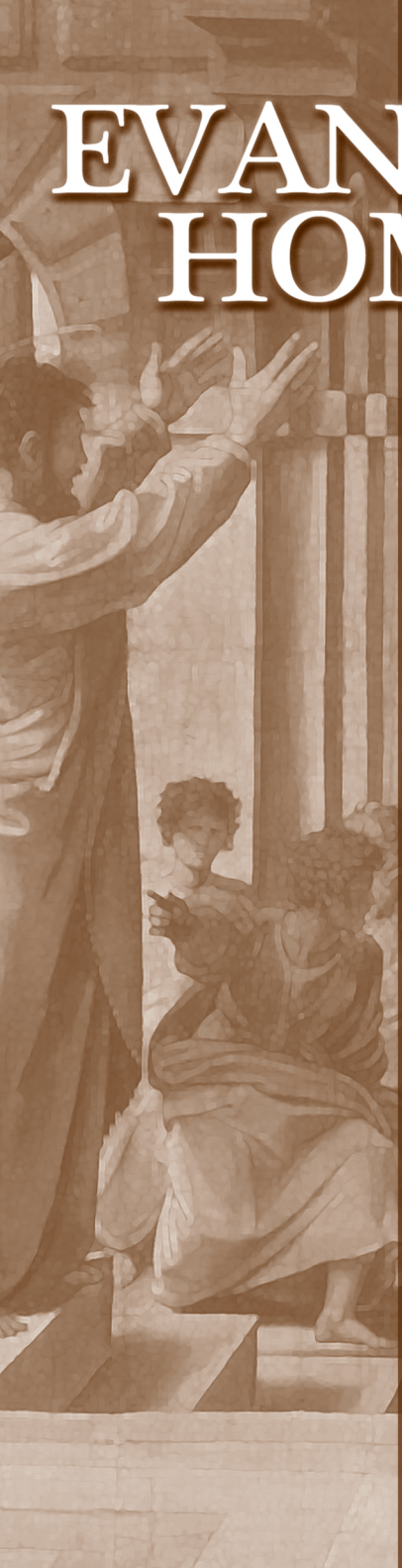

THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FOWARD

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

Looking back and looking forward enables us as individuals to keep track of where we came from and where we are going. The same can be said of any organization. As a new pastor, it is always helpful to pour over the history of the church and to determine how the congregation got to where it is so that a strategy for the future can be shaped. The Evangelical Homiletics Society likewise can benefit from a look at the past so that we can consider steps for the future.

The 2017 annual gathering of the Evangelical Homiletics Society took place at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts on October 19-21, 2017. This was the twentieth anniversary of the society. The conference reflects the looking back and looking forward theme: "What Makes Evangelical Homiletics Evangelical: Challenges and Distinctives." The plenary speakers were Derek J. Tidball and Scott M. Gibson. The addresses of both plenary presenters are published in the current issue. Gibson looked backward into the history of homiletics which included the historical formation of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, noting that preaching drives the evangelical movement. Tidball explored the challenges and distinctives of evangelical homiletics, drawing conclusions from a study of Acts 20:17-38.

This edition also includes the paper of the awardee of the Keith Willhite Award. Heather Joy Zimmerman presented a paper on the topical sermon, suggesting a method for application that employs both pericopal and biblical theology. The Willhite Award is named in memory of co-founder and past-president, Keith Willhite, and is determined by a vote of those in attendance at the conference.

Another article in this edition is by Jonathan Downie who explores Abraham Kuruvilla's approach to preaching—pericopal theology. Downie examines the theological presuppositions and the practical application of Kuruvilla's point of view.

Included in this issue is the sermon president Nick Gatzke preached to those assembled, "Confidence in God's Means." Gatzke, president of the society for 2016-2017, is senior pastor of Old North Church in Canfield, Ohio.

Finally, a robust number of book reviews rounds out the issue, provided by members of the society and edited by Abraham Kuruvilla, Book Review Editor of the *Journal*. The book reviews provide rich insight for our readers as they assess the kinds of books to read themselves and books to order for the libraries of the schools they represent.

The anniversary conference was largely attended. The papers presented were stimulating. One feature of conference was the concluding Celebration Luncheon on Saturday when Bryan Chapell served as the featured speaker. Chapell gave a stimulating and engaging after lunch speech that solidified the theme of the conference and brought it to an encouraging conclusion.

The Evangelical Homiletics Society has had a fantastic God-blessed twenty-year existence. The members throughout the years have made contributions to the society that have strengthened it to the present, which will enable it to move into the future with God's grace as we preach the Word. We look back and we look forward.

WHAT MAKES EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS DISTINCTIVE? A RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW[1]

SCOTT M. GIBSON
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South Hamilton, MA

"Whatever evangelical meant, in other words, it did not mean closed minded."
Frederick Buechner

INTRODUCTION

Evangelicalism is preaching. Preachers and their preaching have formed the backbone of the evangelical movement. In these days of politicism, defining the evangelical movement might be a little fuzzy. However, what distinguishes evangelicalism is its historic commitment to the pulpit. The preaching of the Word is a distinctive mark of evangelicalism.

Readers may not be clear about the term "evangelicalism." We begin with a definition. From there we will explore the place of preaching in evangelicalism, examine the contributions of evangelical preaching, and close with words of caution and conclusion.

WHAT IS EVANGELICALISM?

Evangelicalism is not easy to define. Evangelicalism is a movement, not associated with any single group. One cannot point to a specific person or group and say, "that's evangelicalism," at least not in its entirety. Douglas Sweeney notes:

> Not only do evangelicals come in different shapes and sizes, but they also participate in hundreds of different denominations—some of which were founded in opposition to some of the others! The vast majority are Protestant, but even among the Protestants there are Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist evangelicals. There are Anglicans, Methodists, Holiness people, and Pentecostals. There are Calvinists and Arminians.[2]

Sweeney continues, "There has never been—and there never will be—an

evangelical denomination, despite the references one hears to the evangelical church."[3] The spectrum of evangelicals includes Peace-churches to Black Pentecostals, men, women, multi-ethnic, Native American, an evangelical ecumenism.[4] Or, as David Bebbington observes, "Evangelicals are remarkably diverse."[5]

Evangelicalism's roots are found over two hundred and fifty years ago in Great Britain, Germany, and America where in the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century the Wesleys and Whitfield, Edwards and Franke believed that one's Christian life was founded on the Bible, with personal rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the commitment to evangelism—persuading others to be born again.[6]

To define evangelicalism according to beliefs only, limits a fully contoured understanding of the movement. Social concern has been an important part of evangelical history. Timothy L. Smith notes, "the concern for social justice has been a major contribution of evangelical faith to modern culture."[7] Derek Tidball points out that evangelicals are realistic, "Recognizing that conversion does not always bring about long-term or wide-scale social transformation, and that sin is located in our fallen world not just in sinful individuals, they now generally believe there are two tasks to be accomplished, that is evangelism and social action."[8] The movement is global in its reach and influence.[9]

Evangelicals run the gamut on their position and practice of education. Yet, not all evangelicals shy away from education. Evangelicals were on the forefront of establishing schools, led in inaugurating public education, and founded distinguished institutions of higher learning. From Wesley to Carl F. H. Henry to today, evangelicals number among the graduates of some of the most elite universities in the world.[10] In the years following the Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy in the United States there arose a "renaissance of conservative biblical scholarship."[11] Since then, evangelicals have found themselves on the faculties of departments of theology or biblical studies in major research universities and seminaries on both sides of the Atlantic.[12]

In the 1980s, mainline Presbyterian preacher and author Frederick Beuchner was invited to teach a semester at the evangelical Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. In his memoir Beuchner reflected, "I knew it was Billy Graham's alma mater. I knew it was evangelical though without any clear idea as to what that meant." He continued, "Whatever evangelical meant, in other words, it did not mean closed minded."[13] Beuchner further pondered his brush with evangelicalism while at Wheaton. He wrote:

> The result was that to find myself at Wheaton among people who, although they spoke about it in different words from mine and expressed it in their lives differently, not only believed in Christ and his Kingdom more or less as I did but were also not ashamed or embarrassed to say so was like finding something which, only when

I tasted it, I realized I had been starving for for years.[14]

John H. Gurstner observed that in contrast to the rigidness of their fundamentalist forebears, evangelicals were "not militant, schismatic, or antischolarly…but who are, nonetheless proponents of the fundamentals." He continued, "They call themselves evangelicals rather than fundamentalists, not because they repudiate the fundamentals, but because they reject the image which fundamentalists acquired."[15] Evangelicals have shared biblical commitments, many are socially aware, and many have an appreciation for education.

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF PREACHING IN EVANGELICALISM?

Preaching is the mark of the evangelical's commitment to the Bible and the spread of the movement. Preaching arises as the unique feature of evangelicalism. The preachers of evangelicalism's first and second Great Awakenings, including Theodore Frelinghuysen, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, Francis Asbury, Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, Timothy Dwight, Lyman Beecher and later Charles Finney, Frances Willard and Phoebe Palmer underscore the central role preaching played in the movement.[16] Interestingly, although historians of evangelicalism have investigated various facets of the movement, the role and place of preaching appears to be an area yet to be explored.[17] For example, *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* explores the Bible, theology, the church and mission, yet none of the articles address the place of preaching in the movement.[18]

British evangelical preacher and author, John Stott begins his important book on preaching with the statement of the place of preaching, "Preaching is indispensable to Christianity."[19] Preaching is indispensable to evangelicalism.

The Neo-Evangelical movement reflected the same commitment to preaching. Clarence McCartney and Robert Lamont of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, A.Z. Conrad and Harold John Ockenga of Boston's Park Street Church,[20] Donald Gray Barnhouse and James Montgomery Boice at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Gardner Taylor of Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, B. M. Nottage of Berean Chapel, Detroit, Shadrach Meshach Lockridge of Calvary Baptist Church, San Diego, and Lewis F. Evans of Hollywood Presbyterian Church, Hollywood, preached unwaveringly, many of whom were committed to systematic weekly exposition of different biblical books.[21] Evangelist Billy Graham, a key figure in the Neo-Evangelical movement, helped to solidify the place of present-day evangelicalism on the American and even world stage. On the other side of the Atlantic, John R. W. Stott of All Souls and Martin Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel sounded the evangelical message. The pulpit was their platform. Preaching communicated their message. Preaching is inseparable from evangelicalism.

Derek Tidball observes, "By tradition, evangelicals have exalted two

means of conversion as primary: preaching and personal work."[22] Preaching the gospel, preaching the Word, are simultaneous commitments: conversion and growth in Christ. Preaching being the primary means of conversion. As Tidball notes, "Whatever other methods of communication are employed, most evangelicals would agree that, at some stage, there must be a verbal explanation of the gospel for people to respond to it."[23]

What is evangelical preaching like? What are the features of an evangelical homiletic? Returning to Frederick Buechner, we read what someone from the outside perceives of the movement. Buechner writes:

> Most evangelical preaching that I have heard is seamless, hard sell, and heavily exhortatory. Men in business suits get up and proclaim the faith with the dynamic persuasiveness of insurance salesmen. If there are any evangelical women preachers, I have never happened to come across them. The churches these preachers get up in are apt to be large, packed full and so brilliantly lit that you feel there is no mystery there that has not been solved, no secrets that can escape detection. Their sermons couldn't be more different from the generally low-key ones that I am used to hearing in the sparsely attended churches in New England, but they give me the same sense of being official, public, godly utterances which the preacher stands behind but as a human being somehow does not stand in. Whatever passionate and private experience their sermons may have come from originally, you are given little or no sense of what that private experience was. At their best they bring many strengths with them into the pulpit but rarely, as I listened to them anyway, their real lives.[24]

As Buechner suggests, there are stereotypes of evangelical preaching, they differ depending on one's culture, region, and background. Today, the evangelical movement is world-wide, embracing the globe.[25] Preaching is at the center for evangelicals, persuading people to salvation in Christ and moving them to maturity.

THE COMMITMENTS OF EVANGELICAL PREACHING

Among the historic commitments of evangelical preaching are a allegiance to the Bible, a commitment to the high place of preaching, and a commitment to scholarship.

A Commitment to the Bible

Evangelical emphasis on the Bible as the authoritative Word of God is at the heart of preaching.[26] "It was part of the evangelical genius," says Hutchinson and Wolffe, "that the Bible in hand and the Holy Spirit in mind,

a reflected biblical vision of the future could be worked up out of the ground almost anywhere."[27] John Stott underscores the unique place the Bible has in the ministry of preaching. He urges:

> Since God's final deed and Word through Jesus were intended for all people of all ages, he inevitably made provision for a reliable record of them to be written and preserved. Without this he would have defeated his own purpose. As a result, today, although nearly 2000 years separate us from that deed and Word, Jesus Christ is accessible to us. We can reach him and know him. But he is accessible only through the Bible, as the Holy Spirit brings to life his own witness to him in its pages.[28]

Stott further notes:

> It is certain that we cannot handle Scripture adequately in the pulpit if our doctrine of Scripture is inadequate. Conversely, evangelical Christians, who have the highest doctrine of Scripture in the Church, should be conspicuously the most conscientious preachers.[29]

David L. Larsen emphasizes, "The history of preaching bears out the acute dangers of preaching out of a text rather than preaching the text." He continues, "Respect for authorial intention may be under siege currently, but it must be seen as the hermeneutical high ground which must not be surrendered."[30] The Bible is the foundation for evangelical preaching.

A Commitment to the High Place of Preaching

Evangelical ecclesiology is a "proclamatory ecclesiology," observes Leanne Van Dyk.[31] The Word is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit and people's lives are changed in conversion and in Christian growth. In his magisterial study of preaching, Hughes Oliphant Old devoted seven volumes to the study of preaching throughout the ages, focusing on preaching as worship as well as the place and practice of preaching in the theology of worship. He traces the contours of evangelical preaching while he explores the high place of preaching in individual preachers, suggesting the important role of preaching in the evangelical movement.[32]

There has been an emphasis on expository preaching in evangelicalism. Forebears like Birmingham's R.W. Dale, advocated for systematic expository preaching.[33] G. Campbell Morgan of Westminster Chapel, London, influenced generations by his emphasis on the weekly exposition of the Bible.[34] He was followed by Lloyd-Jones, John Stott and William Still in Britain, and Donald Grey Barnhouse, and James Montgomery Boice. The practice of expository preaching remains a feature of evangelical preachers, including Calvin Thielman, Earl Palmer, William Pope Wood,

Timothy Keller, Haddon Robinson, Bryan Chapell, Tony Evans, among others.

Preaching is central to evangelicalism, despite its critics. "Preaching has stubbornly refused to acknowledge the validity of the charges against it," states Clyde Fant.[35] Preaching is here to stay.

A Commitment to Scholarship

In this section, we recognize three different contributions to evangelical homiletics scholarship. The first concerns the prodigious publication of books on preaching. Evangelical authors on the topic of preaching range from the popular to the scholarly. Over the years, publishers like Baker, Zondervan, Eerdmans, Inter-Varsity, Moody, in addition to Crossway, B&H, P&R, Weaver, Christian Focus, among others, have devoted significant portions of their catalogs over the years to the publication of evangelical preaching. The books range from popular to scholarly in content.

Several significant textbooks on preaching have emerged, including Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* (1980), Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (1994), and John Stott's *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching Today* (1982), and a host of others.

Second, in addition to scholarly publications, education in the theory and practice of preaching has developed in the field of homiletics. Evangelical homileticians have gained important ground over the last fifty years and continue to make strides in writing, teaching and scholarship, including the establishment of several doctoral programs (doctor of philosophy) in preaching and the founding of centers for preaching for preaching research.[36]

The teaching of preaching has been part of the landscape of theological education since the establishment of formal theological training in North America. Harvard College was founded in 1636 not only to prepare ministers for the burgeoning Puritan nation, but also to prepare students in leadership for the various aspects of colonial society.[37] By 1805 the Harvard faculty was persuaded to embrace Unitarianism and voted to appoint Henry Ware, a self-proclaimed Unitarian, to the Hollis Professorship of Divinity. This led to the founding of Andover Seminary in 1808, making a break to establish a theological school based on orthodox Trinitarian theology.[38]

What is striking about the founding of institutions like Andover and other seminaries to follow is the primacy of preaching in the theological curriculum. Unlike the British universities where clergy were trained, like Oxford or Cambridge where preaching was not part of the curriculum, their American counterpart theological schools placed preaching in the forefront, moving it into a distinct academic discipline.

There were notable exceptions to the British model. Philip Dodderidge led an academy where practical studies like preaching were taught to every theological student, but this was not the case with the Oxbridge schools.[39] Later, Charles Haddon Spurgeon trained students in

preaching at his Pastors' College.[40] Additionally, continental theologians like J. J. Van Oosterzee advocated for the "idea and importance of homiletics."[41] Van Oosterzee demonstrated high regard for homiletics in the theological curriculum, its place as a distinct discipline. He urged:

> Christian Homiletics is that part of Practical Theology which describes the nature of and requirements for the preaching of the Gospel in the congregational assemblies of the Christian Church, with the definite object of training by this method well-qualified heralds of the Word of Life. As such it displays—however closely allied to the domain of art—the unequivocal character of a science, and one for the future minister of the Gospel absolutely indispensable. As such it is opposed only by ignorance and prejudice, although powerless in itself alone to form living and life-awakening witnesses of the Salvation in Christ.[42]

From the beginning, Andover Theological Seminary established the Bartlet Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric in 1808 provided by William Bartlet of Newburyport, Massachusetts.[43] The catalogs of Andover Theological Seminary from 1819 to 1830 demonstrate the key role of homiletics in the curriculum, with the final year focusing on sermon development and the practice of preaching. Later, the 1850 catalog includes "Homiletics" and "Sermonizing."[44]

Princeton Theological Seminary, founded in 1812, appointed Archibald Alexander as the first Professor of Didactic and Polemical Theology, additionally teaching practical theology, including preaching, throughout his tenure at the seminary. Joining Alexander in 1813, Samuel Miller was appointed as the Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, church government meaning, practical theology, including preaching.[45] Miller lectured to third-year students on the practice of preaching.[46] The Princeton faculty considered pulpit eloquence so important that as early as 1858 the teaching of speech was added to the curriculum to supplement the teaching of preaching.[47]

Harvard established its Divinity School in 1815 and by 1830 announced the funding of the Professor of Pastoral Care and Pulpit Oratory, teaching students the composition and delivery of sermons. Students at Harvard Divinity School were exposed to the value of preaching in the curriculum for the churches they would serve. The catalog states:

> A religious service with preaching, in which one of the students officiates takes place twice a week, and is attended by the Professors and all the members of the school. Also once a week there is an exercise in extemporaneous preaching, in the presence of one of the Professors, by the students of the two upper classes in rotation. Students take their turns in performing these exercises with the first

term of the middle year.[48]

Another example of the prominent role of homiletics in the theological curriculum is Yale Divinity School founded in 1822. By 1817 there was an informal divinity school already functioning at the college with a few graduates who remained to study divinity. The commitment of Yale to preaching is indicated as early as the appointment in 1817 of Chauncey Allen Goodrich as professor of rhetoric and oratory.[49] Then, by 1822 fifteen students of the class of 1822 requested to study divinity following graduation. Eleazar T. Fitch, the professor of divinity supported their request to the administration to be formed into a regular theological class, thus providing the impetus for the founding of the divinity school.[50] The chair of homiletics was filled from 1822 to 1852 by Fitch, the Livingston Professor of Divinity.[51]

Other seminaries that were established later followed suit.[52] The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded in 1859 in Greenville, South Carolina, and moved to Kentucky following the Civil War.[53] From the founding, John A. Broadus taught New Testament interpretation and most notably, homiletics. He is the author of *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870), one of the most influential trans-denominational textbooks on preaching in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[54]

Garrett Theological Seminary (1853), Rochester Theological Seminary (1850), Crozer Theological Seminary (1866) Union Theological Seminary (New York-1836), Union Theological Seminary (Virginia-1812), the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church [New Brunswick Theological Seminary] (1784), Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (1864), Drew Theological Seminary (1867), among others, and notably evangelical institutions like Gordon Divinity School (1889), Denver Seminary (1951), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1897), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1908), New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (1917), Dallas Theological Seminary (1924),[55] Beeson Divinity School (1988), George W. Truett Theological Seminary (1993) required courses in homiletics for students as they prepared for ministry, emphasizing the prominent place of the teaching of preaching in the seminary curriculum.[56]

Like the theological seminaries, evangelical Bible colleges and Bible institutes in the United States placed an important emphasis on the instruction and practice of preaching.[57] This brief survey indicates that from the beginning of theological education in the United States, homiletics served as one of the key components taught in the curriculum to strengthen a minister's education, and continues to play a key role especially in evangelical theological training.

A third contribution to evangelical homiletics is the honing of the craft of preaching through a specialized society. A professional guild, the Evangelical Homiletics Society, was founded in 1997 primarily for professors in seminaries and Bible Colleges who teach preaching. The society was 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."[58]

The Evangelical Homiletics Society was established because of a demonstrated need for a distinct homiletics guild with evangelical commitments; these would include professors who teach homiletics in university divinity schools, seminaries, and Bible Colleges; in addition, "by reason of interest and involvement in preaching, including pastors, evangelists, and graduate students."[59]

In a memo dated 11 December 1996 to Ken Swetland, then academic dean at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Scott M. Gibson reflected on his experience at the 31st annual Academy of Homiletics meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, held 5-8 December 1996. He wrote:

> I considered leaving the meetings for Boston after the first evening's presentation. However, I wanted to allow as much latitude as I could, so I stayed for the meeting the next day. That session was equally unimpressive. However, during that time I made use of it and penned on a pad an idea for a new homiletics organization for evangelicals, much like the Evangelical Theological Society. While exiting the room I (providentially) met Keith Willhite of Dallas Theological Seminary. We chatted a few minutes—I shared with him my idea. He was equally frustrated with the direction of the Academy, and we decided to spend the afternoon together to discuss my proposal.
>
> Our plan is to establish the "Evangelical Homiletics Society," with the first meeting at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in October 1997.[60]

Soon Keith Willhite developed a "Project Planning Guide" so that "we can be on the same page."[61] The guide mapped the steps needed in order to launch the new organization, with the view to host the inaugural meeting at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary 16-19 October 1997. A letter was sent to potential interested parties in January 1997, inviting recipients to become a charter member of the Evangelical Homiletics Society.[62] Letters were mailed in February 1997.[63]

Support for the proposal was immediate. "I think it is a great idea to establish the Evangelical Homiletics Society," wrote Robert E. Cooley, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to Scott M. Gibson. "It appears that the time has come that a greater purpose can be served in this special way." He continues, "I encourage you in your explorations to move forward."[64] Letters of support suggested a strong beginning. One professor of

preaching expressed excitement at the prospects of the upcoming inaugural meeting, "I'm looking forward to being part of this new society."[65]

Paul Scott Wilson of Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, expressed both congratulations and sadness on the founding of the society. "As a past president of the Academy of Homiletics, may I extend to you and to the Evangelical Homiletics Society my personal congratulations on the occasion of your first meeting." He continues, "While I celebrate your formation, it is with a profound sense of loss that I do so…. On this occasion I deeply regret that the Academy of Homiletics will be deprived of an influence it very much needs, and not just it, but the church at large that its members represent."[66] Another homiletician and newly elected president of the Academy of Homiletics, Richard Lischer of Duke Divinity School wrote with equal grief in a letter to Scott M. Gibson, "In some ways, I think that such a development was inevitable…."[67]

The first annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society was held 16-18 October 1997 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with the theme, "The Need for Biblical Preaching in Today's Church." The plenary speaker was Vernon Grounds of Denver Seminary and Haddon W. Robinson of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was the featured preacher.[68] The society was formally established at the plenary business meeting called by Scott M. Gibson, organizing chair on 18 October 1997. Thirty-two charter members were present. The by-laws were proposed, discussed, and approved, along with the first slate of officers for 1997-1998: Scott M. Gibson, president; Keith Willhite, vice-president; Endel Lee, secretary; Jeffrey Arthurs, treasurer; William Hogan, communication coordinator; Carol Noren, Donald L. Hamilton and Charles Zimmerman, members-at-large. Timothy Warren offered the motion for the society to accept the invitation to hold its second annual meeting at Dallas Theological Seminary in October 1998. The motion was seconded by Dennis Phelps of Bethel Theological Seminary.[69] The trajectory was set for this new preaching society.

On 16 April 2003 co-founder of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Keith Willhite (1958-2003) died from complications of a cancerous brain tumor. The funeral service was held on 19 April 2003 at Lake Pointe Church, Rockwall, Texas. Mark Bailey, president of Dallas Theological Seminary gave the welcome and later a tribute. Rev. Ray Pritchard, Senior Pastor of Calvary Memorial Church in Oak Park, Illinois, preached the funeral message. Keith Willhite's influence continues to be felt in the society.[70] The Keith Willhite Award was established by the membership in 2006 in memory of the society's co-founder. The award recognizes the outstanding paper presented at each annual meeting voted upon by attendees to the meetings. The award includes a certificate of recognition, an honorarium, and the publication of the paper in the society's journal.

Additionally, in 2016 the Emerging Scholars Grant was initiated by the society to invest in the future of younger scholars and in the developing field of homiletics.[71] The grant preamble states, "The Emerging Scholars

Grant is a means for the Society to assist and encourage developing scholars fund their education. Awardees of this grant represent the best in current graduate educational scholarship in homiletics."[72] The purposes of the society continue to be addressed and developed.

The society publishes *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*, which is peer-reviewed, featuring research articles and book reviews. The first edition of the journal was published in December 2001, with four articles and one sermon. The first volume has only one issue, while the following volumes produce two issues a year, now in March and September.

The journal was published in hard copy from 2001 until 2012, when the journal transitioned to an on-line publication beginning in March 2013.

The founding of the Evangelical Homiletics Society also underscores a commitment to the teaching of preaching. As part of their purpose the Evangelical Homiletics Society encourages the development of pedagogy, has devoted conferences to the task of teaching preaching, and study groups as well. Some evangelical homileticians who have backgrounds in educational theory developed the book, *On the Teaching of Preaching: The Use of Educational Theory and Christian Theology in Homiletics*, arising out of a Lilly Endowment grant. The book underscores the importance of informed educational pedagogy for evangelicals who teach preaching in Bible Schools, colleges and seminaries.[73]

The Evangelical Homiletics Society is now twenty years old, with a burgeoning membership of about three hundred, including professors of preaching, graduate students, and pastors—all committed to advancing the cause of biblical preaching.

WORDS OF CAUTION AND CONCLUSION

To be sure, there is a range of preaching in evangelicalism. The commitments listed above highlight the best of the movement. However, contemporary preaching is often driven by personality rather than the preacher having the ballast of education and maturity in the scriptures. To evangelicalism's embarrassment, American pragmatism has distilled preaching to what works best. In his important study of evangelicalism, David Wells lamented:

> Where, then, has the church lost its vision?
>
> We can only surmise from the data we have. Perhaps the disaffection is grounded in the virtual collapse of biblical preaching in the contemporary church that some have noted or in the perception that even where biblical preaching is done, it is not always sufficiently nourishing.[74]

Wells wrote these words over twenty years ago as he surveyed the evangelical

landscape of the late twentieth century—and, sadly, they can be reaffirmed to be the case today in the twenty-first century.

In spite of the detractions found within evangelicalism—the consumeristic tendencies, the threats of theological shallowness, the pervasiveness of the cult of personality—preaching drives the movement. Evangelicalism is made up of preaching and preachers. Preaching is of great significance for evangelicalism. We can say confidently that preaching is indispensable for evangelicalism.

NOTES

1. Author's note: portions of this paper were presented at the "God's Word and Our Words: The Significance of Preaching from the Prophets to the Present," symposium on preaching at Baylor University, Truett Theological Seminary, 12 September 2017 and from a forthcoming chapter in *On the Teaching of Preaching: The Use of Educational Theory and Christian Theology in Homiletics* (Wooster: Weaver, 2018).
2. Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 19.
3. Ibid., 20.
4. Timothy L. Smith, "A Shared Evangelical Heritage," *The Evangelical Round Table* vol. 2 *Evangelicalism: Saving its Success*, ed., David A. Frazer (St. Davids, PA: Eastern College and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 12. See also, Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnson, *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991); Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, eds., *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, eds., *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nashville: B&H, 2008); John H. Gerstner, "The Theological Boundaries of Evangelical Faith," *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing*, eds., David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 31-37. For a perspective on blacks and evangelicalism, see William Pannell, "The Religious Heritage of Blacks," *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing*, eds., David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 96-107; William H. Bentley, "Bible Believers in the Black Community," *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing*, eds., David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 108-121; Steve Wilkens and Don Thorsen, *Everything You Know about Evangelicals is Wrong (Well, Almost Everything): An Insider's Look at Myths and Realities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).
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1990 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 366.

6. Smith, 12-13. Smith considers these elements to be consistent in evangelical traditions. See also Bebbington, 365.
7. Ibid., 16. See pages 16-28 where Smith details evangelical engagement with social justice. See also in the same volume, Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Why Care About Justice?" (156-167). Also see for example, Rufus Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform on the Eve of the Civil War* (Nashville: 1957; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865-1920* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1977); Leonard I. Sweet, ed., *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984); Robert D. Lindner, "The Resurgence of Evangelical Social Concern (1925-75)," *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing*, eds., David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 189-210.
8. Derek Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals? Tracing the Roots of Today's Movements* (London: Marshall Prickering, 1994), 132.
9. See Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Donald M. Lewis and Richard V. Pierard, *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014).
10. Sweeney, 74.
11. Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* vol. 5 *A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), 112.
12. Ibid., 93-98. A casual internet search of universities and seminaries in North America and in Britain will demonstrate the place of evangelical scholars on these faculties. As for evangelical seminaries founded in North America in the twentieth century, these include Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the emergence of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Regent College in Vancouver, BC, among others. In Great Britain, London School of Theology arose as a leading evangelical center of learning, among others.
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has yet to connect the dots to demonstrate the unique place of preaching in the movement.

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21. See Stanley, 112-116; Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Our Own Time* vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 88.
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36. See the websites of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (in cooperation with London School of Theology), among others that have established doctor of philosophy in preaching programs. The Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching at George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor and the Center for Expository Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary are among these newly established centers.
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See also Roger R. Dale, "John A. Broadus, Rhetoric, and *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermon*," *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy*, eds., David S. Dockery and Roger D. Duke (Nashville: B&H, 2008) 68-96. Dargan, editor of the revised edition notes: "The first edition of this work was published in the summer of 1870. Immediately after getting it through the press the author went abroad for some months, and did not expect to teach Homiletics again after his return. But circumstances made it necessary that he should resume his work in that department—always a favorite subject with him. The book was a great success. It became the most popular and widely-read text-book on Homiletics in the country, and has passed through twenty-two editions, thousands of copies have been sold. It has been adopted in many theological seminaries of different denominations as the text-book, and in many where no text-book is used it is highly commended for study and reference. Besides this, it has had a wide and useful circulation among the ministry in general. Two separate editions were published in England; the book was used in the mission schools of Japan, in its English form, and was translated for similar use in the Chinese missions. A translation into Portuguese for the Protestant missions in Brazil has been prepared, and only waits for funds to be published." Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed., Edward Charles Dargan i.

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WHAT MAKES EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS EVANGELICAL? CHALLENGES AND DISTINCTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, a local newspaper in Michigan announced that I was slated for the Northrup Lecture at the town's Christian Liberal Arts College. I was somewhat affronted by this, since I had not delivered the lecture at that point. I had often been slated for a lecture after I had given it, but this was the first time I had been slated for it before I had opened my mouth! I then discovered this was another example of two nations beings divided by a common language. In the USA "slated" means "scheduled." In the UK "slated" means severely criticised, torn to shreds. In the interests of avoiding being "slated" for this address, let me say that the immediate problem one faces is whether to talk about Evangelical preaching as it is actually practiced, or evangelical preaching according to our ideals. Sadly, there is often a wide disparity between them, and perhaps that is the biggest challenge any evangelical, wishing to adopt a distinctively evangelical approach, faces. This address will tend towards the ideal end of the spectrum.

In order to restrain an otherwise unwieldy topic, I have chosen to base my address on four relevant phrases which Paul uses to reflect on his preaching in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:17-38). They are not exhaustive but suggest four modes of preaching. They are: "the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace" (v.24); "preaching the kingdom" (v. 25); "to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (v. 27); and, "I commit you to the word of his grace" (v 32). Each opens a window into the nature of evangelical preaching.

TESTIFYING TO THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S GRACE, vs. 24

The phrase draws attention to two elements of importance. First preaching as testimony and secondly, preaching as concerning the good news.

Preaching as Testimony

Preaching is *diamarturomai*, that is "bearing witness." An evangelical approach to preaching therefore necessarily begins with the preacher having themselves experienced the grace of God, whether through a dramatic conversion experience or by a gradual coming to a definite awareness of God's saving, electing and transforming grace in their lives.

Paul's own preaching clearly grew out of his own conversion and the wonder of God's choice of him as an Apostle. The heart quickens when we hear him speak of preaching Christ, "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light to shine on our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ."[1] And as he recalls, "Even though I was a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief, The grace of God was poured out on me abundantly…" and he was appointed to God's service.[2]

In this respect, at least, Thomas Long's advocacy of preaching as "witness" is correct. The witness is a person who has authority. "The preacher as witness," writes Long, "is not authoritative because of rank or power but rather because of what the preacher has seen and heard."[3] It may be that the preacher as witness is more culturally sensitive to our post-modern and post-truth society than other models, such as that of a herald (of which more in a moment) without sacrificing anything by way of conviction or certainty about the message to be conveyed.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the preaching engendered by the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century was that preaching came alive because it became "experiential" preaching, infused with reality and personal testimony. In fact, Mark "Noll has argued that in several respects Evangelicalism may not have been new, but it was new in what it claimed for the power of God in creating and sustain authentic religious experience."[4]

Preaching was no longer characterised by carefully crafted literary essays or minutely argued theological treatise but had rediscovered its roots in the biblical prophets. As P. T. Forsyth asserted, "The Christian preacher is not the successor of the Greek orator [or we might interject, the Oxbridge theologian], but of the Hebrew prophet. The orator comes with but an inspiration, the prophet comes with a revelation."[5] The preaching of the Evangelical Revivals, to which we are heirs, carried conviction because it was not remote or abstract or formal but felt and known and, in Jonathan Edward's terms, was very much about "the religious affections."[6] Consequently, evangelical preaching provoked the reaction that Jesus' own preaching did: "The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."[7]

As John Stott commented when analysing the preaching of Charles Simeon, a university don and Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge at the turn

of the 19th century, who served as his model, "It seems to me that one might well single out this freshness of spiritual experience as the first indispensable quality of the effective preacher. No amount of homiletic technique can compensate for the absence of a close personal walk with God."[8]

Preaching as Good News

The focus of the testimony is, however, not on the preacher but on the gracious God who has worked the change in a person's life. It is personal, but it is also about bringing objective good news to other people. There is a type of evangelical preacher who warms to their subject most when it is bad news; when they are condemning sin in the world, fiercely denouncing specific wicked behaviour, and apparently celebrating a world going to hell and judgement. There has to be a teaching of the law and of the nature and range of sin, but bad news must never be allowed to eclipse "the good news of God's grace," as it sometimes does. Grace embraces all people for at the heart of this multi-faceted gift of God, as John Barclay has recently put it,[9] lies the incongruity of God rescuing us without regard to our worthiness, whether Jew or Gentile, religious or not.

Testimonies are about events that people have seen and heard and preaching is no different. The testimony element is not about broadcasting one's opinion but about passing on the events of the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. It is, in John's words, "that…which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of Life. This life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us."[10]

The testimony, then, is both felt and subjective, and factual and objective.

PREACHING THE KINGDOM, vs. 25

Preaching as Announcement

Preaching is also about making an announcement—*kērussē* In the ancient world, of course, announcements were made by heralds, proclaiming the news. But I wonder if that has led us to a distorted view of the task as if the only way to broadcast the news is to shout at people from a distance. Announcing good news today occurs through a whole variety of media, and not least through contemporary social media. The focus, then, needs to be on the preacher's task to announce what God has done in Christ, rather than the medium through which the announcement is made.

Nonetheless, the image of the herald leads us to understand that the preacher's task is to pass on the announcement with confidence and clarity.

Other images may lead us in the direction of being apologists for the kingdom, engaged in debate and persuasion, or pastors in the kingdom, providing support and encouragement for believers. But this one puts its emphasis on certainty and lucidity. The image is captured and used in a different context by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:7 when arguing about the greater value of the gift of prophecy in comparison with that of speaking in tongues where he asks, "if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for the battle?" Just as the call to arms needs to be unmistakably clear, so too does our announcement of the good news.

Clarity requires that careful attention be given to the shaping our words, so that we are lucid, precise and transparent. I agree with the late Alec Motyer's verdict, "The majority of (if not to a degree, all) 'bad' sermons are 'bad' because they are muddled."[11] Too much preaching buries the announcement under a mass of qualifications, hesitancies and confused thinking, with the result that no clear message is sounded. We still suffer from the sort of preaching criticized by Phillips Brooks well over a century ago when he said that there is,

> an immense amount of preaching which must be called preaching about Christ as distinct from preaching Christ. There are many preachers who seem to do nothing else, always discussing Christianity as a problem instead of announcing Christianity as a message and proclaiming Christ as a Saviour. I do not undervalue their discussions. But I think we ought always to feel that such discussions are not the type (i.e., model) or ideal of preaching. They may be necessities of the time, but they are not the work which the great Apostolic preachers did, or which the true preacher will always most desire...Beware the tendency to preach about Christianity rather than to preach Christ.[12]

Does that not lead to the mere repetition of what is already well-known? The argument of the new homileticians some decades ago was that the American church knew the story of the Bible well and needed another approach, an inductive and narrative one, to awaken their congregations to its freshness and transforming power. If that ever was true, it is not true now. In the United Kingdom, at least, and I suspect the same is true in the United States, we are speaking to a generation of people who neither had the, admittedly dubious, benefit of a Sunday school education, nor the benefit of the even more dubious daily school assembly. In both of these the Bible was read and the stories told. Today people have not heard the most basic of facts about Jesus Christ and know nothing of the content of the Bible. Consequently, we have the privilege, and responsibility, to instruct them in the basic truths of scripture and about Christ.

I agree with Dan Baumann who wrote some years ago, "Anyone

who simply sets forth the text and gives its meaning distinctly will be accused of freshness."[13] How ironic!

Two other caveats should be entered. First, to make an announcement is not to say that we should confine ourselves to abstract propositional preaching. There is more than one way to make an announcement and the full range of the way in which the Bible itself speaks, making use of a variety of different literary genres, serves as a model for us to imitate.

Secondly, while in one respect it is up to the hearers as to whether they respond or not—Paul immediately says that having discharged his calling, "I am innocent of the blood of any of you" (v. 26)—yet in another respect, no Apostolic preacher made the announcement without it entailing an appeal to accept the good news and make it their own. In the contemporary church, our greater danger is that we are likely to appeal without having made any proclamation, but it is equally erroneous to proclaim without appeal.[14]

Preaching About the Kingdom

The apostle Paul rarely speaks about the Kingdom of God, at least in comparison with the Synoptic Gospels, and yet here he summarizes his message here as "the kingdom." The Acts more usually summaries it in terms of "the word" or "the word of God."[15] While the term "the word" may lead us to focus on the heart of the gospel and its dynamic power in people's lives, "the kingdom" places that gospel in the context of God's whole redemptive story. Authentic narrative preaching is not preaching that uses several stories by way of illustration, nor even one contemporary story by way of parabolic or metaphorical insight into the gospel, but preaching that retells the story of God's reigning in his world. His reign was enshrined in his role as creator, was and is beneficial for his creatures, was challenged by alien powers and disobedience in the Garden of Eden, was epitomized in the good kings of Israel, was reclaimed in the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, and is currently making progress around the world, until the time it reaches its universal culmination in the coming again of Christ.

C. S. Lewis put it graphically: "Enemy occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great act of sabotage."[16]

How grand a story that is! By comparison, so many of our sermons pale certainly into insignificance, if not actual heresy, as they are pre-occupied with individual, existential and transient, spiritual experiences, petty rules, organisational strategies, mission tactics, cultural wars or first-world problems. The world is dying to hear the announcement that God has stepped in to reclaim it from the idolatrous powers that have usurped it and has done so in the most surprising and unexpected way through Christ and

his cross. It is that cross which, to use the words of Colossians, "has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves…"[17] and it is through Christ's blood, "shed on the cross" that "all things can be reconciled to God" and "peace" established once again in our broken creation.[18]

We need to retell "the big story" of God's kingdom.

PROCLAIMING THE WHOLE WILL OF GOD, vs. 27

Paul moves on from preaching as *kērussē*to preaching as *avagellę* that is, to announce in the sense of reporting, teaching or passing on information. It is a short-hand way of picking up what he said in verse 20, "You know I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house." It nuances the preaching of the kingdom by concentrating not so much of the overall story as the elements that go to compose that story and its implications for living. It highlights the evangelical preacher as a teacher.

John Stott, commenting on 2 Timothy 4:2, and citing 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 3:2 in support, wrote, "The Christian pastoral ministry is essentially a teaching ministry, which explains why candidates are required both to be orthodox in their own faith and to have an aptitude for teaching."[19] In using the word 'essentially' he was perhaps under-estimating the influence of his own gifts in his understanding of the pastoral ministry. He was, after all a superb Bible teacher. But if his point was well made when he wrote this, it is even more crucial that we highlight it today in a church, let alone a society, which is largely ignorant of the Bible and which often believes the wrong things, with the result that Christian experience becomes confusing and problematic.

This section of this address leads me to at least three reflections.

It points to the breadth of the message: "the whole will of God" (v. 27).

Negatively, Evangelicals are so concerned not to miss out on preaching the gospel, which is a good thing, and to do so with clarity, which is also a good thing, that we have a tendency to fall into the trap of failing to appreciate "the boundless riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). The Gospel Hall in which my faith in Christ was nurtured had, to be honest, a very narrow view of the gospel. I remember six consecutive evening services one summer when visiting preachers spoke on John 3:16. Instead of "boundless riches," "endless treasures" (NLT) and "rich variety" (Tom Wright) we stick with well-worn formulae (the ABC of the gospel, Four Spiritual Laws), a few select, precious and right doctrines (justification by faith) or a canon within a canon (especially Paul's letters). When measured against preaching on "the

whole will of God" we might appear to fall short.

Positively, this has led Evangelicals to prioritize systematic expository preaching, unfolding consecutive passage in the Bible both in terms of exegesis *and* application.[20] Doing so recognizes the Bible not only as sufficient in the units that form its content but also in its arrangement, since that too is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Expository preaching is not only an effective pragmatic method of preaching but a theological conviction about the word of God and its inspiration.

The whole will of God includes the Old Testament as well as the New; the Gospels as well as the Epistles; the unity of scripture as well as its diversity; creation as well as redemption; ethics as well as evangelism; wisdom and prophecy as well as proclamation; Christ in all his fullness, not simply as our comforting Saviour; Genesis and Revelation as well as John 3:16. To that end a regular review of what we are preaching should save us from preaching predictable hobby-horses or parroting old tired formulae.

All this, of course, takes for granted that our preaching will be formed and disciplined by the full-orbed revelation of God in Scripture, which is sufficient for our needs, rather than by our stringing together a selection of popular topics, often from a recently published book of someone's else's inductive sermons.

As F. F. Bruce comments, here is Paul not withholding anything which would be of value to them, by which he means that he presents them with the full gospel revelation "with all its practical corollaries," and in doing so refuses "to dilute the truth."[21] Moreover, he does so "unhesitatingly," in spite of the fierce opposition he had faced in Ephesus.[22]

It points to the urgency of the message: "Keep watch over yourselves…Be on your guard" (vv. 28-31).

Paul not only announces what God has done in Christ but anticipates the future needs of the Ephesians elders. Hence, he warns them realistically about the spiritual battle in which they are engaged and their need to be armed ahead of time so they can protect "the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made [them] overseers" (v. 28). Good preaching instructs people about the challenges they will face both in realm of their personal living, as attempts are made to seduce them away from Christ by the world, the flesh and the devil, and also in the realm of the mind, as they are seduced by hard questions, alternative philosophies or plain heresy. Evangelical preaching, then, must be ethical and educational, informative and transformative and well as exhortatory and evangelistic.

On a related matter, it points to the truth of the message: "Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw disciples away after

them" (v. 30).[23]

The question of credibility, even plausibility, are stiff challenges for contemporary Evangelical preachers. Postmodernity seems so last century, although of course its effects will remain with us for some time. We are now in a post-truth society. Several commentators have been writing on the subject recently. Matthew D'Ancona, for example, has recently written:

> Lying has been an integral part of politics since early humans arranged themselves in tribes…Yet political lies, spin and falsehood are emphatically not the same as Post-Truth. What is new is not the mendacity of politicians but the public's response to it…we no longer expect our politicians to speak the truth: that, for now, has been written out of the job description, or at least significantly relegated on the list of required attributes.
>
> In the West, it is emotional connection – always part of the political decision-making – that threatens to eclipse our inherited insistence upon truth as the main criterion in political contests.

He adds,

> …emotional necessity trumps strict adherence to the truth." (Contrary to Dicken's Gradgrind in *Hard Times*: "Now what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life.")[24]

We are to hold fast to truth, to God's revealed truth. How grateful we should be to God for people of the stature of Tim Keller who have an understanding of the times and can helpfully guide preachers as to how to speak God's truth to them.[25]

We should also be grateful to God for Lesslie Newbigin and his insistence that the gospel is "public truth," not merely truth for the Christian community. In a way that directly connects with our previous point about the kingdom, Newbigin writes, "To be faithful to a message which concerns the kingdom of God, his rule over all things and all peoples, the Church has to claim the high ground of public truth."[26]

But we should not forget either that what convinces people of truth at the end of the day is not words, or certainly not words on their own, but a community of people who live by the truth and demonstrate it in action. "How is it possible," he asks,

> that the gospel should be credible [or today we might say plausible], that people should come to believe that the power which has the last

> word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and *live by it*.[27]

COMMITTED TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, vs. 32

Our fourth insight into Paul's view of preaching, and consequently of the essence of evangelical preaching, is admittedly of a somewhat different nature. He concludes his address with the words "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified." The words sound more like the pronouncing of a blessing or offering of a prayer than a comment on preaching as such. Yet the statement, with its emphasis on "the word of his grace," contains several allusions relevant to preaching.

It assumes that God's word is a dynamic word.

C. K. Barrett noted that Paul's phrase "to God and to the word of his grace" is an example of hendiadys, where two words are connected to express a single idea. So, the meaning of this is that Paul commends them "to God, who is active in the word of grace."[28] The means by which God has chosen to bless people with his grace is through the preaching of the gospel, the word. This should not surprise us, given the revelation of God, from Genesis onwards, is of a God who accomplishes his will by communicating with his creation and his creatures through speaking eventful, life-changing and powerful words. Preaching the gospel, then, is no mere human communication, not merely an act of public speaking which happens to be about a religious topic, but one through which God himself is active in bringing people to himself and to maturity in Christ.

It suggests that God's word is a sufficient word.

This word, spoken and recorded in Scripture, and subsequently relayed and retold creatively by preachers, is able to "build you up" and bring believers to enter into their inheritance. Mature congregations and mature believers are not the result of entertaining addresses which are influenced more by contemporary insights into the human condition than by the Scripture. They are the result of exploring God's revealed word and expounding it meaningfully to the age in which we live.

It draws attention to God's word, again, as a gracious word.

Should people listen to us preaching often, would they conclude that the message we preach is one of grace? Or would they rather hear words of fierce condemnation about the moral values of our society, or denunciations of liberal theologians, or even endless talk of the internecine battles that occur within the church? Or would they even assume our message was one which, while we are committed formally to the doctrines of grace, actually preached works as we urge our congregations to do more, give more, pray more, witness more, attend more, read more, as if it all depended on us?

Grace, of course, is a word that can easily be devalued. John Barclay's recent study has been a helpful corrective in teaching us that while grace is unconditioned, in that no one merits God's favour, it is not unconditional, in the loose sense in which we often use that word.[29] In contrast to recent times, Barclay argues that in the ancient world a gift meant that the receiver entered into obligations towards the giver. Our message of grace then, from first to last, is that all, however sinful we may have been, are welcome to receive forgiveness from God in Christ and to be justified by Christ, but that doing so means we become incorporated into Christ, that we are baptized into his death and have risen to live a new kind of life with the ascended Christ as our Lord. Grace inextricably entails both forgiveness and holiness.

CONCLUSION

The reports of apostolic preaching that Luke records in Acts, whether to Jewish or Gentile audiences, offer a number of insights into the nature of evangelical preaching as it should be. We could have chosen to consider a number of reported examples, rather than Paul's reflective address. So, as we conclude, let me draw attention to seven of the hallmarks of evangelical preaching as demonstrated in Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-41. They are that his preaching was:

(1) Spirit-filled. After speaking in other tongues, the first thing the Spirit led them to do was to preach Jesus to a curious crowd, in language which they could understand. They preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(2) Experientially generated. The sermon arose because of the apostle's new experience of the Holy Spirit and is marked throughout by their own personal eye-witness knowledge of "what God did among you through him."

(3) Culturally-sensitive.[30] It was Pentecost, so the city was full of Jewish visitors and "God-fearers," the scriptures would have been familiar, at least vaguely, and the recent story of Jesus much gossiped about. Elsewhere different cultural-sensitivities would have led to the message being shaped differently but without any abandonment of the principles described here.

(4) Scripture explaining. Peter makes much use of the prophet Joel,

Psalms 16 and 2, as well as the general story of Israel, to explain what God was doing through Jesus: "This is what was spoken of…" In doing so he stresses the continuance and coherence of God's plan to rescue the world through the Messiah.

(5) Christ-centred. Perhaps this is the most crucial point to recognize. The heart of the sermon consists of an explanation of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man accredited by God" who through his signs and miracles, through his crucifixion and resurrection is now exalted as "both Lord and Messiah."

(6) Response provoking. On this occasion, the crowd do not wait for Peter to make the appeal, rather they push him to do so, leading him to speak of repentance and baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere we see they were "urgent in the demand for decision."[31]

(7) God-connecting. "This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call." Unless our preaching leads people to hear the call of God and respond, our preaching has missed the mark.

Here is evangelical preaching at its best. Here is a not a model to slavishly copy but a model to creatively imitate, so we can speak meaningfully of God and his grace in our own day.

NOTES

1. 2 Cor. 4:6.
2. 1 Tim. 1:12-14.
3. Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989, p. 44.
4. Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Ages of Edwards, Whitfield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 270. See further: David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), esp., 42-50 and David Bebbington, "Evangelicalism in Modern Britain and America" in *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States*, eds., George A. Rawlyk and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 187-192.
5. P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 3.
6. Similarly, William Wilberforce distinguished "real" Christianity from nominal religion in terms of the affections: "Thus mature Christians exhibit in their hearts a glowing love toward their Redeemer—not superficial and un-meaningful, but constant and rational. This love results from a strong impression of the worth of its object, heightened by an abiding sense of great, merited and continually accumulating

obligations. The love demonstrates itself in growing acts of diligent obedience or of patient suffering." William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, ed. James Houston, (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2005), 73.

7. Mark 1:22, cf. 1:27.
8. John Stott, "Introduction: Charles Simeon, A Personal Appreciation" in Charles Simeon, *Evangelical Preaching* (Portland: Multnoma Press, 1986), xxix.
9. John Barclay, *Paul & the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), *passim*. Barclay explores what we mean when we speak of "pure grace" or "grace alone" or "sheer grace" and suggests that in Paul's writings it might refer in varying degrees and in various places to superabundance, singularity, priority, efficacy, incongruity and non-circularity. Among these six "perfections," however, he primarily sees it as incongruity, a gift given "without regard to the worth of the recipient" (p. 73).
10. 1 John 1:1-2.
11. Alec Motyer, *Preaching? Simple Teaching on Simply Preaching* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2013), 9-10.
12. Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (London: Allenson and Co, 1877), 20-21.
13. Dan Bauman, *Leadership* 6:1 (1985): 15.
14. See John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Leicester: IVP Christian Classics, 1995), 48-52.
15. Acts 4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 14, 25: 11:1, 19; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 44, 46, 48, 49; 14:25, 15:35, 36; 16:6, 32; 17:13; 18:11; 19:10, 20. The theme is so prominent in Acts that Brian Rosner can view their missionary expansion as "the progress of the word" in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds., I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 215-233.
16. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fontana Books, 1955), 47.
17. Col. 1:13.
18. Col. 1:20.
19. John Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy: Guard the Gospel*, Bible Speaks Today (London: IVP, 1973), 108.
20. John Stott defines it as, "'Bible-centred preaching' – preaching which brings out from a unit of the biblical text its original meaning, in the over-all context of Scripture, and applies its message to a present-day congregation." He adds, "The expositor prizes open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds that which is tightly packed. The opposite of exposition is 'imposition,' which is to impose on the text what is not there." See Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 126.
21. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 431.

22. Acts 19:1-41. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1965), 414.
23. Cf. Col. 1:5.
24. Matthew D'Anacona, *Post Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury Press, 2017), 22, 26, 28, 32.
25. Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Scepticism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2015), 93-187.
26. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), 222.
27. Ibid., 227. Italics mine.
28. C. K. Barrett, cited by David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 572.
29. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, esp. ch. 16.
30. On this issue, I welcome Matthew D. Kim's *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker: 2017), which was published at the time of the EHS Conference at which this paper was delivered.
31. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 66.

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NO LONGER SECOND CLASS SERMONS: REDEEMING THE TOPICAL SERMON'S REPUTATION THROUGH APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT: "Preach a topical sermon; then repent for a year." While this attitude reflects devotion to expository preaching, it also represents neglect of evangelical topical sermon scholarship. This paper aims to redeem the reputation of topical sermons by proposing a methodology for application that utilizes both pericopal and biblical theology. This paper examines background in homiletics, hermeneutics, and theological method before proposing a method of wedding biblical and pericopal theology in developing application for topical messages.

INTRODUCTION[1]

Topical preaching suffers a bad reputation. With the (valid) emphasis on expository preaching, topical sermons have become like death and taxes – certain, inescapable, and thoroughly unwelcome. Scholars have said, "Preach a topical sermon; then repent for a year." Although this attitude reflects a crucial evangelical devotion to expository preaching, it also represents neglect of evangelical topical sermon scholarship. While many evangelicals prioritize expository preaching, topical preaching persists in even the faithful expositor's pulpit. A community crisis arises. A new church program needs explaining. A theological error or sin needs specific attention. And so the preacher ever so briefly holds his breath, preaches a topical sermon, and washes his hands clean until the next unavoidable excuse for a topical message.

While still submitting it to the headship of expository sermons, topical sermons have redemptive elements to embrace –from their ability to address current events to their ability to correct doctrinal misunderstanding. Perhaps the greatest advantage of the topical sermon involves specifically addressing issues in our world. Topical preaching does not merely demand the listener care about the things of the Word; it shows that the Word speaks into the cares of our world.[2]

In light of this unapologetic apologetic for scholastic study of topical preaching, the topical sermon needs serious surgery. Topical sermons are disparaged because of their difficulties and, too often, their deficiencies.

Frequently, a preacher will have in mind a topic, proof text his opinion on the topic, and exhort his audience to carry out a specific point of application not reflected in any of the texts cited.

A gateway to topical sermonic improvement is application, where many of the deficiencies are actualized. Application in topical sermons must derive from a proper theological move and must legitimately empower the listeners to live in response to this theological thrust. This paper aims to demonstrate how biblical theology should be combined with pericopal theology to lay a better theological foundation for more faithful application in topical messages.

First, we must clarify definitions of "topical" sermons and of "application." Since the application process begins with the "theological move," we must secondly discuss the process of moving from the text to theology, including pericopal theology. After a brief discussion of biblical theology, we will analyze how the preacher may combine pericopal and biblical theology to improve topical sermons by producing applications more faithful to the thrust of the text. Finally, we will discuss how to form and evaluate potential points for application.

TOPICAL PREACHING: A DEFINITION

Before proceeding, we must first define what we mean by "topical preaching." Confusion remains around what is meant by "topical" preaching. Is a topical sermon distinct from textual preaching? Can a topical sermon be expository? Does a topical sermon use one biblical text to address the issue, or does it exposit from multiple canonical texts?

Unfortunately, the topical message has received only a few academic attempts at clarity.[3] In perhaps the most helpful definition from a hermeneutical perspective, Timothy Warren states, "*Topical expository preaching finds its message in two or more different texts or units in their individual contexts that share a common subject*." This use of multiple texts drives the purpose of this paper –much has been written about the interpretative process for developing application from one text; however, we must examine this process for sermons using multiple texts.

With topical sermons thus defined, we must clearly define application in hermeneutics and in homiletics before discussing application in topical messages.

SO WHAT? UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION

Long before the term was hijacked by so-called smart devices, the term "application" has been employed and debated in both hermeneutical and homiletical circles, with insufficient interaction between the two circles. Grant Osborne rightly observes, "Homileticians have failed to provide a strong hermeneutical foundation for application."[4] Application in homiletics

has typically looked at the specific imperative the preacher gives to the audience with little thought to the hermeneutical process for how this action is derived from the theological move.

Application in Biblical Hermeneutics and in Homiletics

In hermeneutics, application (also called "contextualization) is typically the final part of the interpretive process.[5] Duvall and Hays are quick to distinguish application from "meaning," defining meaning as, "what the author intended to communicate through the text."[6] A synthetic definition of application is: the contextualization of meaning for a new situation.[7] As a missionary must take meaning to a new cultural context, so the exegete and preacher must appropriate the message of Scripture for himself and his audience.

In homiletics, application is defined similarly, however, with a different emphasis and nuance. David Murray defines application as "process by which the unchanging principles of God's Word are brought into life-changing contact with people who live in an ever-changing world."[8] Broadus defines application in a sermon as "that part, or those parts, of the discourse in which it is shown how the subject applies to the persons addressed, what practical instructions it offers them, what practical demands it makes upon them."[9] Most homiletical definitions regard application as the part(s) of the sermon which practically demonstrates how the message of the text is to be lived out today.

As application in both hermeneutics and homiletics derives from the development of the theological move, it is important to examine the move from exegetical study to theology. Particularly in topical preaching, poorly developed application often derives from a poorly formed theological move.

Methodology for Developing the Theological Foundation for Application

The application process begins with the development of the theological move. Various approaches are debated for the move from historical/grammatical/literary study to the theological message. In *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, four methods are proposed for making this move: Kaiser's *principilization* method (by which, the interpreter moves up and down the "ladder of abstraction"[10] to state the timeless theological "principle" behind the text and apply), Doriani's *Redemptive-Historical* approach (which, building upon principilization, cautiously utilizes casuistry,[11] genre distinction, biblical narrative, and redemptive history to move to application), Vanhoozer's *Drama of Redemption* model (here he not so much proposes an actual method but an analogy of theatric "drama" for interpretation, challenging the interpreter to look for how the message translates, modulates, and resonates),[12] and Webb's *Redemptive Movement* model (it builds upon principilization through studying the ancient social

context and the canonical corpus to determine how biblical texts show incremental movement toward an ultimate ethic).[13]

Each method has elements to contribute to the preacher –the concept of the "ladder of abstraction," the importance of genre distinction in study, the analogy of actors and script in genre, and how biblical ethics interacts with the original social situations. Using these elements produces a balanced interpretive methodology. However, since each of these methods interacts with principilization, this method warrants closer examination.

Excursus: Principilization and Pericopal Theology

Principilization preaches. This remains the method's great appeal. Typically, the topical sermon aims to present biblical principles on a given topic. Thus, it is worthwhile to critically analyze the process of principilization.

Kaiser defines principilization as when "scriptural principles are abstracted from the biblical text that supplies the proper foundation for meeting modern questions that do not have a direct biblical answer."[14] He instructs the interpreter to go up the ladder of abstraction to determine the ultimate "principle" behind the text, in order to go back down the ladder to apply it to today. Others advocate this approach in the "hermeneutical spiral," a "principilizing bridge," or specifically in developing application.[15] The principilization method aids the interpreter in moving from the text to that which is transcendent to contextualizing the meaning for a particular audience. However, this approach faces strong criticisms.

While principilization has been useful in understanding the need to bridge the gap from "then" to now and the need to identify transcendent truth, it assumes the naiveté of modernism that the preacher can completely separate herself from her culture when deriving that truth. [16] Likewise, principilization uncritically prioritizes propositional statements over other forms of communication. [17] Further, propositional principles often focus primarily on behaviors, neglecting how Scripture should shape our minds and affections. [18] Since the goal of biblical preaching is transformed lives, the preacher's purpose is not to help the audience understand the proposition behind the text; she must help her listeners encounter the wonder and beauty of the text in such a way that motivates them to live in response to the text.

With this aim, Abraham Kuruvilla has presented "pericopal theology" as an alternative to the principilizing method. More broadly than principles, Kuruvilla's approach seeks out the "divine precepts, priorities, and practices of God's world."[19] It focuses on "what the author is *doing* with what he is saying"[20] –how the theology of the pericope is formed by the author and how the theology of that pericope develops the message of the biblical book.

At a superficial study, it appears Kuruvilla merely replaces the "principle" with the "theological thrust of the text." However, he explains key differences below:

> The difference between the two approaches may be summarized thus: in the 'principilizing' hermeneutic, the *principle* is antecedent to the text (and the text is often considered reducible to that principle *behind* it); by the theological hermeneutic espoused in this work, the *text* gives rise to the world/theology (and the text is irreducible to that world *in front of it*).[21]

His method goes deeper than semantics. The theology of the pericope cannot be boiled down into a statement; the text's theology is a transformative force to be communicated throughout the sermon as the preacher invites the listener to encounter the text and respond.

Pericopal theology is a vital contribution to both preaching and hermeneutics. It avoids elements of principilization, prioritizes the functional literary unit of the "pericope,"[22] and develops generalizations more faithful to the unit of text. While pericopal theology is instrumental for expository sermons, it has yet to be applied significantly to topical sermons. With the use of multiple pericopes in topical messages, the preacher must utilize biblical theology in conjunction with pericopal theology.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR TOPICAL SERMONS

The relationship between biblical and systematic theology remains one of the most undefined theological relationships. Exhaustive definitions of biblical theology are beyond the scope of this paper. However, two very broad understandings of biblical theology are relevant to this discussion. First, biblical theology is discussed as the means by which an interpreter seeks the grand theological narrative of Scripture.[23] The precise narrative itself is debated, with various focuses on redemption, the *imago Dei*, and others. Still, this approach is useful for the preacher to understand how a given pericope contributes to the grand narrative of Scripture (though caution is necessary to not superimpose that narrative unqualified upon every pericope, since the formation of that narrative is not inspired).

A second approach to biblical theology, while not consistently deemed "biblical theology" in the proper academic sense, involves analyzing in concentric circles the biblical development of a theology of a topic. This differs from systematic theology in that this approach begins at the level of the pericope. The interpreter then seeks how a given author develops a theology of the topic at hand through the book. If the biblical author has written additional books, these are used in the next concentric circle to determine how the biblical author develops theology of the topic at hand. Next, books in the same section of Scripture (for example, the epistles) and, finally, followed by Scripture as a whole. Unlike systematic theology, this approach pays particular attention to how different portions of Scripture (with attention to the biblical historical narrative) develop this topic over

time in light of the covenants, incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, spread of the Church, etc.

Both of these approaches to biblical theology are useful for the preacher, particularly in topical preaching. If she has not done so, the preacher must devote time, study, and thought to her own biblical theology. This (sometimes) subconscious biblical theology will shape all her sermons. Once this study has been conducted, the topical preacher may better understand how each individual pericope used in the sermon contributes (in its canonical/salvation-historical place) to this grand narrative(s).

Likewise, the preacher should utilize the second approach to biblical theology in topical messages.[24] When one studies how much the given passage is a relevant contribution to the theological biblical development of the topic, the preacher can critique the true relevance of each text for the sermon. Study of how a specific verse(s) contributes to the theology of the pericope helps us see how that entailment contributes to the theology of a topic. For example, studying how Colossians 1:15-16 contributes to the Christology of Colossians should inform how we use these verses to develop a sermon on the Trinity. Likewise, how 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 contributes to the theology of the body in 1 Corinthians should shape how we use 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 in a sermon on gluttony or lust. Further, the preacher can then determine to structure the topic logically by nature of the topic or as it develops in the canon. These approaches to biblical theology must be combined with pericopal theology to form a solid theological foundation for the application in topical sermons.

METHODOLOGY FOR TOPICAL SERMONS

Combining Biblical and Pericopal Theology for Topical Sermons

As a structure is only as sound as its foundation, the application of a message only has the potential to be as sound as its theological thrust. So, how does the preacher utilize both biblical and pericopal theology when multiple texts are in play? First, he must find the theological force of each potential passage in use. While an isolated verse will have a different "significance" than when read in light of the pericope, it is the preacher's duty to guard against "proof-texting." Richard writes, "Proof texts become pretexts for whatever *we* want to say to our people, rather than receiving what *God* says on a particular matter and turning them into the structure of the sermon."[25] Further, this step ensures the teaching on the specific verse is faithful to how that verse functioned in its original pericope.

Second, if the given verse(s), in light of the pericopal theology, still contributes to the topic, note what this passage specifically offers regarding the topic at hand compared with the other texts under study. The preacher should determine the unique contribution of each text to the discussion. What aspect of this topic does the verse address? Does it reveal God's perspective or the human perspective? Does it provide a positive or negative

(or neutral) example of interacting with this topic? Does the passage instruct us how to think, feel, or behave? Does it have individual and/or corporate implications?

Third, note how the genre shapes the contribution of the text. If it is a narrative, one must note how the text is being used by the author before classifying it as a prescriptive, negative, or (neutrally) descriptive example. Is Sarai's complicit "submission" to Abraham's lie (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18) a prescriptive model of submission for wives today? How should Gideon's "fleece" (Judges 6:36-40) or Abraham's journey from Ur (Genesis 12:1-9) be used in a sermon on faith?[26]

Beyond narrative, the preacher must analyze if this text provides a biblical promise or command. If so, how does that promise or command relate to a contemporary audience? Further, what elements of this text were unique to its setting in Jewish history (the covenants, law, etc.)? How does this text relate to us today?[27]

Fourth, examine how the author develops the topic/theme throughout the rest of his biblical work(s), using the second use of biblical theology. This may reveal other passages relevant to the conversation, or it will at least put the text at hand into the context of the author's theology and development of the topic (For example: how is "faith" developed in Genesis or the Pentateuch? How is human dignity addressed in Corinthians or the Pauline Epistles?).

As you utilize multiple texts, note which patterns emerge and, if possible, let the biblical patterns shape your emphases on the topic (for a sermon on "having an eternal perspective" the patterns of faithfulness and hope emerge from texts like Jesus' parables of the servants; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 or 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). This analysis helps the preacher critically think through how he will utilize each text in the sermon. Should the sermon borrow diction from the verse as a literary allusion? Is this pericope serving as an example or illustration? Does this text show God's perspective on the topic? Finally, note how that individual text fits within the grand narrative of Scripture. Analyzing each text used in the sermon utilizing both pericopal and biblical theology will ensure a firm foundation for accurate application.

Methodology for Deriving Application from the Topical Theological Thrust

We must now move from theology to application. Unfortunately, the preacher often fails to subject application to the same level of study and scrutiny as exegesis. The process for applying in topical messages is not drastically different from the process used for expository messages; however, evaluation of the application is much more crucial here.

As mentioned above, the process of application begins with developing the theological focus. Once that has been determined, examine the key elements of the original situation. Once these elements are identified, the preacher then must look for contemporary scenarios that contain these

elements, thinking through the diverse demographics of the listeners.[28] This move is difficult with multiple texts in a topical sermon since multiple situations are at play. Hence, one approach to application in topical sermons involves deriving application from only one text. However, comparing and contrasting the different situations helps the preacher study how the topic contextualizes to different situations. [29] For example, in the command to "Love God," the situation Deuteronomy 6:5 in differs from the situation in Matthew 22:37. Both texts command the listeners to love God with everything. The canonical repetition shows the importance of this command; however, the parallel circumstance of love as a response to revelation of God may be applied to the contemporary listeners. If each of the texts of a topical sermon already have generally parallel situations in play (forbidding deception, etc.), application may take place on a broader level (without getting bogged down with exceptions/controversial situations like Rahab's lie, etc.).[30]

After determining which texts will supply the application, there are two forms of application the preacher may express. One form of application aims to help the listener envision a concrete situation in his life and determine how he should live in that situation in response to the biblical text(s). This type of application coaches the listener through identifying a parallel situation in her life, understanding how the Bible speaks to this situation, and resolving a form of action plan to carry out. [31] This form of application helps the listener enter the process of applying Scripture herself. For example, when the listener encounters a specific temptation in his life, he should think a certain biblical thought and apply a resistance strategy based on this method.

The second form of application, needing significant further study, involves providing a very concrete basic step to form a habit.[32] The end goal is not the specific behavior but how the repetition of the behavior will shape the actions, affections, and attentions of the participant. A sermon on materialism may urge the congregants to change their password on Pay Pal or Amazon to something that will remind them to pause before they buy something. A sermon on "putting on Christ" may challenge the congregation to put reminders in their closets to "put on Christ" every morning. This latter method of application must be prefaced so that the audience understands that the captivating complexity of the biblical text is not reduced to a mere password on a computer; rather, the listener should know that developing this daily habit is meant to have a longer-term effect on how the believer grows in Christlikeness.

A mix of both of these forms of application throughout the preaching calendar enables the audience to develop life-transforming habits and to understand how to live in the complexity of our world in the light of the compelling "force" of Scripture. A topical sermon that clearly communicates the aim of the application will solidify the legitimacy of the application and will develop the reader's ability to respond both to pericopes of Scripture as well as to a synthesis of Scripture's teaching on a topic.

Once the application points are made, the preacher must evaluate

each of the potential application points. The preacher must critically think through each element of application to ensure its legitimacy to the text, consistency with the theological thrust, and relevancy to the audience. By putting this meticulous care into constructing both the theological message and the application points, the preacher may ensure that the topical sermon is not merely a necessary evil alternative to expository preaching, but it is an occasionally poignant sermon to show the Word speaks into the cares of our world.

CONCLUSION

For too long, topical sermons have served as the unwelcome step-sibling of expository messages. The passionate devotion to expositing the Word of God has led to an evangelical scholastic snobbery toward study of topical messages. However, topical sermons have the powerful potential to demonstrate that we can carry the concerns of our life to a Word that speaks powerfully into our cares.

Developing faithful application not only demonstrates to the topical cynic an apologetic for occasional topical sermons, but biblically faithful application in any sermon equips the people of God. Combining pericopal and biblical theology in developing the theological message of the topical sermon lays the foundation to ensure legitimate application. Care for crafting application focuses the sermon on developing life-change. As Karl Barth writes, "Every sermon must also take the form of application. An exposition, no matter how true to the text, will die away ineffectually in a vacuum if there is no possibility of a responsive echo from those who hear it."[33] A due diligence to carefully crafting application in topical messages invites our listeners to a "responsive echo" in the everyday cares of our world.

NOTES

1. Thanks to Vic Anderson, Darrell Bock, Kymberli and Travis Cook, Yuri Doroshuk, Amy Gannett, Abe Kuruvilla, Dane Miodov, Winfred Neely, and Carol Zimmerman for their assistance on this paper.
2. In light of biblical illiteracy and cultural engagement, Darrell Bock consistently notes we need teaching not only "from the Bible to life" but also "from life to the Bible.
3. Mathewson distinguishes the topical from the textual and expository sermons. While his topical sermon definition parallel's Warren's definition, he says a textual sermon "takes its topic and main points from ideas in the text, but the development of those main ideas comes from sources outside the immediate text." An expository sermon "takes its topic, main points, and sub-points from the immediate text." See Steven D. Mathewson, "Verse-by-Verse Sermons that Really Preach" in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's*

Communicator, ed. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 407-412. See also Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching the Topical Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992). While this distinction is helpful pragmatically, it is also debated.

4. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IVP: 2006), 410.
5. However, there are a few who debate whether application even belongs in proper hermeneutics. See Brian A. Shealy, "Redrawing the Line Between Hermeneutics and Application," *TMSJ* 8/1 (Spring 1997): 83-105, in *ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials,* [database online] Ebsco; accessed August 14, 2017.
6. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 236. This is also reflected by the ongoing interaction with E.D. Hirsch on the difference between "meaning" and "significance." His discussion of "implication" does not receive sufficient attention. See E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967). See also Don Sunukjian's distinction between "application" and "relevance." Donald R. Sunukjian. *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 106.
7. This builds off the view of "application" as inseparable from contextualization. See Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 25-26.
8. David Murray, *How Sermons Work* (Carlisle, PA: EP Books USA, 2011), 108.
9. John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons,* rev. Vernon L. Stanfield. 4th ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), 167.
10. See brief description of the "ladder of abstraction" below. For further reading, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "A Principilizing Model," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology,* ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 24.
11. Doriani defines "casuistry" as "the art of resolving particular cases of conscience through appeal to higher general principles, especially when principles seem to be in conflict or when a new problem has emerged." His use of casuistry is critiqued, however, as another form of principilization. Daniel M. Doriani, A Redemptive-Historical Model," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology,* ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 75-210.
12. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "A Drama of Redemption Model: Always Performing?" in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 151-199.
13. William J. Webb, "A Redemptive-Movement Model," in *Four Views on*

Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 215-248.

14. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 82.
15. See: Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 420. See also Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 43-44; 238-239, and Jay E. Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). He provides a helpful series of questions for developing principles on page 54.
16. Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 161-164.
17. Ray Lubeck, *Read the Bible for a Change: Understanding and Responding to God's Word* (Federal Way, WA: World Vision, 2005), 68.
18. Lubeck, *Read the Bible for a Change*, 67-68.
19. Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 117.
20. Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 129.
21. Ibid., 199
22. However, here we must use caution to not elevate the "pericope" as high as the "principle," for pericope divisions are subjective. Likewise, we do not know how many pericopes the original audience heard in one sitting.
23. This is perhaps the most common scholarly view of biblical theology. However, major debates in biblical theology include the following: methodology, grand narrative or multiple thematic approaches, and specific points of emphases. For one comprehensive yet accessible work, see Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).
24. Charles H. H. Scobie writes a particularly helpful discussion of using biblical theology in preaching, specifically topical preaching. See Charles H.H. Scobie, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," in. *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller, and Robin Parry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 449-465.
25. Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 200.
26. Any passages could be utilized. However, the theology of the biblical books provides insight on whether these narratives function as prescriptive examples, negative examples, or merely descriptive of a situation that does not carry the theological weight of the book.
27. Note: this is not a question of *if* the text relates to us today but *how* it does. Some interpreters dismiss any ceremonial laws as not relevant or applicable to the believer today. However, if all Scripture is the inspired word of God, there are theological elements of every law relevant to today. Kuruvilla has a terrific discussion of this in third chapter of *Privilege the Text*, entitled "Divine Demand and Faithful Obedience." Naturally, this element may be influenced by the preacher's positon on the spectrum of the Dispensational/Covenantal discussion.

28. Adams, *Truth Applied*, 48. Other scholars emphasizing the move toward parallel situations include Osborne, 432.
29. Jack Kuhatschek provides three situational options for applying a principle: "an identical situation, a comparable situation, and an entirely different situation." See Jack Kuhatschek, *Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 67-68.
30. Note: It is important when constructing "parallel" situations that the preacher also be sure to ask "how is the audience different from us today." This should serve as a sort of "check" after the theological move to ensure that even at the level of application, the text is handled faithfully. Ramesh Richard provides a good discussion of this. See Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 14.
31. Fuhr and Kostenberger make a case for "multiple scenarios" of specific application to show the range of how "this text *might* relate to us today." See Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology*. (Nashville: B&H, 2016).
32. This section derives from a conversation with Abraham Kuruvilla. He notes the need for not only rhetorical study in persuading life change, but also a greater need for homileticians to employ the psychology and sociology of life-change in methodology for application.
33. Karl Barth. *Homiletics*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991). Never mind the fact that he disparages sermon introductions and claims the presuppositions for sermon introductions are heretical.

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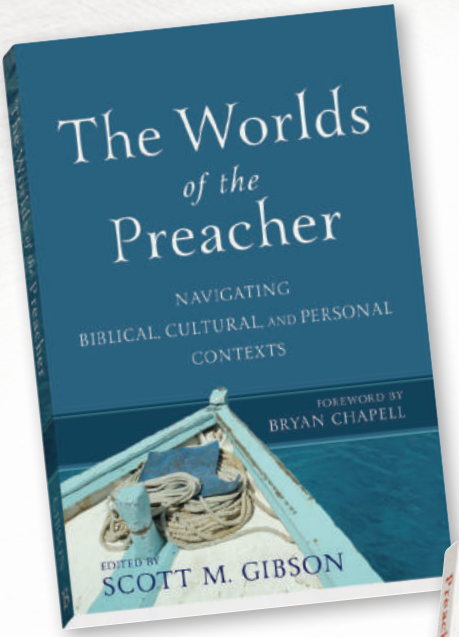

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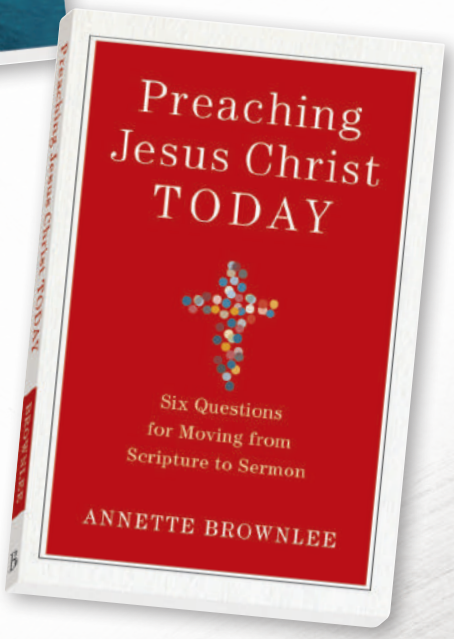

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PREACHING AS INTERPRETING (BUT NOT THE KIND WE ARE USED TO)

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ABSTRACT: This paper revisits Abraham Kuruvilla's characterisation of preaching as translation and argues that instead preaching should be seen as an analogue of a related interlingual activity: interpreting. This move involves accepting the essentially unstable nature of any pericopal theology and the ephemeral and contextualised nature of all preaching. Rather than being regarded as a weakness, this paper views the instability, ephemerality and contextualised nature of preaching and interpreting as a source of power and discusses the practical applications of this view.

INTRODUCTION

In a recent article in *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*,[1] it was suggested that homiletics needs to begin to tackle the question of the status of interpreted sermons. This paper goes further, building on and critiquing Abraham Kuruvilla's argument that preaching is an act of translation, arguing that preaching is not an act of translation but instead an act of interpreting. Here the word "interpreting" is used in the linguistic sense of an operation done on an oral or signed source text to produce an oral or signed target text in a different language, as distinct from, though related to the hermeneutical process of "interpretation." The point of this distinction is that when preaching is conceived of as an act of interpreting, its inherent instability, imperfection and ephemerality come to the fore, aspects that are vital for our understanding of preaching but are rarely discussed in the literature. This understanding in turn leads to a new appreciation of the power of proclaiming the Word of God from the pulpit.

PREACHING AS TRANSLATION

Before going any further, it is necessary to first outline just what Kuruvilla means when he terms preaching an act of translation. He begins his paper by laying out the problem as he sees it: while preaching involves explaining the Word of God and then showing how it applies today, the journey between exegesis and application is not well mapped. For this

reason, he turns to the metaphor of translation, which he sees as "saying the same thing" to the new audience as the source text said to its audience.[2]

It is crucial to understand exactly what is the object of translation here. Kuruvilla's thesis is not that preachers should attempt to rewrite the text in language familiar to their congregation but that they use their exegesis to locate the "pericopal theology"[3] of the text and translate that. It is the world implied by the pericopal theology that "bids the reader inhabit it."[4] Application then becomes the specification of what being faithful to that particular theology would look like in this particular church.

This is by no means a straightforward operation. As Kuruvilla later states, there exists both a temporal and cultural gap between the world of the original authors of the Bible and those of its modern readers. His answer to this is to argue that later readers, especially preachers, must seek out and recognise the "authorial fingerprints"[5] that indicate the writer's purpose in creating the text and thus discover its core conceptual meaning or "thrust."[6]

It almost goes without saying then that this pericopal theology must be stable, free from the vicissitudes of time, since otherwise there would be nothing of substance to translate. His example of Hollywood Westerns, with their "themes of individual rights, responsibilities, and codes of honor in the face of evil"[7] is key here since it is argued that these themes are presented in such films as relevant to modern day society as they were to the world depicted. With no stable themes, there is simply no message to be passed on from the individual depiction. Hence why he insists that, for those preaching Biblical texts, "the elucidation of the specifics of this "world in front of the text" is therefore an essential transaction in biblical interpretation."[8] Preachers quite simply must discover this or they have nothing to preach.

INSTABILITY AND INDETERMINACY IN THEOLOGY AND PREACHING

Recent homiletical research, while not directly undermining the existence of a self-evident pericopal theology, has shown that it cannot be taken for granted that understandings of this theology will be stable over time. In a recent paper on preaching difficult texts, Miller[9] demonstrated that it simply cannot be taken for granted that the pericopal theology of a passage can always be discovered with certainty. Confessional tradition and pre-existing theological positions undoubtedly affect how Biblical texts are understood and hence produce understandings of the pericopal theology, which would seem to be incompatible.

While I, like many Evangelical scholars, am not convinced by the post-modern suspicion of fixed meaning, especially as it has been applied to Biblical texts,[10] there would seem to be some wisdom in acknowledging the inherent impossibility in reaching a single, true-for-all-time pericopal theology of a given passage. Our understanding of even such a fundamental idea as the "conceptual core thrust of the text"[11] will never be complete, based as it is on the best of our knowledge and understanding and the best of our

hearing of the Spirit, whom we only ever hear in part (see 1 Corinthians 13: 8-9, 12).

It is important to reiterate here that approaching the idea of a single pericopal theology with humility by doubting that a single, complete, true-for-all-time position can be reached is not the same as the post-modernist project of viewing all meaning as relative. As will be discussed later in this paper, the instability of our understanding of the pericopal theology of a passage is the result of our own human contextualisation and reflects the need for the Holy Spirit to guide us. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, "we know in part and prophesy in part" (1 Corinthians 13: 9). Our understanding of the pericopal theology therefore must always be a work in progress as the Holy Spirit reveals more of the mind and heart of God to us and to our hearers through the Scriptures and through preaching. We can, and therefore probably should, hold belief in the existence of a core conceptual meaning of any passage in one hand and the knowledge that our necessarily partial and unstable understandings of this meaning are precisely the vehicle that God is choosing to speak *this* word to *this* people at *this* time to reveal Himself in *this* way in the other.

Preaching therefore begins with an unstable object of translation, our current understanding of the pericopal theology, and turns it into an unstable object of performance since sermons exist only as long as the preacher continues to speak[12]. Indeed, while the application of performance to preaching remains a matter of debate,[13] the notion that there is a fundamental difference between sermon as manuscript and sermon as performance would seem to be accepted.

None of these challenges are particularly new and none of them, on their own at least, are sufficient to undermine Kuruvilla's point that there is complex work to do to understand the Biblical text and discover an application of it for a particular congregation at a particular time. What they do suggest, however, is the need for a shift in emphasis. While Biblical truths are timeless and immovable; *our understandings* of the pericopal theology of any passage will naturally change with each generation. Sermons therefore take an unstable understanding of the pericopal theology of a Biblical text and produce an ephemeral performance, both of which are fundamentally entangled with the social, congregational, theological and confessional context in which the sermon is delivered.

FROM PREACHING AS TRANSLATION TO PREACHING AS INTERPRETING

None of the characteristics assigned to preaching then are particularly reminiscent of translation. While the precise definitions of interpreting and translation are still subject to debate,[14] one difference is almost universally accepted. Translation involves starting with one stable text (the written source text) and moving to another stable text (the written target text).

Interpreters work with fleeting oral or signed texts and turn them into texts that are likewise fleeting.

This leads to interpreters constantly doing their best to make sense of what is being said, using any textual and contextual clues at their disposal.[15] Interpreting can never be perfect. It is always the result of the interpreter's best attempts and these attempts never produce the same text twice.[16]

All this may seem to paint interpreting as an inherently flawed activity. Indeed, church interpreting researcher, Jill Karlik has given examples of Bible translators regarding the use of interpreted (rather than translated) Scripture as "this dreadful practice … the kind of thing we try to avoid"[17] based precisely on the perceived openness to error. Yet, as was briefly argued in this *Journal*,[18] viewing the inherently fleeting or ephemeral nature of interpreting as only a weakness would be a mistake, especially given its Biblical pedigree and its intimate links with preaching itself. Much like the multi-lingual work of the Levites in Nehemiah 8:1-9 and the practice of the Jewish *metourguemanim* who followed them[19], preaching and interpreting may both be said to "translate the language [of the original text] and interpret its meaning, while bringing to life the message of the divine word, which is eternal by its very essence."[20]

Indeed, this passage represents in microcosm the differences between the translation approach put forward by Kuruvilla and the interpreting-based approach suggested in this paper. In both *Privilege the Text* and an earlier work, *Text to Praxis*, Kuruvilla sees this passage as paralleling the task of the modern day preacher[21] and on that both his translational approach and an interpreting-based approach care in agreement. The key differences are found in the aspects of the context of this passage that exegetes and preachers need to take into account when attempting to grasp its core conceptual thrust.

Kuruvilla views this passage as essentially a covenant renewal ceremony and thus sees it as reflecting how explaining the text with clarity leads to obedience and joy[22]. What is elided in the discussion is, however, precisely the interlingual nature of the activity that was discussed in Kaufmann's analysis.[23] According to her analysis of this passage and ancient commentaries, the returning Jews had lost their ability to understand the Hebrew of the Torah. The job of the Levites in this passage was not simply to explain the conceptual thrust of the passage but to both create a version that was linguistically comprehensible for the people and culturally comprehensible given their temporal and cultural distance from those to whom the Torah was originally addressed.

With this in mind, Kuruvilla is indeed right to note the repetition of "the people" and similar terms[24] but their significance is surely that, in both hearing the original Hebrew of the Torah and yet being able to understand and apply it due to the dual role of the Levitical preacher/interpreters, the returning Jews are now discovering what it means to be God's people in the new context in which they find themselves. The covenant renewal includes a rediscovery of identity via the dual hearing of the Torah in Hebrew (the

link back to its original hearers and an indication of its timelessness) and in the language they habitually use (indicating its relevance to their new situation). The timeless Torah, given many generations previously to the Jews leaving Egypt now must be understood anew and applied afresh to the Jews returning from the Exile.

Viewing the passage in this light suggests that the pericope should be extended through the rest of the chapter, rather than ending in verse 12, as Kuruvilla's reading does[25]. If what the author is doing here is recounting how the returning exiles were restored to their identity as God's people then the celebration of the Festival of Booths on the second day of the reading represents the application of this principle to their lives, since it forms a physical link to the Exodus, reminding them of the wanderings in the desert. As the rest of the book Nehemiah unfolds, it becomes clear that the Hebrews will move towards a deepened understanding of the core conceptual thrust of their texts they read and how the Torah should be applied to their daily lives but at the precise moment discussed in this particular pericope, their understanding and application are clear. They are God's people, sharing a common identity with those who left Egypt—an identity represented theologically by their hearing and understanding of the Torah and physically by the celebration of the Festival of Booths. The reading and interpreting of the Torah may have been an ephemeral event but it was nonetheless an identity-forming one.

FROM EPHEMERALITY TO CONTEXTUALISATION

The ephemerality of preaching is therefore key to understanding its power. What is preached is yes, the Word of God but more specifically, the Word of God to *this* people at *this* time. This explains why listening to sermon podcasts, no matter how valuable, is not the same as being present in the congregation as it is preached[26] and why homileticians can report that a sermon that works in one setting does not transfer to another.[27]

Growth in understanding the ephemerality of interpreting has been key to the significant shift in research focus in the field of Interpreting Studies. Where much interpreting research in the 1970s and 1980s was focussed on simultaneous (conference) interpreting and the cognitive skills needed to perform this task, from the mid-1990s, the emphasis moved to interpreting in settings such as medicine, courts, and education, and the personal and social skills this work required.[28] This shift led to some of the features that were previously read as errors, such as omissions, additions, and shifts in tone[29], being instead understood as evidence of interpreters making deliberate and calculated decisions to promote the success of the events in which they worked.[30]

Interpreting has thereby moved from being viewed as a text-production activity that involves people, to being the negotiation of meaning between people, with reference to a text.[31] This does not mean that the

semantic meaning of the source text is illusory or that all meanings are equally valid but simply that the application and understanding of a particular text is always a product of the context in which it is used. The role of interpreters therefore becomes the promotion of mutual understanding with the goal of the situation in mind[32].

Since this process goes on throughout the interpreted event, the application of one stretch of text becomes the starting point for the understanding of the next[33]. Viewing preaching as interpreting therefore means that Kuruvilla's "translation"[34] and "application"[35] stages overlap and become indistinguishable. The preaching moment becomes a moment where the preacher and congregation interpret the text together through the power of the Holy Spirit, in both the traditional hermeneutical sense and in the sense given to interpreting in this paper. This does not end at the point of delivery or even the point of reception but finds its purpose in the application of the text to everyday conduct and character, as both Scripture (Matthew 7:24-27) and homiletics attest.[36] Thus, a sermon applied (or not applied) from the previous week becomes part of the context in which the next sermon is interpreted and so on.

Preachers would do well to bear in mind this move from context to text to interpreting and interpretation and then to new context in their preaching. As Paul Scott Wilson argues, the "now" of the moment of proclamation—which is inherently ephemeral—is connected to the "now" of preparation and the "now" of the future of the congregation.[37] When asking, "what does this text mean for this congregation?" preachers must therefore frame their answer both in terms of what the text is asking the congregation to do or think and in terms of what the application of that text would look like for these people, in this place, at this time and given the texts they have previously experienced.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

To further illustrate the difference in approach between viewing preaching as translation and preaching as interpreting, it is helpful to work through an example. Given the terms used in this paper, it would seem apt to examine how viewing preaching as interpreting may affect the way that we might understand and preach Acts 2: 1-13.

This is a well-known and controversial passage, which brings with it important ecclesial, pneumatological and homiletical discussions. No matter how carefully a preacher attempts to perform an exegesis and how much theological training he or she has received, it is impossible to approach these verses without the events that took place in Azusa Street in 1906 and their purported meaning casting a shadow. The story of the Holy Spirit's arrival in such a dramatic way to both empower the gathered disciples and make the work of Christ known to the gathered Jewish pilgrims, who were for the feast of Pentecost, has been used both as the touchstone for entire Christian

movements and as a point of contention between different denominations. The necessary starting place for the exegesis and preaching of this passage is therefore that no preacher or theologian can possibly approach it as a *carte blanche*. Our own views as to its place in pneumatology and whether it should be seen as a one-off or repeatable event, among other interpretive issues, will colour even our approach to its exegesis.

Yet, whether we view preaching as a form of translation or interpreting, many of the exegetical questions will remain the same. Reading Acts 2:1-13 correctly will, of course, involve placing it in its Lucan context as the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit and send the disciples out as witnesses (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:8). Astute scholars might also pick out the theme of the kingdom of Israel being restored, as Jesus' kingly rule, which was demonstrated in the Resurrection and Ascension (Luke 24: 25-27, 50-53; Acts 1:9), is now proclaimed to Jews from all over the world who had come to celebrate Pentecost—itself the festival of first-fruits when the first gathering of the harvest was given back to God (Numbers 28:26).

Without delving into the long debates over the precise meanings of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues or of the disciples being mistaken as drunken by some in the crowd, it is clear that the text actually has an excess of both semantic and pragmatic meaning, far more than could be preached in a single sermon. Even attempting to uncover a single core conceptual thrust, or pericopal theology, would seem to be a difficult task, precisely because of the numerous overtones and connotations found in this passage. These seem to only multiply when we read forward towards the conversion of Cornelius' household in Acts 10 and the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1-9. These later passages act as developments of the theme of the Kingdom at work by the power of the Spirit, piercing through what might otherwise seem to be impenetrable cultural and linguistic barriers.

Whereas viewing preaching as translation would be required to nail down a single, unchanging preachable pericopal theology for this passage—perhaps privileging the theme of cross-cultural mission over that of the notion of these new Jewish believers as first-fruits, for example—viewing preaching as interpreting allows us to take the sheer variety of themes and the complexity of this passage as a strength. Indeed, Peter's own exposition of what the events of that day meant is strikingly not in a line-by-line, detailed explanation of each aspect of what had happened and its meaning. Instead, he simply takes a single theme from among the many possible, that of God's Spirit being poured out on all flesh, and moves quickly from there to a brief argument for the Lordship of Jesus and the need for repentance (Acts 2: 14-40). Later, the same apostle would learn more about what "all people" (Acts 2: 17 quoting Joel 2: 28-32) actually meant in this case, with God having to give him a dream and a fuller personal revelation that gentiles too were to be accepted into God's family (Acts 10: 9-20).

The same events of the same day would therefore be a sign to Jews that God was fulfilling his promises to them and the beginning of a

process within Peter's life that these promises extended to the gentiles too. The outpouring of the Spirit would in fact become the undeniable proof that God had accepted Cornelius' household (Acts 10: 44-48) and that this equally applied to all gentiles who would call on the name of Christ (Acts 15: 8). It is not so much that the core meaning of the events of Acts 2: 1-13 somehow changed or shifted but simply that it would take time and a further experience of the grace of God for a fuller, richer meaning of that day to become apparent to both Peter and the wider Church. While it could be argued that preachers should attempt to synthesise all the themes in this passage to find its pericopal theology, it would seem sensible to assume that the same Holy Spirit who led the early Church to greater levels of understanding of the events of Acts 2 may wish to do the same to modern day preachers.

In trying to grapple with how to preach this passage, viewing preaching as interpreting means coming to terms with the view that the Holy Spirit, who would reinterpret and refashion the apostles' understanding of what it meant for God to so visibly pour out the Holy Spirit, may wish to do the same for us. For a charismatic or Pentecostal church, this passage, already pregnant with ecclesiological meaning, may be fruitfully be recast in a missiological light—the same God who created such a powerful experience did so with the express purpose of empowering his disciples to be witnesses, especially across cultural and linguistic barriers. For a church struggling to come to terms with our modern, multi-cultural world, a similar emphasis, alongside the reassurance that it is the power of God that enables us to bring His Word into our complex world could be preached. For other churches, the same passage may function as a reminder that God cannot and will not be enclosed by our human preconceptions or preferences. As we come in prayer and humility, Acts 2: 1-13 also reminds us that sometimes God may wish to do something unheard of and challenge us to a radical openness to renew us as first-fruits of a much greater harvest. And for preachers, this same passage may need to function as a reminder that the God who empowered those believers to "declare the wonders of God" (Acts 2: 11) in words that pierced the hearts of their hearers wishes to do the same with us by the exact same power.

That all these meanings can be justifiably found in one passage is indicative of the difficulty that arises when preachers look to discover *the* pericopal theology of a passage. While it is indeed possible to approach the pericopal theology as the intention of the author, who has chosen to bring all these elements together, this simply leaves preachers with further interpretation issues. Separating important from incidental details, deciding on the importance of different strands of meaning and moving from there to the construction of a sermon are actions that rely on our own subjectivity and are inherently unfinished. Indeed, it is not impossible that the human author intended to do many things with this passage. While Kuruvilla suggests that Biblical authors always had a single intended pragmatic meaning in mind[38] for each passage, the multi-layered nature of passages like this suggest that it

is possible, even probable that they intended to *do* several things with what we perceive as a single pericope.

The main difference between viewing preaching as translation and preaching as interpreting therefore is that, whereas preaching as translation seeks a stable understand of the pericopal theology on the basis of what has been written and then later moves from this to delineate an application, preaching as interpreting acknowledges the elucidation of a pericopal theology as an ongoing process, in which preacher and congregation both play a part. Rather than trying to choose one theme or one thread of the story as the basis of a single, unchanging pericopal theology, the activity of interpreting reminds us that our understandings and proclamations can only ever be partial. Viewing preaching as interpreting foregrounds the idea that what is preached is the current best understanding that an interpreter has of a given passage at a given time.

APPLYING PREACHING AS INTERPRETING TO SERMON PREPARATION

In addition to asking "what is the world in front of this text?"[39] preaching as interpreting invites preachers to ask "what is the world inside of me?" and "what is the world in front of this congregation?" The first is not so much an attempt at introverted self-examination but an attempt to remind preachers of the history we bring when studying Scripture and of the need to be open to the Holy Spirit coming to test, challenge and even overturn some of our own preconceptions. The second question is a reminder of hermeneutical conversation that is always involved in interpreting, as mentioned above, where one text received and understood in some way becomes the foundation for interpreting and understanding the next. In practical terms, preaching Acts 2: 1-13 to a congregation that is discouraged by its own lack of growth in spite of hard work may bring out a very different emphasis and understanding of the text than preaching from the same passage to a church that has become homogenous in cultural terms and has lost its missional focus. Our understandings of Biblical texts and our view of their pericopal theologies are inherently context-bound. Indeed, as the discussion of the passage in Nehemiah revealed, even our understandings of where a particular pericope should begin and end is informed by our own subjectivity.

Our attempts to re-perform the Word of God are made in the moment, in context and as an offering of the best we have to God. Yet that is no weakness. Just as interpreting gains its power from the authority of the speaker and its intimate connection with context, so God chooses a specific preacher, to bring a specific understanding of a specific portion of the Scriptures, to work through to bring a specific revelation of Himself to people who are each living through specific circumstances in their own specific lives. In that very specificity, God works powerfully, breathing life to dry bones, promising children to the childless, comforting the broken, healing the sick

and building the Church. Viewing preaching as interpreting foregrounds the work of God as the One who spoke and continues to speak, through the timeless Scriptures and time-bound people to time-bound hearers.

A PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

In aligning the task of preaching with that of an interpreter, I have sought to offer both a practical and theological understanding of ways in which preaching like interpreting paradoxically gains its power from its ephemerality and instability. Preachers, like interpreters, can never claim that this sermon is the final word on any subject nor can they maintain that their understanding of a given pericope or even its dimensions is final and unquestionable. The undoubtable power that comes from holding a position as one who speaks the Word of God is paralleled and given meaning by the humility of realising that the Word we speak is not ours, nor may we claim that our position as interpreters means that we replace the One whose Words and thoughts we are attempting to re-perform to our audience. Preachers would therefore do well to remember the contextualised nature of their task and reflect on their role as one who takes the eternal, unchanging Word of God, interprets it as best they know how by the power of the Spirit and in their particular historical and cultural context and re-performs it so that it can be applied into the specific, continuously changing contexts of their congregants. If preaching really does share some of the same features of interpreting then we may be forced to see it as the re-performance of the Words of God who spoke in Scripture and still speaks now, both through our preparation and through ideas and illustrations that arrive unbidden, as if custom-created for the people who will hear them.

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CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S MEANS

NICK GATZKE
2016-2017 President of the Evangelical Homiletics Society
Old North Church
Canfield, OH

2 Timothy 1:13-18

What makes Evangelical Homiletics, Evangelical?

Words.

5 years ago, I sat in a restaurant near our church called Wimpy's with two other pastors. Neither were Evangelicals and both were self-professed liberal pastors of liberal churches. Both were well-educated and impressive men in their own right, and within their denominations they were considered to be quite successful. Every year we'd get together and catch up, talk about our town, swap stories about the ministry, laugh a bit and enjoy a meal. What started as a painful exercise in the first year, quickly became and enjoyable yearly gathering as we became friends.

But this year was different. After we exchanged pleasantries and ordered our chicken parmesan sandwiches, John said, "I've been struggling in my preaching lately. I can tell that I'm struggling to keep their attention throughout the whole sermon, so I've tried something new. I've started inserting a commercial break in the middle of the message."

"A commercial break?" we replied.

"Yes," John said. "We play a song, or sing a hymn or do something to redirect their attention, and then I'd come back and finish my sermon. What do you guys think about that?" John asked

Denzel, quickly replied. "I think it's a great idea and, in fact, I've started to do something very similar."

Thinking that this sounded like the age-old problem of the preacher who likes to hear his own voice a bit too much, I asked the question, "So, how long do you normally preach?"

"18 minutes," John replied.

"Each half? Or the whole thing?" I countered.

"9 minutes for the first half and 9 minutes for the second half," he answered.

Denzel chimed in, "I preach for 15 minutes, with a break in the

middle."

I was taken aback.

"How long do you normally preach for?" They asked.

"30-40 minutes on most Sundays," I replied.

"What??? And they actually listen to you? What's your *secret*?" they asked.

"Well, I don't know if it's *a secret*, but I simply open the Bible, explain what is means and how it applies to us today."

Sadly, this was a novel idea.

What makes Evangelical preaching, Evangelical?

Words.

We all know that it isn't quite that simple. Beliefs and convictions drive Evangelicalism, but these things are expressed with very specific *words*.

And the nature of these words will produce health, it will protect the church and it will give a Holy Spirit induced appetite to those who hear it.

Surely, all of us pastors and leaders want those things. Surely a young pastor named Timothy wanted those things for his church family as well. In Ephesus, the work of the ministry was under threat. There were a variety of teachers in the church and there were cultural ideas outside the church. Surely, he had pressures to pursue a number of different strategies to bolster the ministry and even pressure to leave the ministry all together. But, in the midst of threat, where should he place his confidence?

Turn with me to 2 Timothy 1:13-18 as we read Paul's encouragement to this pastor.

Paul says to Pastor Timothy that he needs to have confidence in the Gospel Word.

WHY SHOULD WE HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORD?

Paul tells Timothy to "Follow the pattern of sound words," the pattern of *sound words*. That is an interesting phrase. These sound words he is referring to is the Scripture that elucidates the Gospel itself. And it's interesting that he talks about it in terms of *words*, isn't it? I mean, the Gospel is about a person! It's about a Cross! It's about a resurrection! It's about Forgiveness! And yet, Paul chooses to emphasize the importance of *words*.

In Fact, this emphasis on words is a thread throughout the entire letter of 2 Timothy. Listen to just some of the examples:

1:13 – the pattern of sounds *words*
2:14 – Don't quarrel about *words*
2:15 – rightly handle the *word of truth*
2:16 – Avoid irreverent *babble*
3:10- you have followed my *teaching* (Comes in the form of words)

3:14 – continue in what you *have learned* and have firmly believed (from of words)
3:15 – *scared writings*, which are able to make you wise for salvation in Christ Jesus (written words)
3:16 – *Scripture* is God-Breathed
4:2 – Preach *the Word*
4:3 – Men will not endure *sound teaching*
4:4 – they will wander into *myths*

Words. Words. Words. Words. Words! You get the point. There is a lot to do about *words.*

We see that not only do *words* have meaning, but they contain the very pathway to life!

Secondly, we see that this word is described as "the Good Deposit." The image is one of a person holding something of great value and putting it in a place or with a person for safekeeping. Paul tells Timothy that *He, The Pastor* is the one who is entrusted with this great task of keeping safe this most prized possession.

A GOOD DEPOSIT

I wonder if you've ever seen a "bad deposit?" A bad desposit can be described a few different ways. It is either something of great value that is deposited into an unsafe location and thus the thing of value is lost; or, this is something that you thought was of value, but when looking for a yield, was found to be nothing but a fake. A bad deposit is something that looks like it has great promise, but ends up disappointing.

But a Good Deposit, if kept safe, Note–not if kept private, but if kept pure in its expression, this deposit yields tremendous returns in its right time.

It sounds almost too simple, but we know the temptations, the temptations come from inside the church and it comes from outside:

There is the temptation to *make it more palatable*, so more people will accept it. If we dull the sharp edges of this word, we won't offend our friends or our neighbors. If we actively question the clarity of this word, we can roll into the culture around us easier and make church more "accessible."

Or perhaps some of the most concerning trends that we see in Evangelicalism, is the temptation *to brush up against the Word in our teaching but never really expound on it.* We have this interesting tension in the field homiletics as we contribute to the raising up of preachers, don't' we? The tension of *what* one says vs. *how* one says it. It is my fear, that the *how* one says it is largely ruling the day as the external standard of success in so many churches, that the content of the "Good Deposit" is not being treated as "good," and perhaps is not even being "deposited."

This is why it is so important that we are clear about what these

sound words are and this good deposit is. Broadly speaking, we can apply this to the Scriptures as a whole, and Paul does that in chapter 3. More specifically, we know that the pinnacle of all Scripture is the Gospel itself. Paul describes these sound words in a variety of ways throughout 1 and 2 Timothy.

He says in 1 Timothy 1:15—*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*

Here in 2 Timothy, he describes this Gospel as:

- "The promise of the Life" (1:1)
- "The purpose of His Grace" (1:9)
- "The appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light" (1:10)

He says that the Word of the Scriptures is able to "make one wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (3:15)

Last year I had the opportunity to meet Dan Mead, the recently retired CEO of Verizon Wireless. He is a Christian man. And in our brief time together he gave a fascinating statistic: The average person with a Smart Phone looks at their phone approximately two hundred times a day. Think about that for a moment. Two hundred times a day. That changes the way we receive information as constant updates and persistent stimulation can even change our brain chemistry.

In an "I want results right now" "instant gratification culture, confidence in a regular diet of simple words is hard concept to embrace, and not all the people in our churches will understand this regular, methodical Word commitment. There will be calls for something more flashy, more entertaining, easier to digest.

But Friends, we can have confidence in this word. When we preach it on Sundays, we teach it to students, when we live it throughout the week.

Have confidence in God's appointed means, that *person* of Jesus Christ and the *work* of Jesus Christ are accessed through the *Word* of Jesus Christ.

We can have confidence in the Gospel Word.

THIS CONFIDENCE LEADS US TO COMPETENCE IN GOSPEL WORK

We see three threads that work their way through this first chapter of 2 Timothy that are on display with regard to the *competence* in ministry.

Vs. 8 – Share in the suffering; vs. 12 – just as I suffer
Vs. 12 – It was entrusted to me; Vs. 14 –So I have entrusted this deposit to

you; 2:2; You entrust it to other men.
Vs. 8 – Do not be ashamed; vs. 12 – For I am not ashamed

Paul is saying, you can suffer and not be ashamed because…

CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORD LEADS TO COMPETENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORK

To illustrate this point we have both a negative example and a positive one.

Vs. 15 gives us the negative example. Phygelus and Hermongenes were faced with mounting pressure and even the threat that is associated with this type of Gospel work. They abandoned the Gospel worker, thus abandoning the Gospel work. This indicates that they didn't have confidence in the Gospel Word.

But conversely, look at the positive example and how wonderful it is in effect. Onesiphorus is his name. He aided the Word worker, he refreshed Him, in an environment that caused him personal risk, this man came alongside and showed his true colors. In fact, he sought him out. Paul said, to Timothy—Don't be ashamed of the Word, I'm not ashamed of the Word, and look, Onesiphorus isn't ashamed either and this is what that looks like.

For our churches and seminaries today, what does confidence in God's Word lead us to?

– It means, that in an ever-broadening sub-culture of Evangelicalism, those churches that *loosely* handle the Good Deposit or only brush up against the Bible in their teaching are probably only loosely Evangelical in its historic sense. But churches that are truly Word-driven in their ministry remain near the heart of Evangelicalism.

– It means for those of us who teach and are under constant pressure to find the newest expression or the cutting edge idea that will be publishable, that we take joy in the fact that the advancement of our field is always subservient to the clarity of the Word itself. We strive to communicate in compelling and effective ways, but *what* is preached will always be more important than *how* it is preached.

– It means that we help our students and our church members understand that success is not defined by the creation of really cool experiences, very emotional presentations, or simply in rhetorical excellence, but rather, we are confident that success is found in all of us growing in faithfulness to God as we understand His Word.

– And I think it means that biblical exposition is the best way to proclaim these sound words while pursuing communication tools that are helpful to the hearer.

CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORD LEADS TO COMPETENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORK.

I can't imagine what it would've been like for Moses to Stand Before Pharaoh and demand that he "Let my People Go" if he didn't have confidence in the Word of the Lord.

I can't imagine what it would've been like to be Jeremiah prophesying to a people that wanted nothing to do with the message if he didn't have complete confidence in the Word of the Lord.

I can't image being Jesus, standing before the Pharisees if he didn't have complete confidence in God's word.

I can't imagine being Peter and John speaking to the priests and the Sanhedrin under the threat of great persecution and even prison if I didn't have complete confidence in the word of God.

And I can't imagine being a pastor of a local church standing up to preach Sunday after Sunday if I didn't have complete and utter confidence in the Word of God.

CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORD LEADS TO COMPETENCE IN THE GOSPEL WORK.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Drama of Preaching: Participating with God in the History of Redemption. By Eric Brian Watkins. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016. 978-1498278571, 274 pp., $33.00.

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

Pastor and professor Watkins has advanced the conversation regarding redemptive-historical (RH) preaching, one of the hottest topics in evangelical homiletics thanks to the influence of Bryan Chapell, Timothy Keller, and the Gospel Coalition. Watkins's book—originally his Ph.D. dissertation—is "continuing an unfinished discussion" (the title of Chapter One). The primary advance comes in the area of application. Simply stated, *Drama of Preaching* makes a strong case for Christ-centered preaching *and* moral exhortation. The advance lies in the little word "and." Christ-centered preaching, desiring to stand well back from the pit of "moralism" (a term poorly defined in the Christ-centered preaching literature), often lacks admonition, exhortation, and instruction in practical discipleship. Christ-centered preachers seem to fear statements from the pulpit like: "pray without ceasing," "avoid sexual immorality," and "be on your guard against all kinds of greed"; but urging such behavior is biblically grounded and pastorally wise, and not "moralistic." *Drama of Preaching* is both-and, not either-or. Preaching should exalt Christ *and* urge godly behavior. Preaching should woo the heart with a depiction of God's grace extended in Jesus *and* remind the faithful of their covenant duties. Watkins correctly states, "Preaching is rightly proclaiming the word of God in such a way as to declare … what man is to believe concerning God, as well as the duty God requires of man" (xiii).

Watkins makes the advance on the topic of application in a sophisticated way by using the "drama of redemption" theological paradigm (DR) as a way to assess and nuance RH preaching. The DR paradigm is the work of theologians such as Michael Horton and Kevin Vanhoozer. It is a hermeneutical and theological metaphor in which God is the author of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, as well as Scripture's primary actor in Christ, who calls humans to covenant obedience in the kingdom of God unfolding on the world's stage (25). This paradigm enables Watkins to maintain a Christ-centered homiletic which also includes behavioral application. In this way, the DR paradigm helps RH preaching "take a step out of the mud in which it has been trapped" (57). That "mud" is the "*over*-reaction of historical-redemptive preaching to poorly done, moralistic application" (57). According to Watkins, early Dutch RH preaching tended to be muddy.

Believers in a church service were passive spectators, watching "the drama of redemption unfold and come gloriously to a climax in Christ. But what was the church's part? What role did it play? What did God expect of the church in response?" (57) According to Watkins, a sermon is much more than a "creative display of God's redemption as something merely to be believed; it is also a summons to active participation in the drama of redemption" (58).

In addition to advancing the homiletical discussion on application, this work also advances it on communicating with postmodern people. According to the author, "The particular value of Vanhoozer's work for us is that it helps communicate (even defend) theology in a way that is sensitive to the … [postmodern] interest in the rhetoric of drama" (60). Using Hebrews 11 as a test case for how the DR paradigm functions in preaching, Watkins sees the chapter not simply as a catalogue of examples to be imitated, but as examples of revelation that disclose "previews of the gospel in the [heroes'] lives of faith" (81). In my opinion, this linking of DR to postmodernism is less compelling than the first advance (application), but nevertheless it is a fresh and scholarly approach to contextualization with postmodern cultures.

The Rhetoric of the Pulpit: A Preacher's Guide to Effective Sermons. By Jon Meyer Ericson. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016. 978-1498235204, 140 pp., $19.00.

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

Writing for novice preachers who are starting to explore the art of homiletics, and also for experienced preachers who need reminders, this short book is a compact summary of the public speaking components of preaching—how to hold attention, outline for logical and psychological impact, use transitions in oral communication, achieve a vivid style, deliver the sermon with vocal variety, and so forth. The writing and advice are straightforward.

Ericson is the dean emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts at California Polytechnic State University and an active lay minister in a Lutheran church. He has a high view of Scripture and sees the sermon as "the most important single factor in evangelism for a parish and also the most important factor for spiritual growth of both the congregation and the pastor" (xi).

The book is organized according the canons of classical rhetoric with chapters devoted to invention, arrangement, style, and delivery and memory. Those are followed by eight sample sermons and a few appendices on topics unrelated to rhetoric. Although Ericson's aim is to "apply rhetorical principles ranging from Aristotle and Augustine to Kenneth Burke and I. A. Richards to sermon building" (71), the slender volume touches only lightly on rhetorical theory from these authors. Rather, as Ericson states, his goal is to articulate and illustrate principles for praxis. Thus, *The Rhetoric of the*

Pulpit is a handbook of public speaking applied neatly to preaching. For most readers of this *Journal*, the ground Ericson treads has been well-plowed in introductory speech and preaching classes. Accordingly, preachers seeking a refresher and professors teaching a preaching class will find that *Rhetoric* suits their needs well.

Preaching Conversations with Scholars: The Preacher as Scholar. Edited by Rodney Wallace Kennedy. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016. 978-1498290739, 132 pp., $21.00.

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

The idea of bridging the gap between the academy and the pulpit is a worthy concept to be explored. Can the church or preacher benefit from the academy? Many feel the two must remain distant neighbors encouraging the sacred/secular divide. Others believe that dialogue is healthy and helpful and the two should become more closely acquainted. Enter Kennedy, who serves as the president of Celebrating Christian Scholarship in Baton Rouge, LA: "This book attempts to combine the weekly discipline of preaching in one particular pulpit—The First Regular Baptist Church of Dayton, Ohio—with the insights and conversations of a number of scholarly partners" (x). A labor of love for the author, "this book represents my deepest and most sacred convictions about the glorious art of preaching and its necessary relationship to preachers who having read a book read another and another and another. Preaching and conversations about preaching keep the tradition alive and well. My hope is that the sermons exhibited here and the critiques offered will challenge all who preach to ever more intense and intellectual pursuit of sermonic efforts" (xii).

Each of the thirteen chapters of this work is a sermon written and presented by the author followed by responses from various professors and a couple of pastors. The sermons deal with various topics and are mainly using New Testament passages. The sermon titles include: "The Gospel is Relevant," "God is Good!," "Excel in Generosity," "A Scary Resurrection," "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," "Is There an Unforgivable Sin?," "Sabbath Gospel," "Welcome to the Family," "Are American Christians Persecuted?," "Jesus and ISIS," "The Holy Spirit as Reading Teacher," and "Theology as Twitter." They are fine homiletical productions that tend to focus on social needs and how the church should respond to such needs as a result of the gospel. The author's attention to detail and to the social fabric of the audience demonstrates his decades of preaching experience. If the reader is engaging such a work in order to be exposed to the approach of a seasoned preacher/consultant to a specific text or topic, and is interested in how university professors respond or "hear" what Kennedy has preached, this book will be

useful.

That said, if the reader is reading the book to follow a particular form of expository homiletical method, found in many evangelical churches, then this work will fall short. I found Kennedy often addressing a particular social need, not necessarily the listener's need, prior to addressing the need found in the actual text. For example, the episode of the woman with the issue of blood is about the relevance of the gospel and not about a woman's incredible belief and Jesus' supernatural ability to heal. Its application deals with how "our imperfect, mixed-up, notions of faith can bring forth the healing power of Jesus. When the need reaches out to us, we can direct the flow of Jesus' power, grace, and mercy in their direction" (5).

The responses to these sermons do not constitute biblical or homiletical scholarship, but are simply well-written thoughts from professors in particular fields. Some responders tended to discuss more of their own takes on a particular issue, rather than deal with the actual message of the sermon. From this reviewer's perspective, the respondents' and editor's perspectives were very similar on many of the issues addressed in his sermons. I would have preferred to hear the response of a biblical scholar or homiletician who might sharpen an already helpful message. Nonetheless, I can say that each of the sermons did provide me with an angle of the text that I had not considered before.

The notion of bridging the gap between the academy and the church is a helpful one. The author is definitely touching a nerve, demonstrated in the recent surge of publications encouraging the role of the "pastor as theologian." I was troubled, though, by the immediate turn towards a social justice component prior to developing the actual biblical passage. Regardless, if one were looking for a number of sermons from a seasoned preacher and author who is attempting to bridge the gap between academy and pulpit, this work might prove to be helpful.

Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutics and Homiletics: Debates in Holland, America, and Korea from 1930 to 2012. By Yung Hoon Hyun. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015. 978-1625655678, 340 pp., $39.00.

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

This book is a revised version of Yung Hoon Hyun's doctoral thesis written at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Hyun currently serves as the academic dean at Goryo Theological Seminary in South Korea. Coming from reformed circles, Hyun's thesis traces the development and widespread influence of redemptive-historical (RH) hermeneutics and homiletics in South Korea via Holland and the United States during a significant portion

of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

As Eryl Davies, Hyun's doctoral supervisor notes in the foreword, Hyun's chief concern in the book regards the current precarious state of reformed preaching within Presbyterian congregations in South Korea (viii). Ultimately, Hyun maintains that "most Korean theologians and preachers have 'misunderstood redemptive-historical preaching'" (ix). The rest of the book builds a case for the shaping of the hermeneutical and homiletical thinking of reformed preachers in Korea with respect to Continental and American theologians.

In the Preface, Hyun spells out his focus of the book: "My longstanding theological queries have been concerned with why one theology differs from another although they derive from the same texts, the Scriptures, and why Reformed theology, in my view, does not produce more reformation in personal and church life" (xi). His answer to this perceived breach between theology and lived praxis is what he calls "the redemptive-historical (RH) perspective" (xi). He commences by laying out the framework and development of RH preaching in Holland, the United States, and South Korea. Hyun notes: "many preachers and scholars who argue over redemptive-historical preaching do not appreciate the complex history of the debate or the relationship between the Dutch and American debates" (1). The theological nuances between the Dutch and American understandings of RH hermeneutics and preaching are carefully distinguished in the chapters going forward.

The introduction (Chapter 1) serves to present the objectives of the thesis, define terms, set the parameters of the study, and chapter outlines.

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the field of RH hermeneutics particularly with reference to Continental theologians and philosophers.

Beginning in Chapter 3, Hyun makes his original contribution to the field. Here he unpacks the historical Dutch perspectives and influences on hermeneutics and preaching. Hyun employs Greidanus, Trimp, and Renniger as conversation partners with respect to the Dutch perspective. However, Hyun claims: "the Korean debate on this subject has been influenced almost entirely by Greidanus's *Sola Scriptura*" (77). As the author observes, the Dutch debate (i.e., New Direction) took prominence in the early 1930s combating the traditional model of Dutch reformed preaching which was seeing "biblical characters in historical texts as mere models or examples to be imitated, without an explanation of the historical context of those texts" (79).

In Chapter 4, Hyun shifts his focus to the reformed American view of RH preaching. He argues that reformed American RH preachers havem, by and large, divorced biblical theology from sermonic application (137).

Chapter 5 takes a step back to trace the historical development of redemptive history as understood within Korean Protestant congregations. Hyun names the primary movers and shakers in shaping Koreans redemptive-

historical foundations, including "Cullman, Bultmann, and Barth initially, then Vos and Ridderbos, and, more recently, also … Greidanus and Trimp" (173).

Finally, in Chapter 6, Hyun gets to the crux of his thesis which is how Dutch and American understandings of RH preaching have led to a "crisis of preaching" among reformed preachers in South Korea. Despite numeric growth in Korean churches, Hyun believes that many Korean preachers have more or less bought into the philosophies of both Dutch and American RH leanings which have wrought hermeneutical and homiletical confusion among many Korean preachers who are weak in biblical exegesis and/or application of Scripture.

In his Conclusion, Hyun reiterates his major contributions in his thesis and provides background on Won-Tae Suk, a leading example of an RH preacher in South Korea.

This book has much to commend about it. Hyun has broken new territory in articulating the trajectory and influence of RH preaching in Holland, the United States, and South Korea. His thesis is written with detail, sophistication, and cogency with regard to history, theology, hermeneutics, and homiletics. The work is clearly a dissertation monograph, and therefore not the quickest read. Yet, for those who seek specialized knowledge about the history of Dutch, American, and Korean RH perspectives, this book will add richly to that erudition you desire.

Judges: A Theological Commentary for Preachers. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017. 978-1498298223, 363 pp., $41.00.

Reviewer: *Don Sunukjian, Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, CA.*

How can you not look forward to reading a commentary with a blurb like this on the back cover? "With Abraham Kuruvilla's sensitive literary and theological reading of Judges … he shows preachers how to relate its message to the world in which we live and the alternative world Christians are called to represent. Given his clear focus of helping preachers, this is probably the first book anyone expounding the book of Judges for a class or a congregation should get" (Daniel I. Block, Wheaton College). In addition to this and other appreciative blurbs, my own experience with Kuruvilla's previous writings—his first-rate scholarship leading to deep and satisfying preaching—made me eager to read this, his latest work. And once again, the author gives us the combination we want—solid exegetical theology that results in accurate and relevant preaching.

The commentary is broken down into fourteen pericopes, or preaching units, each of which is summarized by a single sentence of "theological focus" which can be phrased more colloquially into the preaching

point of the sermon. The fourteen pericopes themselves are broken into sub-units, also with summarizing sentences, in case someone might choose to preach shorter passages.

Two brief examples from the Gideon pericope are typical of Kuruvilla's interpretive insights. First, I had always assumed that Gideon's comment in Jdg 6:15 was an honest, though faithless, attempt to evade God's commission. But the author correctly notes: "That his family is 'the least in Manasseh,' seems fictitious. Joash, his father, we understand later, had considerable resources as an owner of bulls and a patron of altars, having at least ten servants, and a considerable reputation in the community—and all of this nobility and affluence during a seven-year period of intense Midianite oppression (6:1, 25–26, 32–32)" (132). Second, I never would have caught that Gideon's two recruitments of extra forces in 6:35 was evidence of his unsureness about Yahwah's power. But Kuruvilla shows how the two Hebrew disjunctive clauses in that verse reveal Gideon's lack of faith, requiring God to make two corresponding reductions in Gideon's forces through the release of those who were afraid and those who knelt to drink (7:3–8).

The writer tends to view all the major judges (with the exception of Othniel) in a negative light, concluding that Israel was "led by her leaders into a spiraling catastrophe" (15); and "God's leaders had left nefarious examples for God's people to follow" (24). Others, such as Bob Chisholm, one of Kuruvilla's colleagues at Dallas Seminary, tend to view some of the judges more positively, which the author, to his credit, acknowledges (74n22, 78n33).

I, too, perhaps heavily influenced by Heb 11:32, wonder if some features of the text might be viewed more benignly. For example, does Ehud's fashioning a two-edged sword in order to carry out an assassination with his left hand reflect "deceit" and "duplicity" (74–75), or is he instead commendably taking advantage of how God has uniquely created him to do something no right-handed man could do? Also, must the "stone images" (NIV) at Gilgal be Moabite idols which Ehud fails to remove, despite the fact that he delivers Israel and eliminates 10,000 of Moab's finest, or could they be instead, as suggested by the ESV marginal reference to Joshua 4:20, the erosion-shaped memorial stones taken from the Jordan and deposited at Gilgal a hundred years earlier as a reminder of God's covenant to give the land to Israel—stones which spur Ehud to return to Eglon and finish what he possibly lost nerve to do at his initial presentation?

Even though we may "lean differently" on some matters, there is no doubt that Kuruvilla's interpretative observations are insightful and his arguments compelling; we are grateful to him. In the Introduction, he writes, "This commentary is part of a long-term endeavor to rectify the neglect of the pericope and its theology" (2). We wish Kuruvilla good health and God-speed on this "long-term endeavor," so that he may continue to provide us with the kind of commentaries we need.

Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World. By Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 978-083851775, 219 pp., $22.00.

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

Writing for Christians who desire to influence individuals, groups, and cultures (especially the cultures of the United States), Biola professors Muehlhoff and Langer have produced a thoughtful contribution to persuasion, ethics, and ecclesiology. How can the church show neighbor-love when seeking to uphold biblical standards of morality and worldview? The answer they provide is for Christians to persuade winsomely as a "counterpublic"—a group outside of the dominant culture. A counterpublic is characterized by opposition, withdrawal from the dominant pubic to take time to discuss their vision and strategy, and engagement (17–21). The last characteristic is a counterpublic's most distinctive feature and the focus of this book: how to persuade winsomely.

Part One lays a theoretical foundation, defining "counterpublic," describing America's argument culture, and reasoning that credibility (ethos) is necessary for effective persuasion. Part Two is methodological, suggesting how to craft a message by clearly identifying what "public" you desire to "counter," employing strategies such as "universal arguments," images, "plausibility structures," and "loose connections"—the forging of unlikely partnerships. Part Three applies all of this to how Christians should respond to the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage.

One of the attractive features of the book is a handful of historical sketches that illustrate its principles. For example, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* excelled at using images and indirect communication to help change public opinion on slavery. Similarly, Wilberforce's herculean efforts show how he forged unlikely partnerships.

Another strength of *Winsome Persuasion* is its timeliness. As the Introduction demonstrates, Trump's victory has exacerbated the United State's roiling "argument culture" even as seismic shifts of worldview and morality continue to take place. Of course, this strength of the book could soon become a weakness because today's issues may not be tomorrow's, but this reviewer feels that *Winsome Persuasion*'s shelf life is not in danger. The argument culture seems firmly in place for the foreseeable future.

In Part Three the authors model winsomeness as they seek to persuade each other regarding same sex marriage, the law of the land. (In 2015, the Supreme Court—*Obergefell v. Hodges*—ruled that a state ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.) Each author presents a case for what

might be considered prolegomena on the issue. Muehlhoff writes of how Christians should respond when same sex couples suffer relational crisis. His answer is that we should love these neighbors by offering support in the form of communication seminars for relational counseling because "our support of traditional marriage . . . *will not be heard* unless we firmly establish" our ethos (155). Muehlhoff feels that supporting same-sex relationships that are in crisis does not participate in their sin; rather, defusing toxic anger, emotional or verbal abuse, and incivility "results in creating relational goods that God affirms; it doesn't mean that we are affirming the entire relationship" (157).

Langer's prolegomenon offers what he calls "prophetic civility" (166) as described in 1 Peter 3—"be ready to make a defense . . . yet do it with gentleness and respect." According to Langer, that kind of discourse should be used on *straight* marriage, not same-sex marriage, because American culture has crumbled foundation, a warped view of marriage that has made it self-absorbed and utilitarian: "Simply put, our culture has a faulty understanding of marriage, largely characteristic of Christians and non-Christians alike" (167). As a counterpublic, we should rebuild the foundation. A lively guided discussion from these articulate writers follows those two chapters.

I am considering using this book as a textbook in a course called "Preaching, Persuasion, and Leadership." I mention that to indicate that I think highly of it. It is timely and well written, grounded in communication theory and *hokmah*, showing how to be salt and light in a world where evangelical Christians are a shrinking minority. Yet the book also leaves me hanging because it deals only with persuasion. It uses ethical and political positions (such as same-sex marriage) as illustrations on how to persuade, but it does not argue for those positions per se. But the authors did not intend to write a book on how to make ethical decisions, only on how to advocate for them, and that they have done well.

Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Theological Study. By Jonathan I. Griffiths. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 978-0830826438, 152 pp., $22.00.

Reviewer: *Gary L. Shultz Jr., First Baptist Church, Fulton, MO.*

Most Christian preachers share a number of convictions about preaching. They believe that the content of preaching should be the word of God, that preaching is central to God's plan for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, that preaching is vital for the health of the church, and that preaching is the central task of the pastor. If they did not hold to these truths, why or how they could continue to preach week-by-week? But why do they believe these things? Is it because of history (this is the way the church has always done it), pragmatism (this has always seemed to work), or is it because

Scripture itself teaches them to hold these convictions? It is the last that this book attempts to explicate.

Griffiths starts off by explaining that before beginning his study, he would have struggled to defend these convictions directly from Scripture (1). While a large number of helpful books on preaching from an evangelical viewpoint exist today, they typically assume these convictions to be true, rather than establishing them as true. Assuming these convictions, however, leaves a number of important questions unanswered. For example, is there any such thing as "preaching" that is wholly distinguishable in Scripture from all other forms of ministry directly involving Scripture? If all believers are called to be engaged in such ministries, how is preaching different? Did Jesus and his apostles preach sermons as we do today, and if they did, how do the sermons in the post-apostolic period, including today's sermons, relate to them? What kind of continuity and discontinuity exists between today's preaching and the preaching we see in Scripture?

Griffiths looks to answer these questions through an exegetical study of key New Testament texts that relate to preaching. Before he does that, he addresses three foundational matters. First, because preaching is a ministry of the word, he presents a brief biblical-theological overview of the theology of the word of God. Second, he examines the key vocabulary used in the New Testament concerning preaching, focusing in particular on how these words are used, the context in which they appear, and who is commanded or instructed to do what these words call them to do. Third, he outlines the nature of word ministry that all believers are called to do and contrasts that kind of ministry with preaching. In these chapters Griffiths builds upon the work of Peter Adam (*Speaking God's Words*), that could be profitably read alongside this one.

The second part of Griffiths's book is the heart of his study, and focuses on sections of the New Testament that relate particularly to preaching in the post-apostolic age: 2 Timothy 3–4; Romans 10; 1 Corinthians (especially chapters 1–2, 9, and 15), 2 Corinthians 2–6, 1 Thessalonians 1–2, and Hebrews, which Griffiths explains as a written sermon. The book ends with a concluding chapter that summarizes his findings and draws out several biblical, theological, and practical implications.

The author accomplishes what he sets out to do, answering the questions he raises and establishing from Scripture that preaching is "necessary and vital—but not all-sufficient—for the nourishment and edification of the local church. All God's people are ministers of his word, and a healthy church will be a church where all kinds of word ministries (formal and informal) flourish and abound. However, none of those other ministries of the word can take the place of the public preaching of God's word" (133).

Those who have some knowledge of Greek will have an easier time understanding his work, but Griffiths writes clearly and accessibly, employing transliteration and non-technical terms whenever possible.

Pastors who do not have the time to examine these passages for themselves in depth will especially profit. As a pastor myself, I found this book extremely encouraging, and came away not only with a clearer grasp of what God intends to accomplish through my preaching, but with a renewed goal of doing what I can to see that my preaching fulfills those divine purposes.

A Pursued Justice: Black Preaching from the Great Migration to Civil Rights. By Kenyatta R. Gilbert. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. 978-1481303989, 210 pp., $39.95.

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

Gilbert teaches homiletics at Howard University School of Divinity and is an influential voice in the area of African American preaching. This, his second book, picks up from his first volume *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*, detailing the historical significance of what is known as the Great Migration period and its impact on the black, prophetic preaching tradition. During this Great Migration (1916–1940), 1.5 million African Americans relocated from Southern states to the Northern and other sections of the United States (1–2).

This Great Migration era, according to Gilbert, shares parallels with the book of Exodus. Gilbert writes: "Through generations of African American Christian practice, the Exodus story has permitted Blacks to collapse the distance between the ancient worldview and theirs and, as a collective, to see points of congruence within the narrative world of the Israelites despite the obvious difference of circumstance" (3). A central question in *A Pursued Justice* concerns how the Great Migration and "prophetic preaching" became connected in African American Northern congregations (4). A second significant discussion point regards "the vital role prophetic Black preaching played within African American churches and communities during a period of intense social upheaval (7)."

The book is divided into two parts: what this reviewer will call history and theory-practice. The history portion relates to the first two chapters. Chapter 1 describes the "exodus" of African Americans during this Great Migration period, and chapter 2 explains how "the promised land" of the North became an important conceptual scaffold for the preaching in black congregations. Gilbert showcases the homiletics of the Great Migration by focusing on three leading historic prophetic preachers: Reverdy Cassius Ransom, Florence Spearing Randolph, and Adam Clayton Powell Sr.

Part 2 pertains to theory-practice and includes three chapters, "Preaching as Exodus" (Chapter 3) offering a conceptual framework for black prophetic preaching borrowing from the work of Paulo Freire, Adisa

Alkebulan, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Zora Neale Hurston, Chapter 4 "Exodus Preaching" that evaluates the sermons of Ransom, Randolph, and Powell Sr., and "Exodus as Civil Rights" (Chapter 5) that makes the case that Martin Luther King Jr. and other social activists adopted the model of prophetic preaching from these Great Migration trailblazers. Two appendices round out the book providing sermon manuscripts of these and other prophetic preachers.

The rich historical detail, riveting stories, and cogent introduction to notable Great Migration preachers made this book a wonderful read. It is well written and well researched. As someone less familiar with this time period in North American church history, I became quickly engrossed with the historical tension and aspects of the black prophetic style. Gilbert's vivid prose "migrates" the reader through history, time, and space. He informs non-blacks of what we can learn from "exodus preaching," and lays out some its limitations as well. Evangelical homileticians, the primary readership of this *Journal*, will notice the bent toward, and less critical adoption of, the ideas of more mainline and liberation-type thinkers and authors. Nevertheless, overall, the book is a valuable resource for learning about the history and significance of the African American prophetic preaching tradition.

Encountering God Through Expository Preaching: Connecting God's People to God's Presence through God's Word. By Jim Scott Orrick, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017. 978-1433684128, 224 pp., $19.99.

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

A 2016 poll by the Pew Research Center indicated that people who are looking for a new church say that the quality of the preaching plays a significant role in their selection. In a market-oriented church culture we should be encouraged that preaching still matters and that it matters so much. What this data do not tell us is how worshipers determine quality: What kind of standard determines whether the sermon quality is high, low, or somewhere in between?

Encountering God Through Expository Preaching tells us at least one criterion that should be included: the sermon should be expository. This book is both a defense and description of expository preaching. We sometimes speak of this kind of preaching as expository "method," but the authors make it clear that there is more to it than methodology. Expository preaching is both a philosophy and an ethos. It does not begin with the text but with the person. As they put it, "when it comes to preaching, the man matters" (3). (The authors' deliberate and persistent description of the preacher as a "man" implies that they believe that the preaching task should be reserved for males.)

One fact which quickly becomes evident to the reader is that expository preaching involves much more than making a few remarks about the verses in a given paragraph. It demands a comprehensive analysis of the passage in its literary and theological context. The writers also make it clear that there is more to preaching than technique. The Holy Spirit is also involved in the preaching task, illuminating, empowering, and working through Scripture to facilitate an encounter with God.

At some points the book seems to be focusing more on hermeneutics than homiletics. This is not surprising, since the two are wedded in practice. (In this respect *Encountering God Through Expository Preaching* is somewhat reminiscent of *The Art of Prophecying*, the first homiletics text in the English language by the Puritan William Perkins.)

The authors discuss biblical genre, development of ideas in the text, and its grammar. But they touch only lightly on sermon delivery, stressing its importance without providing detailed direction for its execution. When it comes to the question of reading from a full manuscript or preaching without notes, their opinions are mixed, but generally feel that the best practice is not to take a manuscript into the pulpit.

This work is fairly comprehensive in its scope, but not in its treatment. Its topics are not handled with sufficient depth to serve as a core homiletics text. The authors do not cover new ground but mainly summarize ideas that others have been explored elsewhere in greater depth. However, the work is a good introduction for beginners and could be an ancillary text for courses in preaching and hermeneutics.

The Face of Water: A Translator on Beauty and Meaning in the Bible. By Sarah Ruden. New York: Pantheon, 2017. 978-0307908568, 272 pp., hardback, $26.95.

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

Ruden is a classical philologist, as well as a poet, essayist, and a former Guggenheim fellow. Right away she confesses: "I'm the opposite of a cleric or theologian or philosopher …. What's more, I have no formal qualifications whatsoever as a Biblical scholar—not one degree, not even a single course credit, let alone peer-reviewed publications in scholarly journals, or a teaching post" (xvi). But she can read Hebrew and Greek and so she dives right into the Bible!

She is struck by the fact that, in biblical literature, "form and content are inseparable, and equally important"—"*what* they meant was tightly bound up in *the way* they meant it …. That's true of all ancient literature, but for the Bible, on which so much of our society was built, the implications are far more important" (xxi–xxii). Refreshing words, at a time when adequate attention is not being paid to *how* authors of Scripture say things, and what

they are *doing* with their saying!

A primary text for Ruden's reading is 2 Samuel 11–12, the David-Bathsheba story. Thankfully, she employs an English translation that faithfully translates 11:25 and 11:27 with the same phrase: "Let not this thing *displease* thee" (David to Joab in 11:25); and "But the thing that David had done *displeased* the Lord" (the narrator, in 11:27). It would have been even more striking had the original Hebrew idiom been retained: "evil in the eyes of …." That's what the author is *doing:* Who gets to decide what is evil and what is good—David or Yahweh?

Ruden mentions the Ammonite war at the beginning of the story (10:1–19), but neglects the same war at the end of the narrative unit (12:26–31), as well as the entire chiastic structure of 2 Sam 11–12: *A* Sin/conception (11:1–5); *B* Concealment (11:6–13); *C* Murder (11:14–27a); *D* Evil in Yahweh's eyes (11:27b); *C′* Murder (12:1–6); *B′* Exposure (12:7–15a); *A′* Death/conception (12:15b–25). The centnral hinge (*D*) and what the author is *doing* here is obvious.

She does make good observations, nonetheless. For instance, David is on "the king's roof," but Bathsheba is simply "on the roof"—a fact most English translations hide by assuming, wrongly, that second "roof" in 11:2 refers to the one where David is stationed. Also, the parallels between 11:1 and 11:2: each starts with *wayhi,* followed by three more waw-consecutives, and then a noun + participle ("and-David was-staying"; "a woman bathing"), with an extra item in 11:2 that has no parallel in 11:1: "and-the-woman [was] beautiful/good to-see very." Armies fight, while David is lollygagging, and a woman is bathing—a beautiful woman (15–16). Is there a hint of deprecation in Bathsheba's lounging—"both these people indulge themselves" (16)?

All of this, according to Ruden, "keeps heavy emphasis on the deployment of power. Leaders, especially, do what they want; moment by moment, they choose" (16)—an appropriate theological focus for 2 Samuel 11–12. But I was disappointed that she did not bring out the unusual repeats of the verb "to send," a concentrated imperial motif (11:1, 3, 4, 6 [×3], 12, 14, 27) that clinches that same focus. David sends; everyone jumps. That is, until 12:1 where Yahweh—who now appears for the first time in the narrative—does some "sending" of his own, turning the tables on the hubristic ruler who thinks *he* can decide what is evil and what is good.

In Ruden's reading throughout, the beauty of the text is explored, but then what? Unfortunately, she, like most language scholars, does not go the distance to tell us preachers what the significance of the text is and what direction application may take. She confesses: "As to sharing this at Wednesday night Bible Study, better you than me" (77). But that is what Scripture is primarily for, to be shared [read "preached"] for life transformation!

A number of other examples are dealt with in the same fashion: the Lord's Prayer in Matthew and Luke (27–34); John 1:1–14 (46–50); Rom 8:31–39 (89–95); and Jonah 3 (110–112), among others, all well worth a glance if

you are planning to preach those texts. (40–45).

The Face of Water is an easy read, and Ruden has an appealing sense of dry humor. (But, *caveat lector:* there are a few profanities and mentions of bodily functions!) Making a fine attempt to produce a work distinct from the standard fare provided us by Bible scholars and translators, Ruden understands the importance of integrating form and function, style and meaning. And to that I encouragingly exhort, "Give us (preachers) more!"

Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon—Video Lectures. By Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 031-0533759, 2-DVD set, $39.99.

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

Carter, Duvall, and Hays—all at Ouachita Baptist University—have produced a 2-DVD set of video lectures, to accompany a textbook of the same title (Zondervan, 2005). In fact, much of the DVD material is the same as that in the book, even delivered verbatim at times.

The first DVD has eight chapters and deals with the fundamentals of preaching (which I shall focus on in this review); the second has seven and deals with preaching the various genres of Scripture. Carter does seven sessions (most of those that deal with general aspects of preaching), Duvall four (exegesis and preaching the NT genres), and Hays four (preaching the OT genres). Each session runs about 20 minutes, for a total of about 5 hours' worth of video. (I watched it all in 2× speed, following along with the textbook, *and* taking notes—quite a feat, if I may say so myself!)

There is not much in the DVDs (or the book, for that matter) that will be new to readers of this *Journal*. But how useful will the DVDs (+ book) be for students of preaching?

Since Duvall approvingly noted a comment made to him by a pastor that "preaching is all about hermeneutics" (DVD 1, Lesson 2, 1:32–1:36), let me focus on that issue. Here is his list of things to do to "grasp the text." Read the text thoroughly watching for: repetition, contrasts, comparisons, lists, cause and effect, figures of speech, conjunctions, verbs, pronouns, general/specific, questions/answers, dialogue, purpose/result statements, means, conditional clauses, actions/roles of God and of people, emotional terms, tone of passage, connections to other paragraphs and episodes, etc. Here is another list of elements to consider as one examines the original context: the passages before and after, the author, backgrounds, times, nature of ministry, relationship with audience, purpose, audience characteristics, their circumstances, their relationship with God, and other historical-cultural factors. This is like a dermatologist providing a trainee with a checklist for

moles: look for asymmetry, border, color, diameter, evolution, etc., besides taking a personal history of sun exposure, a family history of skin cancers, and so on. What help would such a checklist be without knowing which observations might be significant and which not, what is normal and what not? Unfortunately, this checklist approach is routine fare in many textbooks of preaching, and even in those teaching Greek and Hebrew exegesis.

Carter, Duvall, and Hays also are in favor of a "text thesis statement" that is synthetic, composed of one or two sentences, in the past tense, that includes the original audience and describes what the text meant to them then. This "text thesis statement" is then to be converted into a "sermon thesis statement" that addresses the current audience in an imperative. For instance, here is Carter's "text thesis statement" on John 17:1–23: "Jesus prayed for God's plan to be fulfilled first in himself, then in his disciples, and finally in all those who would believe in him." And here is his sermon thesis statement: "As we pray for the church, we should ask that God's plan will be fulfilled in all believers, including ourselves, fellow believers, and all those who will become Christians in the future" (DVD 1, Lesson 5, 3:50–4:37). Because Jesus prayed, we pray? Is that what the text is about? Has it not got anything to do with being reassured by Jesus' intercession for his people? So, are the prayers of Paul in his epistles also merely models of how we ought to pray?

Duvall is right: "Crossing the bridge poses the greatest challenge" for a preacher, and these authors propose to conduct that journey by "principlizing" (DVD 1; Lesson 2, 19:13–19:22). Though widely utilized in evangelical circles, there is a danger in such a reductive operation for it implicitly understands the God-given text as a wrapper that must be stripped away (and discarded) to extract the all-important candy (the "principle") hidden therein. One would also have to wonder at God's wisdom in giving the bulk of his Scripture in non-propositional, non-theological, non-timeless-principle, non-"thesis statement" form, with messy stories and arcane prophecies and sentimental poetry. But alas, this transaction of "principlizing," too, is standard fare in homiletical textbooks and classes.

All in all, the DVD set, well recorded and smartly edited, is a worthy effort, though I have doubts about its utility for preaching students. The book might be a decent resource for the fundamentals of homiletics, but the DVDs do not add much to what is in the hard copy. Students are well advised to invest elsewhere.

Sensitive Preaching to the Sexually Hurting. By Sam Serio. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 978-0825444173, 202 pp., $16.99.

Reviewer: *Joshua Peeler*, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*, *New Orleans, LA.*

In *Sensitive Preaching*, Serio synthesizes two lifelong passions, biblical preaching and Christ-centered counseling. According to Serio, preaching that examines a biblical response to sexual pain is often neglected by most pastors. He argues that even when pastors address issues of sexual pain, they often misrepresent Scripture by over emphasizing either grace or truth. Sermons on sexual pain should be balanced, truth filled and grace empowered (12–13). Writing from his 35 years of experience preaching and counseling, Serio emphasizes the importance of a balanced perspective. Devoid of footnotes, this work relies heavily on the author's experience; it is a blending of homiletics and counseling rather than a research-driven text. Foundational to Serio's perspective is that preachers should not talk about God's wrath for sexual sin without equally proclaiming His love.

Serio organizes this book into three major sections. Part 1, "Preparing Your Heart and Church," contains three chapters which serve to introduce the main concept of this work: pastors live in a world that is desperate to hear sensitive preaching on painful sexual issues (9–18).

The clear focal point of this work is Part 2, "Preparing Your Message," that examines seven areas of sexual hurt that pastors need to address in their preaching. According to Serio, pastors do not need to preach entire sermons on each of these issues, but ought to preach on any issues of sexual pain present in the biblical text. Chapter 4 includes ten suggestions for speaking about sexual topics that decrease the likelihood that preachers will traumatically trigger their congregation; Serio even includes a list of alternate wordings for difficult concepts including rape, child abuse, and masturbation. He believes that if a preacher is less specific in his wording it is less likely to cause emotional and psychological distress. After establishing a baseline for addressing sexual hurt in sermons, he examines seven of the most delicate, difficult, and darkest sexual hurts and habits (54), including casual sex, abortion, sexual assault and rape, childhood sexual abuse and molestation, pornography, same-sex attraction and homosexuality, and sexless marriage. Serio examines each issue by providing case studies based on experience from his counseling practice, discussing the role of each topic more broadly in American society, and offering suggestions for preaching on each topic (55–184). Serio explains how painful each issue can be for his clients/church members, discusses the depth of the problem in contemporary American society, and describes how he has successfully preached and counseled using the Bible to promote healing from sexual hurt. The chapters in Part 2 contain some difficult to read passages that illustrate the depth of pain a person experiences during and after a sexual trauma. The author explains this trauma, emphasizing the sensitive nature of preaching on the topic in light of possible ongoing abuse.

With Part 3 ("My Challenge to the Church of the Future"), Serio concludes by offering4 solutions for how pastors and churches may improve their ministry to sexually hurting people. He calls on pastors to be

"contemporary, compassionate, competent, and conservative at the same time…filled with truth and grace filled" (186).

Throughout this work, the author gives examples of biblical passages, illustrations, and sermons he has used to help people with each topic. If for no other reason, pastors should purchase this work to learn which Scripture passages can be used to preach messages of compassion for victims and of conviction for victimizers. Serio's suggested sermon applications from these messages serve as good reminders of the love and forgiveness that empower pastors to preach. One such example is his message to child sexual abuse victims and victimizers: he offers to meet with both, challenging his congregation to pay for housing these parties (120–24).

Stressing the importance of balance for instance, the author asks if pastors are preaching messages so heavy on God's judgement that no one would feel free to come meet with them, or so light on the consequences of sexual sin that they would not see the need to schedule an appointment. In sum, this work challenges pastors to address difficult topics, while empowering them to undertake this task using the tools, guidance, and suggestions provided.

Preaching Essentials: A Practical Guide. By Lenny Luchetti. Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2012. 978-0898275582, 224 pp., $14.99.

Reviewer: *Eric Price, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.*

Lenny Luchetti has written a non-technical survey of the basic spiritual qualities and technical skills necessary to deliver quality biblical sermons. His advice is divided into 42 short chapters, most five pages or shorter. These chapters are organized into four parts. The first, "Preaching and Preachers" (chapters 1–7), focuses on the life and identity of the preacher, discussing matters such as calling, the theology of preaching, and ministerial self-care. The second part, "People and Places" (chapters 8–14), teaches basic skills of congregational exegesis. Here Luchetti provides guidance for familiarizing oneself with congregational and local culture. Part three, "Preparation and Presentation" (chapters 15–31), surveys the sermon preparation process from biblical exegesis to delivery. The fourth part, "Planning and Progress" (chapters 32–37), discusses long-term strategies for sermon series and for soliciting congregational feedback. The fifth and final section, "Postscript" (chapters 38–42), addresses unique preaching situations such as weddings and funerals.

Luchetti urges preachers to remember that "simple does not mean simplistic or trite" (220). He follows his own advice: this book is filled with clear and concrete wisdom that reflects the author's years of pastoring and teaching new preachers. He briefly but helpfully covers standard homiletical

topics such as exegesis, application, sermon structure, illustrations, introductions, conclusions, and delivery.

But the author places these basic homiletical skills within the broader contexts of pastoral ministry and the preacher's personal spirituality. His burden for preaching is that it be clear and accessible to listeners, so he reminds preachers that "information without inspiration is impotent" (31). To help move sermons from informational to inspirational, he addresses issues of congregational diversity, appropriate dress, sermon length, oral clarity, and the listeners' different learning styles. Luchetti's passion for preachers to walk with the Lord is evident throughout. He encourages them to prepare sermons devotionally and prayerfully, to rely on the Holy Spirit's anointing to preach, and to take regular spiritual retreats. In urging his readers to be pastoral preachers, he himself pastors his readers.

This book's short chapters, casual tone, and broad scope make it a sort of homiletical devotional, one that young or seasoned preachers could read on a daily basis, without a significant time investment, to sharpen their preaching skills. Each chapter concludes with exercises that guide the implementation of that chapter's suggestions. Perhaps a group of pastors could do the exercises individually and then meet to discuss the results.

The book's brief discussion of the sermon preparation process makes it less than ideal as an introductory textbook of preaching. However, its emphasis on the pastoral and artistic aspects of preaching would nicely supplement other basic readings, many of which downplay such topics in favor of the more left-brained aspects of homiletics. The book might therefore fit well in pastoral ministry classes, helping the reader integrate preaching into the whole of one's pastoral ministry.

Many chapters are summaries of topics about which entire books have been written. It would have been beneficial if Luchetti had included a brief bibliography with each chapter so readers could pursue individual topics in more depth. This minor critique notwithstanding, it is difficult to find fault with this book. Luchetti says that "the best preachers are those who have honed the habit of simply being with and enjoying Jesus" (43). Luchetti has written a gem of a homiletical devotional that will serve preachers of varying experience levels by sparking a desire to spend time with our Lord, and that will invigorate the task of proclamation.

How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology. By Jason S. DeRouchie. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. 978-1629952451, 583 pp., $39.99.

How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology. By Andrew David Naselli. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. 978-1629952482, 384 pp., $39.99.

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

It is only proper to ask, "For whom was this book written?" when preparing a review. The authors of these companion texts propose a readership of laypeople, students, and pastors. No doubt all the above would benefit from a careful study of DeRouchie's and Naselli's twelve steps. However, since 83 of the 98 blurbs that grace their early pages were written by seminary presidents or professors, it is not surprising that the works reflect a more academic than practical approach (that is not to suggest that an academic approach cannot be practical).

These texts will assist the seminary student who needs to grasp a comprehensive hermeneutical method and the pastor who wishes to review formative language courses. It is doubtful, however, that the sole/senior pastor, preaching forty or more sermons a year, will find these texts a feasible weekly guide. It is not likely that that individual will spend incalculable hours evaluating the variant readings of the text, providing an original translation from the Hebrew or Greek, analyzing and classifying every term, diagramming and categorizing every word/phrase in order to trace the argument of the text, probing exhaustively into the historical-cultural-literary context of the text, plunging into word studies that include a compilation of all the ways English translations render the biblical term, etc. This level of scholarly rigor should be obligatory for professors and academics, but expecting a similar level of research from those who preach weekly is the reason too many seminary graduates confess, "Once I left seminary I never cracked my Hebrew/Greek Bible again." The cause is not their failure to value the original languages, but rather the unrealistic, and likely unnecessary, exegetical demands placed on them. Finding a more efficient way to use the Hebrew and Greek texts would serve pastors much better than upholding ideals they will never practice. So these texts might serve the purposes of academics, but will likely frustrate, and even shame, the preaching pastor.

When the authors argue that the work of interpretation is not complete until a text's theological implications have been explored, including its practical theology which applies the truth of the text, they express a sentiment every preacher should applaud. However, the extent to which these various theologies (biblical, historical, systematic, and practical) are explored and employed prove, again, to be more academic than practical. Both authors' biblical theologies seek to integrate a progression of revelation that climaxes in Christ. Although tracing the theme(s) developed in a single biblical book can help identify the theological thrust of each pericope therein, that is not a goal of these textbooks. Rather, they emphasize a "*whole-Bible* biblical theology" (Naselli, 233) that "connects to the Bible's overall flow and message and points to Christ" (DeRouchie, 15). Two cautions: First, whereas the biblical scholar may focus on tracing canonical themes, the preacher must keep the focus on the theological thrust of the individual pericope. Second,

a mandate to find Christ in every pericope can result in the abandonment of the theological thrust of a given pericope and the loss of purpose of that text.

When Naselli encourages the interpreter to "survey and evaluate how significant exegetes and theologians have understood the Bible and theology" (264), he again appeals to the scholar rather than the preacher. His ten reasons for studying historical theology (267–73) are sound, since every preacher should have a basic understanding of orthodox Christianity and how its doctrines developed. But surveying and evaluating the interpretations of multiple theologians from every era of church history is not a realistic weekly exercise.

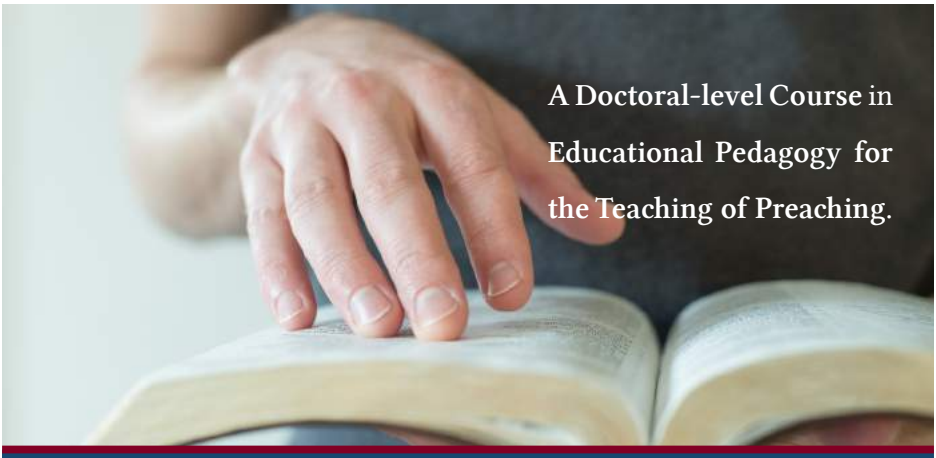
Asserting that systematic theology asks, "How does our passage theologically cohere with the whole Bible?" (395), DeRouchie identifies four steps for doing systematic theology (398–400). Readers should note that while some theological system influences every biblical scholar and preacher, these two will approach the subject differently. The former will be primarily interested in finding biblical support for theological constructs. The latter will employ a systematic theology lens cautiously as a chaperon of the text to keep one within the parameters of orthodoxy, yet without abandoning the pericope's theological agenda in favor of some systematic theological position.

Both authors view practical theology and the application of the text as the ultimate goal of exegesis and theology. They offer fairly routine guidelines for applying the Bible, based on its exegetical and theological foundations.

A weakness of both texts is that they do not take into the account the works of, for example, Abraham Kuruvilla, Thomas Long, and Kevin Vanhoozer, who urge the interpreter to look beyond what the text is saying (the semantics) to what it is doing (the pragmatics).

Meticulous indexing is a strength of both texts. Besides a table of contents, readers will discover a list of figures, a detailed analytical outline of the book's contents, a list of abbreviations, a glossary, an extensive bibliography, and indexes of scripture, subjects, and names. Numerous examples also supplement the explanations of each interpretive step.

To sum up: This book is not for preachers, except as an introduction to, or a review of, the academic disciplines of exegesis and theology. Rather than attempting original work in the twelve steps, the preacher would do well to rely on the efforts of scholars who have given years of labor to address those specific interpretive concerns. This book is a celebration of scholarly excavational exegesis suitable for the academically inclined.



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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.

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

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

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

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

   a. From a book:

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

   b. From a periodical:

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

   c. Avoid the use of op. cit.
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6. Manuscripts will be between 1,500 and 3,000 words, unless otherwise determined by the editor.

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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."

Direct Quotes

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

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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

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