent event in and with time, He is also "the Father who eternally speaks forth his hypostatic Word in the Spirit."[34] If the Son is the eternally begotten Word of the Father, then the Father is the eternal Speaker of the Word. This means that inner-Trinitarian speech is a "necessary divine attribute," an essential attribute "without which God would not be God."[35]

PREACHING IS A TRINITARIAN ACT

> The Christian practice of preaching is not a homiletic theory, practical technique, or form of religious communication; rather, it is the gift of the Spirit to a reconciled and redeemed humanity, a conversation initiated by God in which the church is addressed by the Father through the Son.[36]

We do not understand preaching in Trinitarian terms because of an *analogia entis* (analogy of being). It is not as if the fact that the Triune God is by nature a speaking Being necessitates the conclusion that we who are also speakers somehow involve or implicate the Trinity in our speech. In this, our method is a theological method rather than an apologetic method.[37] Instead, we are to think of preaching as a Trinitarian act because the Scriptures demonstrate that Triune God speaks through human preaching.

One way of making the case that God speaks through human preaching is to begin with the fact that revelation is a Trinitarian act. In Frame's "linguistic model of the Trinity,"[38] the Father exerts His lordship over creation through speech.[39] The Son is the Word spoken.[40] The Holy Spirit is the powerful breath that drives the word along to accomplish its purpose.[41]

While the process of revelation is rightly understood to be the origin of Scripture, it is generally less appreciated that much of Biblical revelation

was given through preaching. Deuteronomy is the collection of Moses' final sermons. The book of Joshua records several sermons by Joshua. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and most of the Old Testament prophets delivered their oracles first as sermons. Much of the Gospel material records the sermons and speeches of Jesus. Even the New Testament epistles were ways for their authors to preach to churches when they could not be physically present, expecting that their letters would be read aloud to the congregation. This allows Butin to conclude that, "with only a few dramatic exceptions, it is by speaking through human beings that God speaks to human beings."[42]

The argument from revelation establishes that God has spoken through preaching. That is, at certain points in the past, God spoke through particular preachers in order to convey divine revelation. Yet this argument is limited to the preaching that is recorded in and gave rise to Scripture. It does not yet support the conclusion that the Triune God speaks in human preaching today.

The clearest exposition of the Trinitarian nature of preaching is found in Paul's reflection on his own preaching in 1 Corinthians 1-6. In 1 Cor 2:1-5, Paul states that he proclaims "the testimony of God."[43] The genitive here can encompass the possessive ("the testimony belongs to God"), agency ("God's testifying), and source ("the testimony that originates with and comes from God"). It is not necessary to choose between these options, for all may be seen to be in view here. The Father originates, speaks, and owns the testimony. Further, it is "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" that is Paul's message.[44] Indeed, he "determined to know nothing else among [them]!" The Son then, was the content of Paul's preaching. Finally, the efficacy of his preaching rested, "not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."[45] The Holy Spirit makes the preaching effectual. Each of the three divine Persons were at work in Paul's preaching.

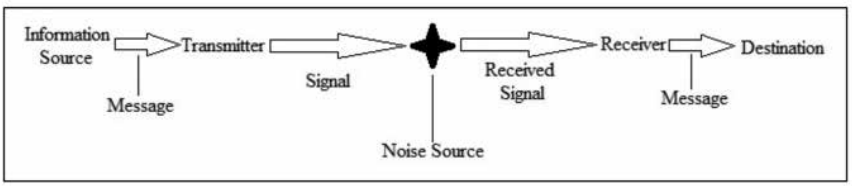
For Paul, the ministry of preaching was simultaneously the work of the preacher and the Triune God. Explicit Trinitarian language comes to the fore again in 2 Cor 2:17, where Paul states that "as from God, we speak Christ in the sight of God." Knowles understands the final phrase, "in the sight of God," to refer to the Holy Spirit who is God's empowering presence.[46] This interpretation is supported by 2 Cor 3:3, where it is the Spirit who does the writing on human hearts, and 3:6 where preaching ministers the Spirit. Here again, the Father is the source, the Son is the message, and the Spirit makes it effective. One other important contribution of 2 Cor 2:17 is that Paul makes it clear that his theology of preaching applies to all who preach Christ, not just himself. It is not merely that "I [Paul] speak…,"[47] but "we" do so.

Paul's Trinitarian understanding of preaching not only articulates the working of the three distinct Persons of the Trinity, it also relates them as one working. The voice of the Triune God is one in which the Father speaks the Word, the Son is communicated, and the Spirit conveys.[49] God's activity in preaching follows the same Trinitarian pattern as all of God's

works in creation: to the Father "is attributed the beginning of activity, and the foundation and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity."[50] Preaching then is not merely a triadic activity, as if there were three divine actors working through the human actor. Nor is preaching simply the unique work of the Spirit or the Son. A theology of preaching must be shaped by the unique features of both Christology and Pneumatology, but these must also be understood in light of preaching as a properly Trinitarian reality. Preaching is a single act of the Triune God, reflecting His ontological unity as one divine Being. Though the Trinitarian persons are "distinct communicative agents," they "share a common communicative agency."[51] All the speech-acts of God are one. As a result, we do not affirm simply that a generic monotheistic God speaks through Christian preaching. Instead, we may conclude that "by the Spirit, God's Word in Jesus Christ can characteristically assume and transfigure our human words, as the Scriptures are faithfully proclaimed…."[52]

It is only now that we may move from the Biblically-grounded claim that the Triune God continues to speak through preaching to the possibility that human communication in general bears an analogical relationship to the Triune God who is by nature a speaking Being. The Triune God is the "paradigmatic communicative agent" in that "the Father communicates himself in the activity of the Son and Spirit."[53] What God is in a divine way, humanity may reflect in a creaturely way as the *imago Dei*.

Horton makes an analogical connection between the three divine Persons and human persons-in-relationship. God's creation of humanity in "Our [Trinitarian!] image" results in "a society of speakers as an analogy of the Trinity."[54] By contrast, Dembski takes up an explanation of divine speech based on the communication theory of Claude Shannon. He finds Shannon's conceptual structure of communication:



to suggest a Trinitarian pattern of information source, message, and transmitter that is analogous to Father, Son, and Spirit.[55] As the exposition of an analogue of Trinitarian speech in creation, Dembski's model has something in common with the attempts to find tripartite structures in individual humans that is reminiscent of Augustine.

THROUGH PREACHING WE PARTICIPATE IN THE TRINITARIAN CONVERSATION

Christian Preaching brings people into participation in the Trinitarian conversation through the Gospel by which the Spirit unites us to Christ. Though this is an eternal conversation, it is not as if we become part of the immanent Trinity. We are not absorbed into the divine life so that the number of Persons in the Trinity are multiplied or we lose our personhood in the divine nature. Rather, we become part of the intra-Trinitarian conversation in time, a conversation which reveals the nature of the Triune God in eternity.

EXPERIENCING THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE TRIUNE GOD

God's nearness to His people is more than an ontological reality. While God is not spatially distant from any point, strictly speaking this is as true of those in hell as of those in heaven. God's blessed presence with His people is the relational expression of the gracious presence of God. Though this could be expressed in extraordinary ways in the Old Testament (e.g. theophanies), Frame points out that "God's nearness to his people is the nearness of his words."[56] Moses tied the blessed presence of God in the life of Israel to their faithful hearing of (obedience to) God's commandments:

> For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in the heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?" But there word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.[57]

God had spoken and given His commandments. The word was present with Israel. In a literal sense, they had no need of any intermediary to cause them to hear the Word of God. Their hard hearts, however, were a barrier that made them unable, in a different sense, to hear God's Word and so experience His blessed presence.

Paul takes up the theme of God's blessed presence through His Word in Romans 10:6-8, where the righteousness that is grounded on faith does not ask for someone to ascend to heaven to bring Christ down, or into the abyss to bring Christ up. Instead, the present Word of God is "the word of faith that we are preaching."[58] Though the issue of conversion is properly a soteriological question, it is worth noting here that once again the Triune God is at work. As Vanhoozer notes, "God is present where God speaks."[59] It is the Father who sent the Son, the Son who is the Word preached, and the Spirit who makes the Gospel efficacious. In short, faith in the message spoken to us by God results in us becoming friends of God.[60] We are ushered into

fellowship with the Triune God, a fellowship increasingly characterized by effective communication,[61] resulting in faithful obedience and the growing experience of the blessed presence of the Triune God.

What is communicated in preaching is the very presence of the Triune God. This not due to the inherent power of preaching as such,[62] nor is it due to the charismatic personality of the preacher,[63] nor even to the wonderful skill or rhetorical adornments of the form and delivery of the message.[64] Rather, it because in preaching the Triune God speaks and communicates to creatures in time something of what God has always communicated in eternity. As the Word is received in faith we experience new life, both in the sense of eternal life[65] and life progressively liberated from sin.[66] It is in hearing the Triune God speak through preaching (to be sure, that of the prophets and apostles or those who publically proclaim what they said) that Christ communicates His life to others. [67] The Word brings light, in the sense of a transforming understanding of the glory of God in Christ[68] and a new way of life.[69] Just as the eternal fellowship of the Trinity is characterized by the expression of mutual glorification, so also the speaking of the Triune God through preaching opens the eyes of those who hear to the glory and knowledge of God.[70] Further, to hear the speech of God in preaching is to know that God is love.[71] Just as the love of God is perfectly expressed in the eternal inner-Trinitarian fellowship, so now that love is poured into the hearts of those who hear the message of the Triune God in faith.[72] God uses preaching to draw those who hear in faith into a creaturely experience of the life, light, and love communicated by God in the fellowship of the Trinity.

PREACHERS AND THE TRINITARIAN SPEECH

Preaching begins with the call of preachers. In the Old Testament, such calling as is described is presented simply as the call of God.[73] This pattern befits the Old Testament emphasis on the uniqueness of God. As with the doctrine of Trinity proper, the working of the Triune God to call preachers is implicit in the Old Testament, and more clearly explicit in the New. The New Testament makes clear that the calling of preachers is a Trinitarian act.[74] The Spirit has made ministers "overseers to feed the church of God."[75] God the Father "has made us ministers of the new covenant."[76] And Paul can say that the Son, "counted me faithful, putting me into ministry."[77] In short, the ministry of preaching begins when the preacher hears, if only in a metaphorical sense, the Triune God call (speak!).

The ministry of preaching that begins with hearing the Triune God speak continues through listening to the Scriptures, which is itself the Word (speech) of God. Insofar as the preacher is a student of the Word, he has become an auditor of the Trinitarian conversation. Christ spoke only what He had heard the Father say.[78] The Spirit also speaks what He has heard.[79] Just as the Spirit is the eternal auditor of the divine conversation, now He causes people to hear. Just as the Spirit says only what Christ has given, who

in turn has spoken only what the Father has said, so also the preacher may only say what God has said through the prophets and apostles.[80]

Though the call described here is that of pastors, a particular office in the church, it would not be correct to limit the responsibility to speak or the presence of God in the speaking of His Word to the office of pastor and those who hold it. The Great Commission is both Trinitarian in form ('in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit") and given to all believers.[81] Though the responsibility of executing the office of pastor is limited to those who are both Biblically qualified and called of God,[82] all believers are called to speak the Gospel and encourage one another in the faith.

Preachers participate in the intra-Trinitarian conversation, hearing the voice of God which comes to us as the Scriptures. Their response of prayer and personal obedience is part of their role as believers in the conversation with God. But it is the offering up of their speech about what God has said (exposition of the Scripture) to others that forms the primary expression of their part in the fellowship of conversation with the Triune God.

To return to Horton's analogy, the task of the preacher is to listen to the Word of God and in imitation of the Triune God communicate it in a society of personal hearers and speakers. Using Dembski's illustration, preachers function both as receivers (through their own study) and transmitters (in their communication to others). The great threat is that through their own sin or creating distractions from the Word, preachers may end up being a "noise source."[83]

AUDITORS OF THE TRINITARIAN SPEECH

Hearing the Word of God faithfully proclaimed is to overhear, indeed, to be directly addressed by the speech of the Triune God. God's speech comes to us through one who has already heard, and so now speaks. Hearing with living faith makes the auditor of God's word a participant in the divine conversation. In this way, the proclamation made by the Triune God through genuine preaching reorients those who hear it in faith. Rather than being *incurvatus* (curved in) upon themselves, it renders them "extrinsic, extroverted, and social creatures,"[84] in that it opens those who were once closed off to God to God's blessed presence and Triune fellowship. Rather than living in spiritual silence, we now participate in conversation with God, hearing His Word and responding through obedient faith, prayer, and praise.

Hearing the Word of God and entering the fellowship of the Triune God also transforms those who hear with faith into a new kind of speaker. As the preacher has listened and spoken, the hearers themselves are to become speakers. Not only does the Triune God open people to participate in the fellowship of conversation with God, they are opened beyond themselves to others. They testify to what they have heard, and by God's grace draw others into hearing the same voice we have heard, participating in the same fellowship we share. Auditors are always to become speakers.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the theology of preaching. It requires and allows us to think of God as a speaking Being by nature, no less in the immanent Trinity than in the economic, revealed Trinity. If God is not a speaking God, then there is nothing left to say.

In turn, the doctrine of the Trinity enriches the claim that God speaks through human preaching, leading us to see preaching as a Trinitarian event. The realization that the Spirit speaks only what He has heard from the Son, who spoke only what He heard from the Father provides a distinct, more positive justification for a high view of preaching that is nevertheless bound to the Scriptures than merely the threat of judgment on those who claim to speak for God when God has not spoken.[85] Reflection on what God communicates among the divine Persons in eternity suggests the promise of a thicker description of what is communicated in genuine human preaching. While propositions of doctrinal truth and the duty of obedience to commands form an indispensable aspect of preaching, they avoid being harsh and burdensome in part because they are situated in the divine communication of life, light and love through preaching. Perhaps a deeper realization of this reality can aid preachers to speak even hard truths in encouraging, joyful ways to those who no longer stand under the judgment of God because they have heard His Word with faith, in the power of the Spirit.

Finally, a doctrine of preaching shaped by the doctrine of the Trinity takes both preacher and hearers up into the fellowship of the Triune God. In preaching, both as hearers and speakers, we become participants in God's own Triune conversation in time. As a result, preachers who were once hearers (and must always be again!) share in the work of the Trinity, drawing other hearers out of themselves into a redeemed fellowship with God and humanity. The response of hearing the Triune conversation is faithful obedience and speech in prayer, praise, and proclamation. Preaching that is a vehicle of the speech of the Triune God, will thus not stifle the voices of those who hear it. Instead, it will encourage those who hear to speak.

NOTES

1. Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004), 423.
2. John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010).
3. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
4. 1 Ki 18:24; Isa 46:7; Jer 10:5; Hab 2:18-20; cf. 1 Cor 12:2.
5. Ps 115:5-7; 135:15-16.
6. Mt 3:17.

7. Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22.
8. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; cf. Lk 9:35.
9. 2 Pet 1:17, emphasis added.
10. Mt 11:25-26; Lk 10:21.
11. Jn 17:4, 6-8, 12-14, 18-19, 22-23, 25-26.
12. Lk 22:41-44; Jn 17:1, 5.
13. Lk 22:32; John 17:9, 15-17, 20, 24.
14. Heb 7:25.
15. Lk 23:34.
16. John 16:13-15.
17. Vern S. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language, A God-Centered Approach*. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2009), 18.
18. Gal 4:6.
19. See: F.F Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 199; Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41 in *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 174.
20. Rom 8:26.
21. Jn 12:30.
22. Vanhoozer, 212.
23. Poythress, 2009, 18.
24. see Gen 1:26; Ps 2:7-9; 110.
25. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 77-80.
26. Eg., John 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38, 57; 6:29, 38-39; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.
27. See: Eph 3:9, 11; 1 Pet 1:18-21.
28. John 10:18.
29. Ibid., 79, cf. Phil 2:7.
30. "the glory which I had with you before the world was" John 17:5.
31. "You loved me before the foundation of the world," John 17:24.
32. Vanhoozer, 2010, 259-270.
33. Ibid., 241.
34. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 332; See: John 1:1.
35. Frame, 2010, 48.
36. Michael Pasquarello, III, *Christian Preaching: A Trinitarian Theology of Proclamation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006). 31.
37. Cf. Pierce Taylor Hibbs, "Imagining Communion: An Argument for God's Existence Based on Speech," *Westminster Journal of Theology* (77: 2015): 35-51.
38. Frame, 2010, 66.
39. Pss 29; 147:4; Isa 40:26; 43:1; 62:2; 65:15; Eph 3:14-15.
40. John 1:1; Rom 10:6-8; Heb 1:1-3; 1 Jn 1:1-3; Rev 3:14; 19:13.
41. Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21.

42. Philip W. Butin, "Preaching as a Trinitarian Event" in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*. Daniel Treier and David Lauber, eds. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 213.
43. 1 Cor 2:1.
44. 1 Cor 2:2.
45. 1 Cor 2:4-5.
46. Michael P. Knowles, *We Preach Not Ourselves: Paul on Proclamation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 103.
47. Cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5.
48. Cf. 1 Cor 2:6-7, 10, 12, 13; 2 Cor 3:2, 4-6, 12; 4:1-2, 5, 7-13.
49. Vanhoozer, 2010, 291.
50. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 1.13.18.
51. Vanhoozer, 2010, 247.
52. Butin, 2009, 219.
53. Vanhoozer, 2010, 226.
54. Horton, 2011, 334.
55. William A. Dembski, *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 86-7.
56. Frame, 2010, 64.
57. Deut. 30:11-14.
58. Rom 10:8.
59. Vanhoozer, 2010, 238.
60. James 2:23.
61. E.g., Moses, Ex 33:11; Jesus' disciples, Jn 16:25, 29.
62. Cf. 1 Cor 1:21.
63. 2 Cor 4:7.
64. 1 Cor 2:4.
65 Rom 6:23.
66. Rom 6:4; cf. Jn 10:10.
67. *Ibid*., 256.
68. John 1:9.
69. 1 John 1:7.
70. *Ibid*., 250.
71. 1 John 4:8.
72. Rom 5:5, 10.
73. Eg., the call of Moses, Ex 3-4; Samuel, 1 Sam 3; Isaiah, Isa 6; and Jeremiah, Jer 1.
74. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology,* "Prolegomena, Bibliology, Theology Proper," (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1948), 1:307.
75. Acts 20:8.
76. 2 Cor 3:5-6.
77. 1 Tim 1:12.
78. Jn 8:36, 40; 12:49; 15:15.
79. Jn 16:13-15.

80. Cf., Deut 18:20.
81. Matt 28:19-20.
82. Cf., *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000, Sec. 6.
83. See Pasquarello, 2006, 13-31.
84. Horton, 2011, 334.
85. Deut 18:20.

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- The sermons are to be videotaped, posted to the student's YouTube channel, and the YouTube link provided to RobinsonSermons@ehomiletics.com by the stated deadline
- A task force of EHS members will view the submission, evaluate it on the basis of adherence to basic principles of biblical preaching (as discussed in Robinson's Biblical Preaching) and the EHS confessional statement, and determine first, second and third prize awardees
- The Board will notify the students of the decisions at least 90 days prior to the EHS annual conference
- Recipients will be recognized at the annual EHS conference; the first place recipient may be an option of presenting the message during the EHS (e.g. one of the periods in which academic papers are presented) and a possible link to the message included on the EHS website

CASH AWARDS:

1) first place: $500, plus registration fees and meals to attend the EHS conference
2) second place: $400
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EXPOSITORY PREACHING: A COHESIVE DEFINITION

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The definition of expository preaching is both elusive and crucial. The definition is elusive because exposition is much more art than science. Many pastors and theologians have sought to define the basic boundaries of the discipline but without the needed cohesion. The definition is crucial because there are many pastors who desperately want to handle the Word of God with reverence and competence. They want to do exposition but are perhaps unsure of what that actually entails. How then can exposition be defined?

No definition of any kind of preaching would be complete without including the famous definition given by Phillips Brooks[1] during the Lyman Beecher Lectures at the Yale School of Divinity in 1877. Brooks states:

> What, then, is preaching of which we are to speak? It is not hard to find a definition. Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching. The truest truth, the most authoritative statement of God's will, communicated in any other way than through the personality of brother man to men is not preached truth…It is in the absence of one or the other element [truth or personality] that a discourse ceases to be a sermon, and a man ceases to be a preacher altogether.[2]

In this definition, Brooks focuses upon the enduring principle that preaching must be communication of truth from man to man. Therefore, there is an implied truth to be shared and a place where it may be found. Are we then to ask as Pilate did, "What is truth?" That isn't a bad place to start.

This article presupposes a definition of truth that would have been familiar to Brooks. Not a view of truth that is restricted to the experiential sphere of Kierkegaard. Nor a neo-orthodox view of truth that subjugates the Word of God to the experience of man. This view of truth does not reject objectivity nor believe that reality exists purely in human consciousness. The definition adopted for the discussion maintains that God has spoken in His Word. This is the truth that Brooks speaks of in the above definition. But the communication of this truth is mediated through God's messenger.

TRUTH THROUGH PERSONALITY

The most significant aspect of Brooks' definition is the fact that the truth is communicated through personality. The human factor of preaching is nonnegotiable according to Brooks' belief. He makes it clear that if either truth or personality is sacrificed then whatever happens cannot be preaching.

What does he mean by truth that comes through personality? Brooks says, "truth must come really through the person, not merely over his lips, not merely into his understanding and out through his pen. It must come through his character, his affections, his whole intellectual and moral being. It must come genuinely through him."[3] According to Brooks, actual preaching does not exist apart from the preacher as mediator. Preaching in general and expository preaching in particular must contain a truth to be communicated and a personality through which the truth is communicated.

John Broadus, another giant of the preaching world, has a discussion of the preaching event in the beginning pages of his famous work on preaching. He states:

> When a man who is apt in teaching, whose soul is on fire with the truth which he trusts has saved him and hopes will save others, speaks to his fellow-men, face to face, eye to eye, and electric sympathies flash to and fro between him and his hearers, till they lift each other up, higher and higher, into the intensest thought, and the most impassioned emotion—higher and yet higher, till they are borne as on chariots of fire above the world,—there is a power to move men, to influence character, life, destiny, such as no printed page can ever possess.[4]

In context, Broadus is arguing the merit of the live preaching event over the practice of printing sermons. It is clear Broadus does not disagree with the printing of sermons. To the contrary, he argues that the printing press has "become a mighty agency for good" because it helps the "spread of the truth."[5] He is, however, rather clear that printing sermons (and by implication for our context, translating them to other media such as television or podcast) is no viable replacement for the preacher being "face to face" and "eye to eye" with his listeners as he communicates the truth that has changed him to those who need to be changed. Part of the purpose of preaching is to "move men, to influence character, life, destiny." Change is the goal.

Haddon Robinson has crafted one of the most widely accepted definitions for expository preaching. While Brooks and Broadus have, in a sense, defined preaching in general, their inclinations are definitely toward an "attitude" of exposition. Robinson, however, is on the forefront of the movement to refine and define exposition into more than just an "attitude." He is, however, cautious about taking the definition too far.

Robinson states, "Attempting a definition becomes sticky business because what we define we sometimes destroy…Preaching is a living

interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation, and no definition can pretend to capture that dynamic."[6] He then gives his definition. Robinson states:

> Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.[8]

Robinson's definition builds upon Brooks' definition (personality/experience) and Broadus' definition (Holy Spirit/divine interaction) and refines elements that apply specifically to exposition such as historical/grammatical contextualization and communicating biblical concepts.

Robinson acknowledges the fluidity inherent in defining how a preacher does exposition. Robinson says, "Expository preaching at its core is more a philosophy than a method," but he also says, "Whether or not we can be called expositors starts with our purpose and with our honest answer to the question: 'Do you, as a preacher, endeavor to bend your thought to the Scriptures, or do you use the Scriptures to support your thought?'"[9] While Robinson leaves the definition of exposition in the realm of philosophy, it is not a philosophy devoid of clearly defined boundaries.

For Robinson, the clear borders that both free and restrict the expositor are the borders of the text itself. The truth of the text must shape the thoughts of the preacher. How does the preacher deal with theology in reference to Scripture? What governs what? Robinson makes this clear. Even the theology of the preacher should be defined by the text. Preachers change based on a changed understanding of the text. Long held beliefs may become irrelevant in light of an expanded understanding of Scripture. Robinson says:

> Theology may protect us from evils lurking in atomistic, nearsighted interpretations, but at the same time it may blindfold us from seeing the text. In approaching a passage, we must be willing to reexamine our doctrinal convictions and to reject the judgments of our most respected teachers. We must make a U-turn in our own previous understandings of the Bible should these conflict with the concept of the biblical writer.[10]

Sunday sermons may inadvertently become exercises in exegetical gymnastics. The gymnastics occur when the preacher encounters a text that challenges an aspect of his theology and he decides to jump through several hermeneutical hoops to make the text comply with his theology.[11]

Gymnastics should never be part of a Sunday sermon. If and when a preacher encounters a text that challenges or undermines his theology, it is his theology and not the text that should be changed. Theology is not static, but the text is according to Robinson. Robinson's high view of Scripture is

evident as he subjects the preacher to the text preached. This attitude is a rejection of an existential or neo-orthodox view of Scripture.

Notice that Robinson's definition highlights the communication aspect of preaching but limits this communication to that which is "derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context."[12] Robinson believes that there is discernible meaning in the text.[13] Context is vitally important to the proper communication of the biblical concept because the meaning of the text, at least in part, is contained in the three areas of history, grammar, and genre.

These three areas help the understanding of the preacher as he seeks the meaning of the text. Can the meaning of Isaiah 6:1-10 be fully understood without an understanding of the reign of King Uzziah? If the preacher does not know that Uzziah was made king instead of his father, that Judah flourished in his reign, and that his reign lasted over 50 years, the preacher will not communicate the unrest that must have been present in Judah upon hearing of the death of King Uzziah. Many in that day would have been born and raised never knowing any other king but Uzziah. These facts are historically significant and are a vital part of this passage's context. This is but one example where history is important to meaning. [14]

What about grammar? Is it that significant for the preacher to delve into tenses, moods, voices, or stems? Take John 3:16 for instance. John 3:16 has been referred to as "the Gospel in one verse." And so it is, but it is also one of the most widely known verses in Christianity. Many Christians have committed this short verse to memory because of its theological significance. The preacher who studies the grammar in John chapter 3 will see something very interesting. Verse 16 is actually a grounds clause that supports verses 14 and 15 where Jesus discusses an event from Numbers 21. God was judging His people for complaining. He sent fiery serpents amongst them that bit them and the people died. Moses made a bronze serpent and lifted it up on a pole and all that looked to the serpent were spared. Jesus used this instance to speak of Himself but this connection might be overlooked if not for grammar. There are many instances where grammar is the exegetical "key" that unlocks the fuller meaning of a passage.

Genre also plays an important role in interpreting texts according to Robinson. The preacher who is unaware of genre may partially understand or miss the meaning of the text altogether. The same phrasings take on different meanings depending upon whether the genre is poetry, wisdom, narrative, gospel, apocalyptic, law, epistle, or prophecy.[15] The genre that God communicates in is significant when establishing the meaning of a text.

Robinson also mentions application in his definition. The biblical concept is that, "which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."[16] The text will first change the preacher according to Robinson. The goal of preaching is not only change within those receiving the communication but change in the one communicating also. Once this change is accomplished, the

concept can flow through the preacher and be applied to the hearers. Thus in the communication event, all involved should experience change based on an encounter with the text of Scripture. Change seems to be a critical element in Robinson's definition of expository preaching.

R. Albert Mohler has posited a significant definition for exposition in a recent work. Mohler states:

> Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of a sermon. Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and the message of the biblical text and makes clear how the Word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God.[17]

Mohler continues to develop his definition by breaking it into its constituent parts. Mohler is keenly aware of the preaching climate of today. His definition is well crafted and worth consideration.

Speaking of Scripture being part of the central purpose of preaching, Mohler says:

> This simple starting point is a major issue of division in contemporary homiletics, for many preachers—from Harry Emerson Fosdick onward—assume that they must begin with a human problem or question and then work backward to the biblical text. On the contrary, expository preaching begins with the text and works from the text to apply its truth to the lives of believers. If this determination and commitment are not clear at the outset, something other than expository preaching will result.[18]

The determination and commitment that Mohler speaks of is the determination and commitment to study the text and communicate the meaning of the text to the listener. Exegesis is critical to Mohler's definition. He says, "There are no shortcuts to genuine exposition. The expositor is not an explorer that returns to tell tales of the journey but a guide who leads people into the text, teaching the arts of Bible study and interpretation even as he demonstrates the same." If one were to imagine preaching as traveling from point A to point B on a map, then Mohler is concerned that not only are preachers not trying to get to the same destination, but also they may not even be starting from the same point of origin.

Mohler's definition introduces a new idea to the discussion when he states, "As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of a sermon." Many who try to define exposition discuss the Scriptures as they relate to the substance of the sermon,

but the discussion of Scripture as it relates to the structure of the sermon is a recent discussion. Mohler says:

> This is where many preachers will be challenged in their own preaching. Because the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God, the very shape of the biblical text is also divinely determined. God has spoken through the inspired human authors of Scripture, and each different genre of biblical literature—historical narrative, direct discourse, and apocalyptic symbolism, among others—demands that the preacher give careful attention to the structure of the text and allow it to shape the sermon. Far too many preachers come to the text with a sermonic shape in mind and a limited set of tools in hand.[20]

Not only does Scripture define what is said in the sermon, but also the way it is said. In the structuring of the communication event, the preacher should pay close attention to how God has communicated the information the preacher will present. This focus on structure is simply expanding the grammatical aspect of the historical-grammatical approach of exegesis to encompass sermon structure.

Notice Mohler's caution against having a "sermonic shape" that is applied to every text. All too often, preachers are guilty of this exact thing. In an effort to be "clear" and with good intentions, they may inadvertently obscure the meaning of the text by ignoring the structure of the text. If the structure of the text is inspired, it logically follows that the structure of the text also adds to the meaning of the text and should be communicated by the preacher.

Mohler, like Robinson, highlights the need to apply the text in the life of the listener when he says, "Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and the message of the biblical text and makes clear how the Word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God."[21] The desire to apply the Word of God puts expository preaching in conflict with postmodern thinking. What should the response of the church be to the preached Word? Mohler says:

> As the Word of God, the biblical text has the right to establish our identity as the people of God and to determine our worldview. The Bible tells us who we are, locates us under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and establishes a worldview framed by the glory and sovereignty of God. Put simply, the Bible determines reality for the church and stipulates a God-centered worldview for the redeemed.[22]

In essence, the church becomes what the Scriptures say it should be and not vice versa. Scripture becomes the driving force for change in the lives of the hearers and, as God's Word, has an incredible amount of authority in the life of the believer.

Before concluding his definition for exposition, Mohler posits three characteristics of true exposition, one of these being authority. Modernity has given way, at least partially, to Postmodernity. Authority in every form is being rejected. How then can expositors claim to have authority if all authority is suspect? Mohler states:

> In all true expository preaching, there is a note of authority. That is because the preacher dares to speak on behalf of God. He stands in the pulpit as a steward "of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1), declaring the truth of God's Word, proclaiming the power of that Word, and applying that Word to life. This is an admittedly audacious act. No one should even contemplate such an endeavor without absolute confidence in a divine call to preach and in the unblemished authority of the Scriptures.[23]

Authority as it applies to the preacher is only present when the preacher communicates the Scriptures. According to Mohler's statement, preachers only have authority when they speak for God. According to the argument thus far, preachers do not speak for God unless they speak the words of God. The words of God are found in the Word of God. Preaching does not occur unless the Scriptures are explained and applied to the life of both the preacher and the hearer. This type of preaching is exposition. Therefore, proponents of exposition would argue that the only preaching that can be done with authority is exposition.

TEXT-DRIVEN PREACHING

"Text-driven" preaching is a movement within exposition that seeks to allow the text to define several aspects of preaching. Mohler hints at this idea in his definition of exposition when he says, "the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon."[24] While many proponents of exposition include some reference to allowing the text to define the sermon, none has done as complete a treatment of this idea as Akin, Allen, and Mathews in their work *titled Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon.* In speaking about the current state of preaching, Allen says:

> What form should a text-driven sermon take? Today, sermon form is frequently dictated by one or more of the following considerations: tradition, the prevailing paradigm in homiletics, culture, or literary form. Not all sermons are created equal, and some are based on a faulty understanding of biblical revelation and/or the human sciences.[25]

Of the four options given, literary form is the one Allen agrees should dictate the sermon form. Whether or not the meaning of a text is couched in narrative, prophecy, poetry, or epistle is significant according to Allen. He focuses on

the idea that genre and structure are related concepts. The meaning of the text cannot be divorced from the genre of the text.

Text-driven preaching endeavors to submit the will of the preacher to the meaning of the text. By focusing on text structure as it relates to sermon structure, text-driven preachers use the "how" of preaching to convey meaning. You would expect a different sermon structure for a narrative section of text versus a psalm because the two texts are structurally different. This devotion to the structure of Scripture is not present in all of exposition. In fact, many critics of exposition accuse expositors of placing an artificial sermon structure on every text regardless of genre or length. This accusation is often valid.

Based on the preceding discussion regarding some accepted definitions of exposition, what threads can be drawn together to weave a working definition of exposition? What follows is a working definition of exposition that is crafted as a composite of the accepted definitions that have already been discussed. Therefore:

> Expository preaching is a *philosophy* of preaching that *explains, illustrates, and applies* the text of *Scripture*. True exposition occurs when a *preachable unit* of Scripture is examined according to its *historical, grammatical, and literary contexts* and then a sermon is presented whose substance and structure are governed by the *substance and structure of the text being preached*. The preacher and hearers are *exposed to the revelation of God* through the Scriptures and the power of God through the *Holy Spirit with life transformation being the goal*.[26]

Notice some key aspects of the definition, which are set off by italics. First, expository preaching is a philosophy. The definition of exposition rests mainly in its theology and not its methodology. The overall consensus is that exposition is more a set of guiding principles undergirded by conviction than a pragmatic approach to sermonizing. Expositors are often accused of preaching "three points and a poem." The root of the accusation is that our sermon structure is static across several genres of Scripture. Our sermon structure shouldn't be static across genres. This is not good preaching and is not respectful of the text. However, expositors are not the only guilty ones. Many preachers uses the same structure over multiple genres because they haven't considered a better option. We should all realize that the structure of a sermon from a psalm must be different than the structure of a sermon from an epistle or a parable or a narrative.

Second, expository preaching is about Scripture. Without a commitment to the inerrancy, infallibility, and inspiration of Scripture, the preacher will not do the work it takes to be an expositor. It is from this conviction regarding Scripture that the desire to arrive at the correct meaning of a text flows. The preacher wants to get it right because he believes he is communicating the very words of God. For the expositor, Scripture is the

beginning and ending point in all that he does. The sermon should be slave to the text. Without this fundamental belief, exposition will not happen.

Understanding Scripture becomes paramount, so the hard work of examining history, grammar, and genre become critical parts of bridging the gap between the events of Scripture and life today. The expositor wants his listener to "get it." Therefore, the expositor explains and illustrates the text so the listener can comprehend in a short time the meaning that took the expositor hours to discern. This commitment to discern the meaning of a text begins with a belief that there is a meaning in the text. Most people don't have cash to buy a house of a car. In buying those items, you assume legal obligations that are usually set forth in a contract. The contract outlines the terms: payment amounts, how long, principal and interest, etc. Our signature on the contract is our assertion that we understand the meaning of the words on the page. Do some actually believe that a bank is better at putting words on the page than God Himself? We should at least have as much commitment to discerning meaning in the Word of God as we do a mortgage contract or car loan.

The expositor does not leave the listener at mere understanding. Not only does the expositor want the listener to "get it" but also he wants the listener to "do it." Application is part of the goal to the expositor. There is application built into every text. Something to know. Something to believe. Something to do. We dare not stop short of outlining these applications for the listener. The Holy Spirit can and will reinforce the clear application of Scripture.

How much should be preached? The expositor will look for textual clues to find the limits of the preachable unit of Scripture that contains a complete biblical concept for the audience to understand and apply to their lives. The expositor will carefully construct a sermon whose substance and structure reflect the substance and structure of the text being preached. He does this because he believes that, just as he has been changed by the text he will preach, the listener through the power of the Holy Spirit can also be changed by the text he will preach.

CONCLUSION

The expositor sees lasting change as the result of preaching. However, the goal of preaching for the expositor is not only change; it is faithfulness to the text of Scripture as God's truth is communicated in the preaching event.

The preacher who desires to be an expositor can reflect on the previous definition and count the cost both in commitment and preparation. The commitment required for exposition is a commitment to the text of Scripture and a willingness to allow the text to shape the sermon. This type of preaching takes preparation through diligent exegesis but yields much fruit in relation to effort. By confining himself to the intended meaning of a

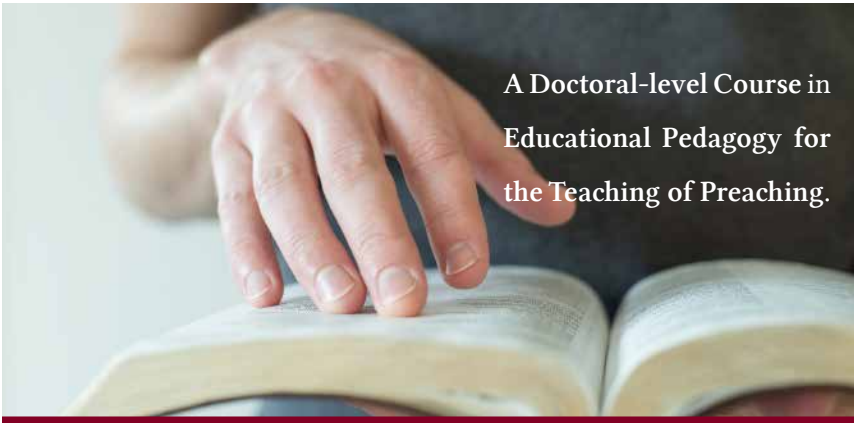
particular preachable unit of text, the preacher can present the information with an authority that isn't contrived but rather derived; derived from the very Word of God. For those willing to commit to the discipline of exposition, may God bless and increase your ministry of His Word.

NOTES

1. Phillips Brooks and John Broadus factor into any discussion of preaching because of their respective contributions. These men are included in those who may not have been expositors by name but definitely expositors in practice. Their definitions and input regarding preaching in general are applicable to expository preaching specifically.
2. Phillips Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 25-26.
3. Ibid., 27.
4. John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1891), 18.
5. Ibid., 17-18.
6. Haddon W, Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.
7. Robinson's definition is emblematic of the current thought as it captures the main components found in most modern definitions of exposition. These components include discussion in some form related to the preacher, the text, the audience, the method, contextualization, authority, and purpose.
8. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.
9. Ibid., 22.
10. Ibid.
11. Consider also, what Peter Adam says about the need to preach the text in Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 25. Adam says, "Modern theology has tended to remove the idea of speech from the forms of divine revelation, but I hope I have demonstrated that this is a false move, and that God's words are inseparable from his self-revelation… Without God's words there can be no ministry of the Word. If God is dumb, we may speak, but we cannot speak Gods words, for there are none to speak. The first great theological foundation for preaching, then, is *God has spoken*." Adams continues his discussion of foundations for preaching with *It is written and Preach the Word*.
12. Ibid., 21.
13. This belief stands opposed to Jacques Derrida's view of the deconstruction of language. Derrida believed meaning was undiscernible and left open to human interpretation. For a discussion regarding the effect of deconstruction related to the Word of God, see Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 230. Groothuis says, "Derrida

removes any objective meaning from texts; their meaning is forever indeterminate…. If a text is intrinsically and irreducibly equivocal, its meaning is unavailable and its interpreters can never be judged rationally against the one meaning of the text itself. The author vanishes, and readers are left adrift."

14. Notice that in this instance, Scripture informs Scripture on historical matters. It is only in these instances where preachers can utilize historical facts as authoritative because the historical facts are also included in Scripture and are Scripture.
15. Expositors have done recent work addressing how genre affects structure and content of sermons. Some of those works include Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 270-346, Craig C. Broyles, *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*, ed. Craig C. Broyles (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 13-62, and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 63-172.
16. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.
17. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2008), 65.
18. Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 66.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 67.
21. Ibid., 65.
22. Ibid., 69.
23. Ibid., 71.
24. Ibid., 65.
25. David L. Allen, "Preparing a Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 103.
26. In endeavoring to distill what has been presented into a concise definition, certain aspects of the aforementioned accepted definitions were either combined or omitted altogether.



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Mark 4:35-41

INTRODUCTION

What does faith look like when graduation is coming, and your next step isn't all planned out? You're graduating from High School, or college, or graduate school and who knows what's next. You don't know what school to attend. You aren't sure what major to choose, or you aren't sure what job you'll take. You may start to wonder, "Are you still in control? Do you still care?"

Perhaps you have been going through a lonely season. Perhaps a family member, or a friend has passed away and you can't help but think about them. Places remind you of memories with them. Songs remind you of them. Your circumstances cause you to wonder, "God, are you in control? Do you still care?"

You have been praying for a wayward child. And things don't look like they're getting better. You keep praying, and there is no answer. We wonder, "God, are you still in control? Do you still care?"

Or perhaps you are at school on a scholarship, and if you get one more C you will loose your scholarship. If you loose your scholarship there is no more school. You may ask, "But God, I thought you provided this scholarship for me? God, are you still in control? Do you still care?"

When life gets bumpy we may wonder, "God, do you still got this?" This person starves while that person is fed well. This person is treated with justice while that person is exploited. Global storms cause us to wonder, "God, are you still in control?"

Personal storms also cause us to wonder, "God, do you still care?" Declining health. Conflict with siblings, children, co-workers, employers, or a spouse. "God, are you still in control?"

Whenever our circumstances get a little shaky, we wrestle with the questions: "God, have you fallen asleep on the job? Are you still there? Do you see me? Do you care?" And if you have ever thought this before, be encouraged, you are not the first one to wrestle with these question. The disciples were asking the same thing in Mark 4:35-41:

> On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they

> took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

It was a nice day, so the seminar on the Kingdom of God was held down by the sea of Galilee. The beach was so crowded, Jesus and his disciples pushed a boat a few feet into the water. And because it was so nice out, there were other boats on the water. The other boats were floating nearby, perhaps listening to Jesus' parables. The boat was Jesus' pulpit. The beach was the stadium. The water acted as amplification, carrying Jesus words to the listeners.

Now the sun started to scurry for the horizon. Evening came. And Jesus was spent. He was exhausted. He had been preaching all day! And after he wrapped up the day with a final parable, Jesus looked to his disciples and said in verse 35, "Let us go across to the other side."

Now, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were professional fishermen. They would have known what it takes to make a trip to the other side of the sea of Galilee. The sea of Galilee is 7 miles across and it was already evening. The boat was designed to seat 15 people. But it was only designed for four rowers. If they wanted to make good time, they would have had to switch out rowing. It was a commitment to cross the sea of Galilee, but Jesus said they were *going across to the other side*. So they lifted the sail, started to row, and were inching their way across the sea of Galilee. As the sun fell closer to the horizon, Jesus fell asleep under the platform at the back of the boat. And like all good fishermen, they kept one eye on the horizon, and another eye on the weather.

Then the clouds came. And it wasn't long until the sky was covered by the ominous grey blanket. Now our professional fishermen would have handled a boat in some weather before, so it was no big deal. But then the wind came. It was a whisper at first, then a howl, then a scream. The gentle breeze soon turned into a nightmare.

And you can see it now, can't you? The disciples are scurrying to lower the sail so they wouldn't capsize. The rowers are fighting to keep the boat straight. The other disciples dig their fingers into the side of the boat so they wouldn't fly overboard. The waves are starting to crash against the side of the boat. The boat was only 4 feet high, and in a bad storm on the sea of Galilee the waves can reach 7 feet. The boat is filling with water. The disciples

are tight lipped. The oars are creaking under the stress. Perhaps Peter was yelling orders to keep this thing all together.

And I don't know who suggested it. Maybe it was a group consensus. But perhaps someone realized, "Wait a minute, we have Jesus in the boat. Hey, someone get Jesus! Surely Jesus could help." So the disciples look to the back of the boat, but he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. That's what it says in verse 38. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. The boat is sinking and Jesus is asleep. The waves are filling the boat, and Jesus is asleep on the cushion.

And that is when I think the wind starts to whisper poisonous words of doubt into the disciples' ears. This is the moment when Satan started to plant seeds of doubt in the disciples' minds. Through the winds and the waves, Satan started to whisper, "He doesn't care about you. Look at him, He is asleep. And remember, it was *his* idea to cross over to the other side in the first place. *He* is the one who got you into this mess. He doesn't even care that the boat is filling with water. He doesn't even care graduation is coming up and you don't know what is happening next. He doesn't even care that you are lonely. He doesn't even care that your prayers aren't answered. So go ahead, keep rowing, keep trying to bail water. Look, your boat is sinking, and your Jesus is asleep. Go ahead, keep praying, keep going to your small groups, keep telling yourself Romans 8:28 but look at your Jesus. He is asleep.

And then they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" In verse 38, The disciples wake Jesus up, and ask, "Do…you…not…care?"

Then Jesus gets up. And He gets off the cushion. And He looks out at the wind and the waves. And with the same words Jesus has used before for rebuking demons. Jesus says to the wind and the waves in verse 39, "*Peace! Be Still!*" Jesus *rebukes them* and says, "That is enough! Be quiet! No more!" And the voice of Jesus sent the waves and the wind, with their poisonous words of doubt, back to the bottom of the sea where they belong. Then verse 39 says, *And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm*. At the command of Jesus the "great storm" has become a "great calm."

Then Jesus turns to his disciples who are soaking wet, exhausted, and pumped full of adrenaline *and He said to them*, in verse 40, *"Why are you so afraid?"* Why are you cowering? Why have you been paralyzed by fear? Why have you allowed the winds and the waves to shake your confidence in me? And then Jesus asks, *"Have you still no faith?"* Don't you know who I am? Do you still not trust me? Do you still not believe in me?

And then verse 41 says, *"they were filled with a great fear* [a great fear, an awestruck fear, not the cowering-fear of verse 39, but a reverent-fear] *and they said to one another, "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* Who should we fear more? The storm? Or the one who commands the storm by his voice? Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? The disciples would have realized at this point that Jesus was no ordinary man. Jesus wasn't just another teacher. There was something huge about this man.

I don't know how well the disciples would have known their psalms, but as this story circulated throughout the first century, people may have turned in their Bibles to places like Psalm 93 and read, *"The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; The floods have lifted up their roaring. But Mightier that the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty."*

Or maybe they would have thought of Psalm 107 which says, "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!"

"Who is this man that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Who is this Jesus? Well, the God who created the sea in the book of Genesis, the God who parted the red sea in the book of Exodus, the God who stopped the Jordan river in the book of Joshua, the God who caused and calmed the storm in the book of Jonah, the God who collects water in the clouds and releases the rain as Job says, is the *same* God who is in the boat with the disciples in Mark, and He is *your* God. Jesus is God. And you can trust Him.

Against the backdrop of a storm, God's word teaches us…

Faith is trusting Jesus is still God and He still cares.

Faith is trusting Jesus is still God. If the disciples had a failure of faith, it was *not* that they feared the storm too much, but that they feared Jesus too little. Faith doesn't think less of the storm, it thinks more of the Savior. Faith doesn't minimize the storm, it maximizes the Savior. True faith doesn't minimize the unknown future. Faith doesn't minimize the unanswered prayers. Faith doesn't minimize the failing health. It doesn't minimize global issues. It doesn't minimize personal issues. True faith says, "This *is* a big deal, but Jesus is bigger."

Faith doesn't belittle the storm, it maximizes the Savior. True faith says, "I don't have my future figured out, but Jesus is God, He is in control." It says, "Loneliness is tough, but Jesus is stronger." It says, "I *am* nervous about my grades, but Jesus is in control. He is God." It may not look like Jesus is in control, but that is why we call it faith. We *believe*, we *trust*, we have *faith* that He is in control even when our circumstances don't show it.

Faith is trusting Jesus is still God and He still cares. I think it is significant the way in which Jesus handled the situation in verse 39 and verse 40. It says Jesus *rebuked* the storm, but *said* or *spoke* to his disciples. Jesus did not open up a dialogue with the storm, he commanded. But with His disciples, Jesus opened up conversation and room for relationship. The word Jesus used with His disciples doesn't suggest anything other than conversation. Jesus doesn't rebuke us for having weak faith. Jesus uses the

storm as an opportunity to strengthen our faith. In the midst of the storm, Jesus is concerned about our relationship with Him.

Now, some of you who have had some experience on the water may wonder, "How in the world could *anyone sleep* through that storm? Why was Jesus asleep?" Great question. I think Jesus was asleep because He was exhausted. He had been preaching all day. However, I also think somewhere along the line Jesus' humanity handed off the baton to His divinity to stay asleep. I think Jesus *used* the storm as an opportunity to prove His divinity to His disciples.

So, let Jesus *use* your storms. Let Jesus remind you *in the midst of your storm* He is still God and He still cares. Sometimes we can't *see* God's hand in the midst of the storm. That is why we call it faith. I don't know why we face storms and suffering in this life. I don't know how your storm is going to pan out. But I do know this: God is in your boat. He cares. He is in control.

As the hymn says, so may it be true of us in the midst of our storms: Be still my soul, the waves and winds still know his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below. Faith is trusting Jesus is still God and He still cares.

BOOK REVIEWS

An Essential Guide to Interpersonal Communication: Building Great Relationships with Faith, Skill, and Virtue in the Age of Social Media. By Quentin J. Schultze and Diane M. Badzinski. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015. ISBN 978-0801038945, 145 pp., $15.99.

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

Following his *Essential Guide to Public Speaking* (Baker, 2006), Quentin Schultze has produced another tidy and helpful introductory text in a related field—interpersonal communication. This time he has a writing partner, Diane Badzinski, Professor of Communication at Colorado Christian University. The result is the same: the thorough integration of a Christian worldview into the heart of human relations: how we talk to each other. In fact, stating that this book "integrates" Christianity into the subject is an understatement. In *An Essential Guide*, the subject grows *out of* Christianity. The authors begin with the faith and let principles of communication emerge from that worldview, subtly critiquing the standard approach of textbooks of interpersonal communication that emphasize skill and pragmatism. These statements are typical: "Faithful and virtuous communication flows from a desire to love God and neighbor. Communication skill without righteous desire can dangerously lead us to exploit others. Relationships dissolve over this lack of humble self-awareness" (46). "We're practicing what it means to be holy rather than just effective communicators" (9).

Some readers may feel that Schultze and Badzinski shortchange technique—that they are short on practical advice on how to communicate well—but I would disagree. For one thing, the book has frequent sidebars such as "Nine Ways to Not Confront People" (91), and "Four Steps to Resolving Conflict" (100). More importantly, the authors correctly identify the engine that produces words: the heart. Out of the heart the mouth speaks. They address the heart just as the Christ does in the Sermon on the Mount. It does little good to teach communication skills if the engine of the heart puffs out toxic exhaust. But do not get the wrong idea: this book is up-to-date with current statistics, studies, and events. It is indeed a textbook, even as it has the feel of a manifesto or a manual of pastoral counsel.

But the primary way the text is current is with its emphasis on social media. In *An Essential Guide* we read the same wisdom Schultze had already shared in *Communicating for Life* (Baker, 2000), and in *High-Tech Worship* (Baker, 2004). Perhaps that wisdom could be summarized this way: (1) All media are gifts from God and have great potential for good, but they must be stewarded with wisdom and virtue lest the devil use them for harm. (2)

One of those harms is a false belief that we can fix the broken world by means of technique. Only the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit, stewarded through his servants' faith, virtue, and skill, can redeem the broken world.

I recommend *An Essential Guide* not only for the classroom, but also for church staff, elders, and small groups.

The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision. By Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015. ISBN 978-0801097713, 240 pp., $19.99.

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

Vanhoozer teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Strachan at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The former does the Introduction, Chapters 3 and 4 (dealing with systematic and practical theology), and the Conclusion, while the latter handles Chapters 1 and 2 (dealing with biblical and historical theology).

The goal of the book is to correct "[t]he widespread confusion about the nature, identity, and role of the pastor" (x). That it takes two *professor* theologians to delineate what it means to be a *pastor* theologian makes for a view from the lectern and not from the pulpit.

The four chapters deal with "the biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology of the pastorate," respectively (26). Pastors, apparently, have lost interest in theology, primarily because of the separation of church and academy, with theology migrating to the latter, remaining in the realm of abstract and theoretical scholarship (5). Besides, "much of what pastors find in many scholarly commentaries on the Bible is hard, if not impossible, to preach. The standard biblical commentary produced in the modern academy typically treats the Bible as a historical document, often focusing more on the world *behind* the text (e.g., historical backgrounds, ancient Near Eastern parallels) than on what God is saying through the church today *in and through* the text about the subject matter *of* the text" (6–7). Amen!

On *biblical theology*, the reader is told that the offices of priest, prophet, and king correspond to the role of the pastor. That seemed quite a stretch; the triadic scheme works well for Jesus Christ, but just does not fit the shepherd of the local flock. Pastoral ministry, it was emphasized, ought to be christocentric, dealing with "the wisdom of a message about a crucified king" and having "the cruciform nature of kingly pastoral ministry" (52, 54). Many readers of this *Journal* will struggle with such a narrow conception of the pastorate.

Historical theology did not fare much better. The examples paraded—Irenaeus, Chrysostom, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Baxter,

Edwards, et al.—lead me to suspect that the endeavors of historical theology are simply proclamations of systematic theology: rule of faith, creeds, doctrine, correction of heresies, etc. (71–75).

On *systematic theology*: "theology is the attempt to set forth in speech *what is in Christ*." And "the theologian is a *minister of reality*. … Pastors are public theologians because they bear witness to *what is in Christ*, and there is no greater reality than that. … Insofar as the theologian helps people to live into the reality of the resurrection, the new creation in Christ, the theologian helps people to get real" (109). Again, wonderful stuff from a thoughtful and perspicacious theologian. And, regarding the source of this vision: "Scripture alone provides an authoritative account of *what is in Christ*" (114). I found myself in hearty agreement, but wondered how "what is in Christ" could be discovered from the biblical text, say, for instance, from the pericope dealing with Leah and Rachel battling for reproductive superiority in Genesis 29–30, or from the story of Ehud eviscerating Eglon in Judges 4? How do I know what Christ looks like, from these narratives?

Practical theology is, well, practical, and the various images of a pastor—as an evangelist, a catechist, liturgist, and apologist—were helpful, but quite non-specific (152, 161, 164, 174).

The degree of specificity preachers look for, to better undertake their expository responsibilities, was not found in this tome. Preaching, in much of the conceptions herein, turns out to be "[t]he apostolic preaching of the gospel of Christ"—evangelistic in function and nature. Citing Acts 17, where "Jesus" is not named in Paul's "sermon," there is some fudging: "Paul's message *might initially seem rather* different from those of Peter [in Acts 2] but in reality, it is similar" (57). That tells the reader how much the notion of "preaching" is being stretched.

It seems to me, from my vantage point as a preacher, that in all this there is something missing: a specific means to derive Christlikeness from particular pericopes of Scripture. *That* is the kind of theology we need, both to preach on, and also to be edified by, so that both the preacher and the flock may be conformed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).

A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015. ISBN 978-0801096747, 214 pp., $21.99.

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

Kuruvilla, professor of Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, has given preachers and teachers of preachers yet another weighty, worthy book. Readers who appreciate *Privilege the Text!* and the commentaries in which Kuruvilla practices the theological hermeneutics advocated therein will welcome this companion volume on the heart of pastoral ministry—preaching.

"Biblical preaching, by a leader of the church, in a gathering of Christians for worship, is the communication of the thrust of a pericope of Scripture discerned by theological exegesis, and of its application to that specific body of believers, that they might be conformed to the image of Christ, for the glory of God all in the power of the Holy Spirit." This is the vision the author commends, unpacking this sentence phrase by phrase in nine chapters.

The assertion of Scriptural authority in Chapter 1 ("Preaching is Biblical") will be uncontroversial to most readers of this *Journal*; we know (though it does not hurt to be reminded) that our only warrant for saying anything at all is a God-breathed text. The Bible is also a "classic": what this means is spelled out here. Not all will agree with one inference Kuruvilla draws from the nature of Scripture: that *lectio continua*, preaching pericope by pericope through books of the Bible, should be the norm, with only occasional exceptions for a topical sermon.

"Preaching is Pastoral" (Chapter 2) reflects on the significance of ordination and the personal character of the one who preaches. "Preaching is Ecclesial" locates preaching in the context of Christians gathered for corporate worship. Some readers may wonder, then, if missionary, evangelistic, itinerant proclamation does not count as preaching. But Kuruvilla commends a vision, a manifesto for preaching, not an exhaustive definition of preaching: normally, the word and sacrament come together with other elements of worship, and Chapter 3 explores what difference that makes.

Chapter 4, "Preaching is Communicational," brings rhetoric, pragmatics, and the new homiletic into the service of discovering the "thrust" of the text: answering the question "What is the author *doing* with what he is saying?" This has been a key concern of Kuruvilla's homiletical scholarship. So has pericopal theology, a key concept in Chapter 5. Preachers should discern the specific theological claim of the pericope at hand and let that, rather than law and gospel or redemptive history or some other theological grid, shape the sermon. Every part of the Bible portrays a "segment" of the ideal world in which God and his people are rightly related. Each segment must be allowed to have its say.

Preachers make two key moves in Kuruvilla's vision. The first is from text to thrust (also called "*world in front of the text*," "pragmatics," and "the theology of the text"). The second is from thrust to application, the subject of Chapter 6. A given passage and its thrust have, potentially, multiple valid applications, but that does not mean anything goes: "Preaching is Applicational" guides readers into legitimate application, a challenging task best done by a pastor who knows the flock to whom he preaches.

Chapter 7 makes the case that preaching's aim is to conform listeners to the image of Christ. Each segment of pericopal theology, God's ideal world that he wants his people to inhabit, is also a facet of the character of the only Person to have ever lived life as God meant it to be lived. So when listeners embrace and live this theological thrust, they are imitating or

following Christ. Every passage, then, is *christiconic*. Preachers who wish to link every text and every sermon to Christ should find this vision easier to sustain than making every sermon "christocentric" or "christotelic." In any case, Kuruvilla's vision is not Christ-centered but Trinitarian: That sermons should be for the glory of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit are the burden of the final two chapters.

Each chapter starts with a citation from Psalm 119 and concludes with reflections on passages we don't ordinarily think of as pertinent to homiletics. Helpful diagrams, concise summaries, topics for discussion, and Kuruvilla's engaging style make this a fine classroom text, but it is worthwhile reading for seasoned preachers too.

The move from ancient text to contemporary sermon is, as noted in the Introduction, an extraordinarily difficult intellectual task. Preachers who sense this will like *A Vision for Preaching*; those who do not, need the book even more.

Proverbs and the Formation of Character. By Dave Bland. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. ISBN 978-1498221641, 187 pp., $25.00.

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

As a preacher, homiletician, exegete, and educator, Bland has spent much of his professional career on Proverbs. This book puts Bland the exegete and educator in the spotlight. Arguing against a vitiated perspective that sees Proverbs as moral finger wagging with an emaciated body of theology, the author contends that "the reader who earnestly wrestles with these aphorisms, not releasing them until they divulge at least some of their rhetorical power and theological insight will not leave disappointed" (8). Proverbs are indispensable in forming character and are less a "How-To" manual and more a "How-To-Be" resource (173).

Proverbs and the Formation of Character demonstrates how the sentence literature of Proverbs (Chapters 10–29) helps those who hear this briefest of all biblical genres "be" in regard to language, wealth, and relationship to God. Emphasizing the role that community and dialogue play in character formation, Bland interacts with disciplines such as biblical studies, learning theory, rhetoric, ethics, and paremiology (the study of proverbs).

Readers of this *Journal* will be particularly interested in knowing how this book contributes to homiletics. Bland hopes it will "generate ideas along the way for those who preach" (xiv). In other words, this book is not directly about preaching, but a preacher doing a series on Proverbs will find this volume helpful as an introduction to the literature. Indeed, it is more than an introduction. It is the fruit of Bland's long study of the genre. Demonstrating his own sapience, the author borrows from the disciplines listed above even

while critiquing them. For instance, Chapter 2 has an insightful critique of Kohlberg's learning theory, and Chapter 3 notes a critique of the approach to ethics called "values clarification."

While appreciating Bland's scholarship and wisdom, I found myself wondering about the audience he addresses: preachers, rabbis, parents, educators, and biblical scholars—any reader who participates in the journey of character formation (7). This is a wide net, and I feel that it tries to haul in too many sea creatures. Follow-up volumes might target particular species: parents who need down-to-earth advice on how to use Proverbs; preachers seeking homiletical advice on how to preach them; and biblical scholars who will want to consider the author's interpretation of passages such as Prov 22:6 ("Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray").

I am grateful to Bland for keeping the dialogue on this book of Wisdom going!

Building a Community of Interpreters: Readers and Hearers as Interpreters. By Walter R. Dickhaut. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013. ISBN 978-1610979962, 146 pp., $20.00.

Reviewer: *Blayne Banting, Briercrest College and Seminary, Caronport, SK, Canada*

Dickhaut, retired professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Bangor Theological Seminary, has written *Building a Community of Interpreters* as his retrospective on the writing/reading and speaking/hearing processes as it relates to preaching. "The aim of this book is as much, or more, to address those who read Scripture and hear it read, and those who listen to preaching. Likewise, it is intended for those who read and study Scripture in groups as well as in the meditations of their own interests and necessities. I will refer to them often as a *community of interpreters*" (xv). These reflections address the importance of the role of hearing and listening in interpretation. The author's chosen vehicle on this journey is reader-response theory. His proposal is "that listeners and hearers make up a community of *interpreters*, a community that not only receives meaning that has been produced by others but also produce meaning themselves" (4).

The first part of the book states his case; the second part is an illustration of his main thrust. The latter is punctuated with sermons that reflect the perspective of this poet-preacher. Dickhaut does not intent to march with precision but to meander provocatively along the way, which fits well with his assumption that much of interpretation depends on the reader's expectations. These expectations are affected by what he calls filters and lenses. In his own words, "*A filter functions largely in a preconscious mode; it sets aside or removes what the reader prefers not to engage, often without*

our awareness …. Lenses, on the other hand, are instruments of intention; they focus the interpreter's intention on specific interests and features that aim to discover something new. … Whereas filters function to prevent certain features of a text from being seen, lenses function to enhance or enlarge what might be otherwise be overlooked or disregarded" (21, 22). Building upon the inevitability of these filters and lenses, Dickhaut proposes his own version of the hermeneutical spiral that places the reader in control of the contemporary meaning of a given text, even a biblical text. The second half of the book supports and illustrates, with included homilies, his favorite three lenses: mystery, surprise and expectation. The author reminds preachers everywhere of the complexity of preaching an ancient sacred text in a new context, of turning ink into blood.

Two points of critique seem warranted. First, there is very little mentioned about the community of interpreters until the end of the Afterword where there a few suggestions to show how the content of the book might be used in a group setting. Dickhaut seems more interested in his own perspectives throughout the book; there is only a cursory tip of the hat to the community of interpreters as he heads out the door. Second, this reviewer feels the author has fallen victim to the weaknesses of his own perspective. To approach a biblical text with the expectation of seeing all kinds of nuances unknown to its writer predisposes the interpreter to interpret the text in ways congruent with the aesthetic and imaginative ponderings of the interpreter rather than the intentions of the text's writer. The irony of this approach is that if the reader is free to determine the meaning of the text, the reader will never learn anything new—it is all recycled and reconstituted from the reader's own imagination. While such an approach might meet the expectations of an aesthetically predisposed poet-preacher, it seems like an unsatisfactory approach for biblical literature, or even for reading instructions on how to perform open-heart surgery, for that matter. As tempting as it might be to subordinate the intentions of an antiquated writer to those of the contemporary interpreter, the former still remains in hermeneutical hegemony; we would rather not be left in the unstable hands of fallen readers.

Preach the Word: A Pauline Theology of Preaching Based on 2 Timothy 4:1–5. By Stephen Oliver Stout. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2014. 978-1625648990, 362 pp., $42.00.

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

Pastor-professor Stout explores Paul's theology of proclamation by meticulously unpacking 2 Timothy 4:1–5 and relating it phrase by phrase, word study by word study, to what the apostle has written elsewhere.

Readers who accept Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles may

appreciate the kind of painstaking attention more often paid to passages in 1–2 Corinthians on preaching: there are hundreds of footnotes, extensive cross-references, an exhaustive bibliography, and three indexes. Stout even discusses textual variants. He includes material not ordinarily found in homiletical studies, like the case for a plurality of elders and its relevance to preaching. We have eleven pages on "I solemnly charge you," typical of the thoroughness of this study. And every Koine Greek verb of speaking is examined, as are all the nouns that conceivably describe the pastor-teacher.

But thoroughness can be taken too far. A page-length footnote on Paul's conversion and four pages of tables on the apostles add little to our understanding of preaching or of 2 Timothy, though they do remind us that the book was a D.Min. project in its former life. Some chapter titles ("The Preacher's Dynamic"), section titles ("As a worker working the work"), and terminology ("ambassadoring") seem a bit contrived. Some claims ("Robert Mounce was a Barthian" and "'In season and out of season' signify the preacher's geographical locale") are a bit of a stretch. Some taxonomies (speaking verbs and ministerial "offices") appear a little too neat.

A couple of surprising lacunae: Stout discusses prophecy in the New Testament, but without any reference to Wayne Grudem's study on the subject. And even though Stout believes the Epistles were written sermons, structured like the preaching in Acts with a form that is normative for preachers today, he does not engage Ben Witherington's rhetorical approach to New Testament documents.

This book may be a useful resource for homiletics professors who will find between its covers a variety of meticulously excavated details not often found in a single volume. It may encourage preachers with its reminder of the primacy of preaching and challenge preachers with the importance of the task of preaching—hard but glorious work.

Of Seeds and the People of God: Preaching as Parable, Crucifixion, and Testimony. By Michael P. Knowles. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. ISBN 978-1625648204, 263 pp., $34.00.

Reviewer: *Randal Emery Pelton, Calvary Bible Church, Mount Joy, PA, and Lancaster Bible College/Capital Seminary and Graduate School, Lancaster, PA*

Any book that reminds me of my need to depend on God for a fruitful preaching ministry is worth reading. Knowles writes: "The argument proposed here is that preaching is, in the most important sense of all, a humanly impossible task: it is not something that we can effectively undertake on our own …. This book is about how the true source of persuasion, conviction, encouragement, and sometimes even transformation lies largely outside ourselves" (xix).

Part One ("God's Field") argues from Jesus' agricultural parables that God is the sole source of life, even of preaching. In this section Knowles surveys Scripture, as well as the considerable intertestamental literature that features agricultural imagery, to show that God alone gives life to the earth. This becomes Knowles's foundation for interpreting and preaching Jesus' parables. His main argument is that the parables are not focused on human obligation, but on "the nature and ways of God" (44). Such an interpretative angle results in a philosophy of preaching: "the parable [Mark 4:14-20] draws attention to God's role in bringing the seed to fruitfulness, precisely because human efforts alone are incapable of doing so …. No more can preachers expect their own words—however artfully delivered—to be capable of transforming their hearers" (54).

Part Two ("God's Body, God's Building") is an exploration of Paul's theology of the cross and its implications for ministry, including preaching. One of the more significant sections is titled, "'I have been crucified with Christ': Discipleship, Ministry, and Learned Theological Helplessness" (97). You can see the continuity between Parts One and Two as Knowles declares that "ministry in the name and power of Christ first requires humility, self-emptying … and reliance on something other than oneself" (107).

Part Three ("God's Word") is an attempt to balance God's work and our responsibility. The section begins with a thirty-page summary of the views of Augustine, Barth, Brueggemann, and Ricoeur. The emphasis is on preaching as testimony: "Preaching that bears witness to the life of God will acknowledge God—not preachers or preaching—to be the only source of that life" (159). Again, readers will note the refrain of our need for God to move for preaching to succeed.

Often I would read a sentence or section of a book and say, "That was worth the price of the book." Knowles's summary of Jesus' agricultural parables contains one of those worth-it sentences: "Perhaps a measure of failure is inevitable" (58). Indeed, the parable of the soils does include more failure than success. Knowles also includes a worth-the-price quote from Paul Simpson Duke that helps capture the essence of the author's argument: "To know such a word [the parable of the seed that grows of its own accord in Mark 4:26-29] would send us into the pulpit freer, less anxious about ourselves, less inclined to take constant measurements, less needy of affirmation, more at ease in the potent … mystery of God. This is not only how to preach this parable; it is how this parable teaches us to preach" (66).

Knowles's message is crucial. We preach in a day when we expect preaching to succeed. We teach in a way that causes students to expect preaching to succeed. It is good for us to acknowledge "the limitations of our own ministries" (187) and to ask whether we function under "the unspoken assumption that … we have the right to set the terms and conditions of our hearers' encounter with God" (194).

However, readers of this *Journal* will not find this an easy book. Much of the analysis of Scripture—and there is a lot of that—does not yield

unique information. Where Knowles suggested an alternative reading to a parable, I found myself questioning the results of exegesis. Then there is the matter of Jesus' parables being the only paradigm for preaching. Surely there are other angles on preaching in Scripture that suggest what our preaching should accomplish (e.g., 1 Tim 4:16). Someone once said that in every large book there is a little book dying to get out. I felt that to be the case in this book as I found myself reading repetitive material.

But for all that, I am grateful to Knowles for reminding me that preaching "shares all the conditions of human frailty and weakness, but in so doing becomes open to the grace of God and the possibility of transformation" (206). Anyone looking to expand his or her understanding of a theology of preaching should read this book.

Beyond Heterosexism in the Pulpit. By Emily Askew and Wesley O. Allen Jr. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. ISBN 978-1620326183, 149 pp., $21.00.

Reviewer: *Russell St. John, Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO*

Beyond Heterosexism in the Pulpit assumes that "a pastor picking up this book is already on the progressive side" of questions concerning homosexuality and gay marriage, and the authors are therefore writing "for pastors who feel called to speak prophetically on these issues" (2). Askew self-identifies as a lesbian, while Allen describes himself as a "straight ally" (3). Each seeks to equip theologically liberal pastors with an inclusive theology of human sexuality, as well as with homiletical strategies for sharing that theology from the pulpit.

After defining heterosexism as "all forms of sexual prejudicial attitudes, actions, and structures that contribute to personal, institutional, and societal discrimination of LGBTQI [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex] individuals and the LGBTQI community" (4), the authors assert that "heteronormativity has been around for millennia and will not simply disappear after a twenty-minute sermon. It runs through the pages of Scripture … like pollution pouring from an industrial complex" (8). Proposing to remove such corruption, *Beyond Heterosexism* unfolds under five chapters, each of which concludes with a sample sermon. In addressing Anthropology and Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Gay Rights, Weddings and Unions, and Funerals and Memorial Services in turn, the authors focus on theological and homiletical methods for "normalizing homosexuality for a congregation" (10).

In their pursuit, the authors reject traditional biblical anthropology as "dualism" (18), and attempt to redefine human anthropology around the biblical concept of *hesed* which, when properly understood, refers to God's special covenant lovingkindness in Christ as it is manifest toward

the redeemed. But divorcing God's *hesed* from its expression in and through Christ, the authors instead emphasize "relational *hesed* as the metaphorical description of God's image that is imparted to humans," and therefore suggest that theologians are "no longer bound to heteronormative ways" of defining proper sexual relationships (22). Feelings of lovingkindness thus trump plain moral declarations. Redefining all sin as "structural" rather than personal, the authors assert that in a *hesed*-based anthropology, "[h]omosexuality per se is not a rejection of God's gift of *hesed*, but the structural sins of heterosexism and homophobia are" (24). Nonetheless, the authors reject "sexually punitive theologies of salvation," arguing that "[w]e must reject the easy triumphalism of relegating salvation to an otherworldly rescue of individual souls in favor of proclaiming a this-worldly reconciliation" (28, 30). This move will, they concede, be easier for progressive Christians, who have "long ago given up heaven and hell as metaphorical" (30). Still, the authors urge preachers to retain the use of explicitly Christian terminology and symbolism in order to present their progressive views as "a credible alternative for Christian hearers" (28). Thus purposefully investing biblical terminology with foreign meanings, the authors propose to re-educate heterosexist congregants.

The remainder of the book offers more of the same. Proposing an ecclesiology that systematically redefines the marks of the church to mean what they do not and cannot mean, the chapters on gay rights and homosexual marriage comprise little more than a politically liberal screed, which is thinly varnished with more talk of *hesed*. Throughout *Beyond Heterosexism*, the authors openly repudiate the Scripture, the supernatural, and basic Christian categories of thought and morality.

Nevertheless, *Beyond Heterosexism* is instructive. As Peter Adam suggested in Speaking God's Word, reading theologically liberal literature has its benefits. It acquaints evangelical pastors with the present state of worldly thinking and with the cultural winds that are blowing through their congregations. Liberal theology is primarily an attempt to conform the Bible to contemporary cultural values. Such literature therefore provides a mirror to the times, and furnishes evangelical preachers with a better understanding of the beliefs of the non-Christians with whom they interact. Taken as such, *Beyond Heterosexism* may offer value to the readers of this *Journal*. But taken as an exegetical or theological resource, it is heterodox and will not profit the evangelical preacher.

To Preach the Truth: Selected Sermons and Homilies. By Schubert M. Ogden. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. ISBN 978-1625649430, 156 pp., $21.00.

Reviewer: *Russell St. John, Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO*

While Ogden acknowledges that he is known primarily as a theologian, he has nevertheless embraced opportunities to preach throughout

his career (ix). *To Preach the Truth* assembles sermons that date from 1955 to 2003; all manifest a clear theology and structure, as well as a common concern that Christians walk in love.

Ogden is not evangelical. He does not believe that the Scripture is inspired, inerrant, or infallible, or that the supernatural and miraculous events recorded in the text of Scripture are true. His sermons and homilies thus tend to manifest a similarity of approach: read the text; explain what it appears to mean; suggest that modern men and women, or intelligent and thinking men and women, cannot possibly accept the text for what it plainly says; demythologize the text; divest Scripture of its author-intended meaning; and then proclaim that the witness of the text can nevertheless still speak to us today—if only we will listen. The sermon or homily that follows offers an interpretation with little resemblance to the intent of the inspired author. Indeed, the sermon is purposely vague, requiring the hearer to invest the sermon with his or her own existential "meaning."

For readers familiar with the New Hermeneutic, Ogden's work will echo the familiar catchphrases of Neo-orthodoxy. Scripture is not the Word of God; it is merely a "witness" to a word of God. Much is said of the "event" of Christ, of granting the text a "new hearing," and of "existential meaning." Also recognizable are the labyrinthine sentence structures, that are almost indecipherable. Consider: "To every event there belongs a future of possibilities, every event has a potential meaning that is correctly actualized with the actualization of those possibilities" (36). Difficult to understand in print, imagine how much more opaque it would be to the ear! When explaining from Ephesians 1 what Paul meant in teaching that Christ ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, Ogden writes, "To assert that Christ is ascended into heaven is, most fundamentally, to make a certain assertion … that the really ultimate power with which not only we but all men and women have to do is the power that makes itself known to us, and will, through us, be known to them, too, through the Jesus whom we as Christians confess" (65). Each sermon or homily in this collection manifests such obtuse speech.

The strength of this collection is, at the same time, a weakness. Ogden is clearly and repeatedly concerned about enjoining upon his hearers the law of love. He understands true faith as proving itself in love, and therefore manifests a Johannine spirit in his desire to see brothers and sisters live in the unity of love. Unfortunately, nearly every sermon or homily is directed toward this end, as Ogden, repudiating the clear meaning of the text, constantly offers an ill-defined losing-of-self in the love of God as the true finding-of-self, or authenticating-of-self. Sadly, this concept of love suffers from a lack of definition, and embraces no moral distinctions, so much so, Ogden is consistently exhorting believers to love one another without clarifying what that love is or is not.

To Preach the Truth will not offer much of substance to the readers of this *Journal*. Ogden's theological perspective is simply inimical to evangelical

convictions.

Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology. Edited by David Schnasa Jacobsen. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. ISBN 978-1625645654, 186 pp., $23.00.

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

Jacobsen, professor of the Practice of Homiletics at Boston University School of Theology, invited members of the Academy of Homiletics to dialogue on the nature and parameters of homiletical theology, speculating on the intersections between the two disciplines. After an introductory chapter, Jacobsen, John McClure, and Luke Powery write of homiletical theology as "Constructive Visions"; Alyce McKenzie and Michael Pasquarello reflect on "Homiletical Theology as Practical Wisdom"; and Ronald Allen and Teresa Eisenlohr consider "Homiletical Theology and Method."

In the forward, David Buttrick expresses the burden of the conscientious preacher as "trying to be faithful to the tradition and yet be understood and believed by a contemporary cultural world" (ix). McKenzie expresses the frustration homileticians feel when colleagues affirm that "[a] lmost any of us in other fields could teach homiletics for a semester" (87) and laments, "The reduction of homiletical theology to a delivery system of systematic theology and biblical studies not only does harm to homiletics, it also reduces systematic theology and biblical studies to resources for preaching" (89). Eisenlohr concurs, noting that "[a] history of preaching and theology shows that homiletics has had a tendency to pick up the latest innovations in rhetoric, communications, culture, biblical studies, and/or theology and run with them instead of thinking theologically about the whole of our field, including the place of the discipline and how preaching is taught in academia" (175).

The question the authors seek to answer is where and how theology and homiletics intersect. A presumption apparently held by all of them is that in the preparation and presentation of the sermon a theological conversation takes place between several participants: Scripture, tradition, theological perspectives, culture, the gospel, and hearers, to name a few. Jacobsen asserts: "Situations and contexts are not merely recipients of gospel speaking, but also work back on gospel to broaden its vision and refocus it" (37).

The result is a gospel always up for redefinition as perceived by evolving cultural norms. "The problem with the bridge paradigm rested chiefly on its failure to discern the true, theological nature of preaching. That is, preaching is not about bridging the world of the Bible to our world, but in relation to Bible and situations articulates ever-anew the world of gospel" (41). It is "the gospel" that ends up being preached, not the Bible or a theological truth because, "the starting point of homiletical theology is

a theology of the gospel itself" (55). Yet, "the gospel" constantly undergoes a renaming in order to be intelligible and morally plausible to its recipients (44). For example, the anti-Jewish elements of the New Testament may be excused on account of the grief and trauma of the early church, but they are not acceptable today because we know that, "problems lurk in Scripture" (52). In such an approach, "listeners are, heretically, talking back to preachers, texts, God, and each other—negotiating the meaning of gospel for the here and how" (69).

While the language of this volume is often so dense as to make comprehension difficult, and while the presuppositions of the authors are liberal, each author provides substantive material for reflection and application. For example: Jacobsen's historical overview of approaches to homiletical theology; McClure's placing preaching in the context of Christian worship; Powery's development of a theology of the Spirit in relation to preaching; McKenzie's concept of the preacher as sage who "is not a figure who dispenses knowledge so much as one who models its discovery and its ongoing contextualization"; Pasquarello's example of Bonhoeffer as a preacher; and Eisenlohr's chart comparing "Academic Constructive Theology" with "Preaching as Homiletic Theology"—all caused this reviewer to take a fresh look at what preaching is, how it works, and where theology intersects with its practice.

Readers will be encouraged to know that after wading through more than half the volume, they will encounter Allen's confession that, having heard the term "homiletical theology" for at least a quarter of a century, he is embarrassed to admit that he still does not understand the concept (129). These chapters are, no doubt, a work in progress. One would hope that as this work progresses more concrete examples might accompany the theory.

Although the authors struggle to articulate the relationship between theology and homiletics, the book argues that, "Preaching is not about consuming theology, but a place where theology is 'done,' or produced" (3), and concludes with a helpful definition of "homiletical theology as the theological thinking required for preparing to preach the gospel in any given sermon at any given time and place" (154). While this first volume of a proposed four-volume series will appeal more to the academic minded homiletician than the weekly preacher, more theological thinking of this kind ought to be our goal.

The Story of Narrative Preaching—Experience and Exposition: A Narrative. By Mike Graves. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015. ISBN 978-1620328736, 234 pp., $25.92.

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

Graves is professor of Preaching and Worship at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City and Regional Minister of Preaching for the Greater Kansas City Christian Church. Having been exposed to the narrative preaching model popularized from the 1970s on by homileticians John Holbert, Fred Craddock, and Eugene Lowry, having practiced the narrative model in his own preaching, having taught the model in his classroom, and having listened to the "narrative preaching" of better and lesser knowns, Graves concludes that the time has come for "rethinking" narrative preaching (6). That rethinking first began to emerge in his preaching classes and later evolved into this present volume.

Two features of this book make it more interesting than most preaching texts. First, the content and organization of the narrative escorts the reader through the weekly class sessions of Graves's course, "The Story of Narrative Preaching." Each week's session, usually covered in a single chapter, describes the students, their observations and questions, the professor's assignments and insights, and the housekeeping and fellowshipping aspects of that particular class. This reviewer appreciated glimpses into the professor's educational planning and strategies, especially his spiritual and relational emphases.

The second interesting feature is the author's inclusion of short stories throughout both course and book. His goal is to encourage his students, and now his readers, to consider how short stories might aid the preacher as (s)he strives to include substantive and significant story telling into narrative sermons. While not all short stories have explicitly religious content and/or meaning, the preacher can employ most any short story of substance and significance to evoke the hearers' experience of a message expounded from a biblical text. That, in fact, is Graves's main objective: that his students and readers acknowledge "the value of both, experience and exposition" (180).

Graves offers a telling confession; "When I stumbled onto narrative ways of preaching, I mistakenly thought all those expository sermons needed to be thrown overboard. I'm ashamed to admit it, but in my early days of teaching narrative preaching I discouraged students from using exposition in their narrative sermons. It took me quite a few years to realize we could be experiential and expositional in narrative preaching" (142). This admission may serve to bring the more exposition-minded members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and the more experience-minded members of the Academy of Homiletics closer, in their understandings of narrative preaching.

A couple of concerns must be noted. While the inclusion of several short stories in the book exemplified how a strategic retelling might be implemented in a sermon, fewer stories might have accomplished that goal more efficiently. Perhaps references to other genres, like novels and movies that also evoke powerful emotion, would have strengthened Graves's claim that sermons should include experience as well as exposition. Also, the

author's selection of sermons suggests that his commitment to exposition is minimalist. While those examples retell both the biblical and the short story with creativity and energy, the exposition of the biblical text is limited to two or three observations about the text or an implication drawn from a specific detail of the story, without any expounding of the text's theological message. When Graves explains, "There is text and there is today. That's all there is, really" (39), and, "We play with texts and we study texts rigorously, but eventually we have to decide what the sermon will be about. There are lots of possibilities" (44), he apparently fails to account for text's transhistorical, theological intention and leaves the "interpretation" up to readers' inclinations. More attention to the text's agenda would have been welcome, to bring a better balance between experience and exposition, both of which are crucial to narrative preaching.

This text is an easy read, provides many delightful insights, and accomplishes its goal of rethinking narrative preaching.

Reading and Understanding the Bible. By Ben Witherington III. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0199340576, 304 pp., $29.95.

Reviewer: *Blayne Banting, Briercrest College and Seminary, Caronport, SK, Canada*

Witherington has attempted a laudable but difficult task in this work designed to be a textbook for introductory classes in hermeneutics or Bible surveys. He brings his experience as a seasoned and well-respected scholar of international caliber to bear on a work intended for beginners. The look and feel of the book relate well to the intended audience—written in an engaging colloquial style, with a glossy cover, a glossary of terms, a generous amount of pictures, some in full color format, and helpful Scripture and topical indexes. Each chapter begins with a preview of the upcoming material and concludes with a review of the current chapter contents and suggestions for further reading.

The book is written in two major parts. The first is a general introduction of the Bible as a book, including its grand narrative, cultural contexts, and the major genres found in it. The second part is more selective, where Witherington gives a hermeneutical primer and then digs a deeper into a few representative texts to give the readers some sense of where they could be heading if they make the decision to take this journey into the Bible seriously. He concludes with a chapter that traces the development of the biblical canon.

The author does well to cover the basics in the first part of the book. He tips his hand somewhat, in that Chapter 6 deals with The Oral and Rhetorical Character of the Ancient World—an area of his own scholarly

expertise. It appears as though he desires to have the next generation of biblical scholars be well informed in an area where he already has made a significant contribution. Nevertheless, it all fits seamlessly into the introductory nature of Part 1 of the book.

Some of the chapters in the second half of the book, designed to spur the readers further in their own studies, might be a bit too lofty for a general audience. Chapter 14, in particular ("Digging Deeper—Paul: His Reflections on Hymns and Him"), requires more of the reader than most students in introductory courses can muster.

On the whole this is an excellent resource for those requiring a basic textbook for classes in hermeneutics. Its value is enhanced by the attention paid to the oral and rhetorical backgrounds of biblical cultures—helpful for aspiring preachers. There is the odd occasion where Witherington's Wesleyan perspective colors his comments or his choices of additional reading material, but these should not deter one from considering this volume as a useful textbook.

Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Strategies for Overcoming Bottlenecks in Preaching God's Word. By Greg R. Scharf. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2015. ISBN 978-1629950426, 272 pp., $17.99.

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

Biblical. Theological. Practical. Words that not only describe Scharf's *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* but also his conception of preaching as developed therein. Endorsing Packer's view that Christian preaching is the event of God *himself* delivering a Bible-based (biblical), Christ-related (theological), life-impacting (practical) message through a chosen spokesperson (xix), Scharf opens his work by setting forth the rationale for such an understanding of preaching, and then explores its implications (1–32). As in all his writings, he cites and expounds numerous passages (over seven hundred Scripture references in all) to make his case.

In the brief chapter that follows (33–39), Scharf borrows imagery from an earlier article on "bottlenecks" to explain what might impede student learning. The flow of God's word in the preaching event can likewise be restricted by eight failings on the preacher's part. He briefly surveys those bottlenecks to which he subsequently devotes one chapter each: unbelief; a lack of qualification; errors in text selection; inadequate understanding of the text; missing the text's intention and subsequent application; faulty organization; an imbalance of propositions and illustrations; and flawed delivery.

The influence of his mentor John Stott and of Bryan Chapell's

Christ-Centered Preaching are unmistakable. Throughout his work Scharf demonstrates a natural familiarity with recent literature and developments in the field of homiletical study. Most striking along this line are his suggestions relating to the work of theological interpretation in the exposition and application of Scripture (116–21, 126–27, 144–51). What he writes here readily meshes with Kuruvilla's insistence upon the preacher accounting for what the biblical writer intended to do with what he said (see his *Privilege the Text!*).

Scharf wrote his book primarily, like Broadus more than a century earlier, for the sake of students taking an introductory homiletics course. For this reason, much of what he includes may be found in many standard evangelical homiletics textbooks. The genius of his work, though, is in its arrangement. By constantly drawing readers' attention to the negative at the beginning of each chapter—the preacher's failings—his strategies and practical exercises for eliminating them are made all the more impressive. As a result of this arrangement, old ideas shine brighter, and advice made musty by the passage of time takes on a fresh aroma.

Let the Earth Hear His Voice is aptly named, given its author's obvious passion for the existential experience of encountering God, especially to hear him through the preaching of his word. Such a basic concept of what preaching should entail is all but forgotten or quickly obscured in many preaching textbooks that focus primarily, if not exclusively, on technique. Scharf is to be commended for keeping the goal of hearing God through preaching front and center. His criticisms of the preacher's faults are incisive and his counsel sagacious.

Scharf's work might have benefited from an analysis of the *audience's* faults for not hearing from Scripture. To his credit, Scharf does concede that after the preacher has done all (s)he can, the individual auditor still plays a decisive role in determining how much and even whether (s)he hears from God (150). But what are those bottlenecks to *hearing* God's Word, and how may *they* be overcome? Truly, there's only so much a preacher can do, and Scharf shows the preacher how to do his/her part well.

Recapturing The Voice Of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture. By Steven W. Smith. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2015. ISBN 978-1433682506, ix + 230 pp., $24.99.

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

In the Introduction, Smith plainly lays out why he wrote this book: "The humble ambition of this book is to show a preacher or teacher how the genre influences the meaning of the text and give practical help for those who want to know how we can shape our sermons to reflect this meaning" (2). He

makes the sensible observation that the genre shapes our understanding of the text, and that understanding should shape the sermon on that text.

Structurally, the book aspires to fulfill that ambition. The first three chapters focus on the concept of text-driven preaching and how genre is important for this undertaking. He concludes the section with the sweeping assertion that all the Scripture is story, poem, or letter. In his view there are nine genres in Scripture arranged under these three forms: story (Old Testament Narrative, Law, Gospel/Acts, Parable); poem (Psalms, Wisdom Literature, Prophecy); and letter (Epistles, Revelation).

Each of the remaining chapters is focused on one of these genres, unpacking each form in four sections that provide "a short primer on the genre," "sermon tips for crafting a sermon that recaptures the voice of the Word in a manner specific to the genre," a section on "structuring a sermon from this genre," and a sample sermon from that genre (35).

However, this excellent plan falls short in its execution. The "short primer" did not really provide an introduction to the genre under consideration; instead it served as a launch pad for the obvious. For example, in the chapter on Old Testament narrative there were sections with titles like "Stories have structure," "these are Jewish narratives," and "Narratives are inductive." In the "sermon tips" section there were suggestions like "Avoid moralizing," "Don't resolve the unresolved," and "Let the flow of the story determine the flow of your sermon." The sample sermons seemed very light and not really text-driven. For example, the one in the Old Testament narrative chapter was from Genesis 6–9 (a pretty large chunk of text). In Smith's view the text was supposed to be providing the answer to the question, "What does God do when people abuse his grace?" The puzzling answer here is "God extends common grace to all, but he only extends saving grace to those who understand common grace." Besides missing the point of the text, the shaping effect of genre was not at all obvious in this sermon (or in any of the other samples offered on particular genres).

In short, this book had fine aspirations but poor actualization. It basically devolved into a collection of thoughts on preaching, not very helpful to an experienced expositor.

The Challenge of Preaching. By John Stott. Abridged and updated by Greg Scharf. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. ISBN 978-0802873354, 144 pp., $16.00.

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

John Stott (1921–2011) was rector emeritus of All Souls Church, in London, and the founder of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. His *Between Two Worlds* (Eerdmans, 1982) was a classic that now gets a timely reworking as *The Challenge of Preaching*. Kudos to Greg Scharf,

professor of pastoral theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a friend of Stott, for doing the hard work of reducing 123,000 words to about 45,000 (my rough calculation) without significant loss.

Apart from making biblical references more precise, adding weblinks for quotes from church fathers, making gendered constructions neutral, providing dates for historical figures, omitting some dated references, illustrations, and quotes, Scharf has not made major structural changes to Stott's original and beloved version. There are a few (mostly necessary) additions here and there of a paragraph or two that respect the spirit of Stott, like, for e.g., on the electronic age (7–8). But an inexplicable addition was a block quote from a book that in turn cited an unpublished dissertation (26–27), that begins: "Interpreting the Bible is like safecracking." Interesting metaphor, but was it really necessary? Other changes: A historical sketch of preaching with which Stott opened his book has been relegated to an appendix, and Scharf has also taken the liberty of adding McCheyne's Bible Reading Plan into another appendix (116–25). Freely available on the internet, the omission of this appendix could have saved another ten pages.

Stott's first sentence (by "Stott" I refer to the original version, and by "Scharf," to this abridged volume) was "Preaching is indispensable to Christianity." Arresting and bold. Scharf has turned it into a compound sentence: "Preaching is indispensable to Christianity because …" (1). Stott had: "Word and worship belong indissolubly together. … Therefore acceptable worship is impossible without preaching. … The two cannot be divorced." Nice. But Scharf has a consolidation: "Preaching and worship cannot be divorced" (9). I don't know, but I feel a sense of loss with the attenuation of what I can only label as Stott's "poetic prose." Here is another example: "Their exposition of the central biblical doctrines is impeccable," said Stott. "They are faithful to Scripture, lucid in explanation, felicitous in language, and contemporary in application. Yet … [n]o note of urgency is ever heard in their voice and no suspicion of a tear is ever seen in their eyes." Lovely. But Scharf has: "They explain the central biblical doctrines precisely. They are faithful to the content of Scripture. They explain it clearly and apply the lessons to today's world. Yet … [t]here is no urgency in their voice, and no tear is ever seen in their eyes." That is somewhat deflating!

Both Stott and Scharf agree that "all true Christian preaching" is/should be "expository," i.e., it should bring out what is in a biblical text. Both subscribe to "text" being "a word, a verse, or a sentence," or "a paragraph or two" or "a whole chapter or book" (25–26). But I still disagree with Stott and Scharf: I think a preaching text should be a sense unit, a pericope: a word or a verse or a sentence can hardly qualify as a sense unit in which an author *does* something with what he says.

Stott's metaphor "preaching as bridge-building," perhaps the crux of his book—a concept that has spawned a large number of preaching paradigms, papers, and postulates over the last three decades—is retained almost in its entirety in a chapter with the same title (30). I was also glad

Scharf kept Stott's recommendation for pastors to find "a quiet day at least once a month," to reflect, pray, think, and read (47). In these days of busyness and frenetic activity, this is sound advice.

I spotted one wrong attribution of a quote (59), and I wondered why "humor" was spelled "humour" (84)—retaining Stott's original (British) spelling—but such bibliographic and typographical errors were few and far between. On the whole, Scharf's condensation is a job well done, making Stott's classic more accessible, more contemporary, and an easier read.

Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism. By Timothy Keller. New York: Viking, 2015. ISBN 978-0525953036, 309 pp., $19.95.

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

This is not your run-of-the-mill homiletical textbook or manual for preparing sermons. *Preaching* by Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, reads more like a personal preaching philosophy written from a seasoned pastor who has proclaimed the truth of God's word on the turf of real life.

Following a helpful introduction, the book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 ("Preaching the Word") addresses the purpose of preaching as presenting Scripture with its own insights, directives, and teachings. Here he makes his case for the benefits of expository preaching. Chapter 2 ("Preaching the Gospel Every Time") develops Keller's vision and reasoning for seeing every sermon through the light of the gospel. "This means that we must preach Christ from every text, which is the same as saying we must preach the gospel every time and not just settle for general inspiration or moralizing" (48). Chapter 3 ("Preaching Christ From All of Scripture") takes the previous chapter's theme a step further by stating that each part of the Bible points to Christ in a particular way (71). Chapter 4 ("Preaching Christ to the Culture") shows Keller at his finest, drawing from philosophers, cultural anthropologists, and theologians, demonstrating his skill at not only exegeting the text but also exegeting the culture. This chapter gets to the very root of the intellectual hurdles skeptics in the pews might have. Chapter 5 ("Preaching and the Late Modern Mind") covers the increasing disintegration of authority and heightened sense of individualism found in every audience. Drawing on philosopher Charles Taylor, Keller presents an accurate view of the secularist landscape. After having exposed its vulnerabilities, he demonstrates how the Bible alone has answers to the yearnings of the secularist. Chapter 6 ("Christ to the Heart") addresses the importance of speaking to the real heartaches and heartbreaks of one's audience. "If you want to preach to the heart, you need to preach from the

heart" (166). On prayer, he challenges the preacher and reminds him that his public prayer life is a reflection of his private prayer life. "You won't touch hearts because your heart isn't touched" (168). Lastly, chapter 7 ("Preaching and the Spirit") reminds the preacher that listeners understand and can often sense when the Holy Spirit is working through him. This chapter is about inviting the Holy Spirit into one's preaching.

Preaching is an excellent read for those wanting to continue improving their craft. Keller demonstrates great humility in concert with great wisdom. On speaking of embracing our limitations—no longer having to pretend, but trusting in God—he writes, "Tremendous freedom comes when we can laugh at ourselves and whisper to him, 'So! It's been you all along!' In some ways that day will be the true beginning of your career as a preacher and teacher of God's Word" (207).

In spite of accomplishing what it sets out to do, this book is not without its weaknesses. One is worth mentioning. In Chapters 2 and 3 Keller covers preaching the gospel and preaching Christ from every passage, with several examples of such a christocentric reading of the text. To do it otherwise, the author argues, would lead to merely moralistic preaching. I am not so sure. There are a variety of ways in which preaching Christ can be done, and I do not think Keller's approach takes all of the text into consideration. A more nuanced approach is one that does not have an explicit reading of Christ in every text (à la Keller), but rather sees Christ implicitly. Instead of finding Christ everywhere, one finds an "image of Christ," such that every passage ultimately falls in line with God's desire to conform his children into the image of his Son (Rom 8:29). That is, every preaching text can be used to help mold the listener to the image of Christ.

But what of Luke 24:27, 44 that Keller uses to defend his christocentric reading? Most would agree that this passage is not saying that every verse in the OT is referring to Christ. The passage is stating that Christ, out of the OT, discussed those passages that did point to him—not that they *all* pointed to him. Nonetheless, I agree that our preaching must point to Christ. I am simply arguing that there is another way to do so that is sensitive to and informed by the author's intended meaning.

With that said, I still find Keller's book well worth the read. What it lacks in hermeneutical nuancing, it makes up in sage advice to the preacher from a well-respected champion of the sermon. Take and read, for there is wisdom on every page!

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

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

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

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

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

Purpose:

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

Vision:

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

General Editor:

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

Book Review Editor:

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

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

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

Frequency of Publication:

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

Jury Policy:

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

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

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

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

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   a. From a book:

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

   b. From a periodical:

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

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

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

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

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

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