



## BOOK REVIEWS

*Preaching the Women of the Old Testament: Who They Were and Why They Matter.* By Lynn Japinga. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017. 978-0664259693, 221 pp., \$20.00.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Anderson, Thoughtful Proclaimer Ministry, Mirror Lake, New Hampshire.

*Preaching the Woman of the Old Testament* offers forty brief chapters with ideas for how to preach about Old Testament women including many lesser-known characters such as Achsah, Jael, and Samson's mother. Lynn Japinga allows that some of these stories are passed over in the church because they deal with topics, including sexuality and abuse, that may be challenging to tackle in the pulpit on Sunday morning. She aims to give us creative ways to face these challenges. Each chapter begins with biblical reference followed by lectionary references, if any. Japinga then tells the story interspersed with her personal reactions. She ends with several preaching themes or ideas for that passage.

In *Preaching the Women of the Old Testament*, Japinga reminds us that all of the Bible is worthwhile for preaching or should at least be grappled with in appropriate settings. Japinga's stark honesty makes us think. This book is for anyone who has ever preached Joseph without Tamar, or Abraham without Hagar. Her heartfelt evaluations of the plights of female characters offer preachers helpful insights on not only the characters in the stories they preach but, on the values and sensibilities of the people they preach to.

As Professor of Religion at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, Japinga has taught Christian feminism for twenty-four years. Her book clearly reflects this perspective and offers a feminist reader-response interpretation (rather than aiming for the biblical authors' intentions). She favors a sympathetic understanding of the women she has chosen to write about, and helps us consider the possible feelings and viewpoints of women like Potiphar's wife, Jephthah's daughter, and Hosea's wife, Gomer.

Japinga's perspective, however, limits her ability to value biblical authors' intentions for including the women in their narratives. Her focus on individual characters overshadows the purposes of the plot (for instance, the case

of Jezebel [146]). In some cases, Japinga takes minor characters and builds them into major characters simply because they are women (for instance, Job's wife or the Queen of Sheba). She is not concerned with how the larger narratives teach theology or fit into the canon.

Not only is Japinga critical of God and the biblical authors' portrayals of events (she tends to see God as unjust at times), she also readily critiques reformed commentators such as Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, and Kuyper for what she sees as their misogynistic viewpoints and imaginative, but negative, remarks on the natures and motives of these women. In truth however, Japinga offers an equally imaginative portrayal of her protagonists.

The author notes in her introduction that we should not oversimplify Bible stories by giving them morals (5), yet she often does just that, making up her own morals when the Bible doesn't offer any. Though the introduction recommends focusing on God's actions in these stories and asking how God is being gracious or bringing shalom (5), in actuality, Japinga is not afraid to condemn God as a bad actor. Japinga seeks themes to preach on from difficult texts but she does not ask what the text's authors meant to say, rather she concentrates on what her audience needs to hear.

This book, then, is a commentary on society and its perceptions. In this way, it is valuable to preachers of the Old Testament; particularly to those who have, or hope to have, young people, college students, or seekers in their congregation. Japinga's sensitivity to injustice and her tendency to judge God mirror the views of many in today's congregations. Those of us who look for the larger redemptive meaning in a narrative sometimes forget how many of our congregation members may be viewing the gorier details. We can use Japinga's nose for what others may find troubling so that we can help our audience put it all back together again. When we see that God seems absent or sin seems to dominate a story we can adapt one of Japinga's sermon ideas, which is to write a "different ending of the story." We can turn a troubling and dark story into a redemptive, cross-centered message.



*Preaching Must Die! Troubling Homiletical Theology.* By Jacob D. Myers. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. 978-156411866, 220 pp., \$24.00.

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

Writing for professional homileticians and advanced students, Jacob Myers has produced a thoroughgoing application of deconstruction to preaching. The book is impressively researched with footnotes sometimes occupying half the page, yet in many places it is also written with verve. With a keen eye for irony and a passionate voice for justice he seeks to trouble homiletical theology, to “mobilize, subvert, confuse,” and “interrogate the ‘prevailing laws’ of preaching that homiletics establishes” (4). Those “laws” enforce a Western, modernist hegemony of philosophical commitments that undergird theology. And that’s the trouble with theology—it duplicitously gives allegiance to both God and philosophy. So the author asserts that preaching must die to four commitments implicit in most homiletical theology. Those theological commitments deal with language, the preacher, Scripture, and God.

First, preaching uses language, but Myers argues that we must not assume a simple correspondence between word and referent—a “fantasy” (26). Second, homiletical theology is also committed to the identity of a preacher, but identity is “multifaceted,” “heterogeneous,” and “unstable” (68). “There’s no ‘I’ in preacher” (72). So preachers must “cross over to the other side of selfhood to embrace a non-foundational and polyphonic sense of identity” (74). Third, homiletical theologies universally acknowledge that preaching has some relation to Scripture, but nearly all of those theologies arise from and promulgate the view that truth must be extracted from the Bible like currency from an ATM machine (120–121). Instead of an economic view of the Bible, Myers offers an approach to Scripture he calls “echognomic” (132). If I understand this section of the book, Myers is saying that “echognomics” does not take from Scripture in order to learn or understand but rather has something to give (135). Fourth, homiletical theology is in trouble because it speaks about God, yet the word “God” is not God. Thus preaching rejects most homiletical theology dealing with language, the preacher, Scripture, and God, then it can die a good death; that is, it can be open to values like chance, hope, faith, and transcendence.

*Preaching Must Die* revels in witty phrasing, complicated sentences, neologisms, and frequent use of parentheses, slashes, and hyphens, as in this section heading: “Spook(ing/y) Homiletics: The Word of God, Perhaps” (175). The book is not easy reading. Trying to follow Myers’ argument is like following a dance partner on an undulating dancefloor coated with oil.

Though his treatment of all homiletical theologies, including evangelicalism, is even-handed, well-documented, and fair, in the final analysis, the book’s case implodes because of a philosophical conundrum and a pedagogical impasse.

Philosophically, how far can one press the view of language that says that signs point only to other signs (26)? Myers seems aware that his approach to preaching flirts with epistemic nihilism (75), yet he soldiers on with deconstruction as his guide. It seems that a consistent application of deconstruction would lead to silence, not a career as an author, professor, and preacher. Behind the pessimism regarding language may be the belief that essence itself is a chimera, yet Myers seems to maintain a belief in essence (or at least the appearance of essence) in dozens of statements like these: “apart from these four factors preaching could not exist (if preaching does, in fact, exist)”; “inasmuch as it is anything, preaching is a radical, foolish act of faith”; “to the degree that preaching ‘is’ anything, it is a specter of God”; “deconstruction, to the degree that it ‘is’ anything, that it ‘does’ anything, unwittingly serves preaching inasmuch as it exposes us to our (often) unexamined presuppositions, prejudices, and elisions” (4, 8, 173, 190).

Pedagogically, how can a student learn to preach this way? I’m not even sure what that “way”—if such a “way” exists—would be. Myers acknowledges this: “This theoretical questioning is all well and good until homileticians have to teach this stuff to their students” (139). But no further methodology is offered, just a vision of preaching that is mysterious rather than certain, fluid rather than solid, and open rather than locked down.

To be sure, *Preaching Must Die* is a thrill ride at the county fair that tosses you upside down, but at the end of the day, I prefer to draw my concept and practice of preaching from a biblical theology of the power of God’s Word mediated through humans. Those humans are, to be sure, fallen and fallible, and the language they use cannot capture the glory and mystery of God, yet somehow through the foolishness of preaching God continues to redeem humans and build his kingdom.

Book Review Editor’s note: A version of this review is simultaneously being published in *Worship* journal.



*Preaching Through Time: Anachronism as a Way Forward for Preaching.* By Casey C. Barton. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017. 978-1498234641, 234 pp., \$22.02.

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

Barton is the Senior Pastor of Hilmar Covenant Church, Hilmar, California. Preaching Through Time is the fruit of his studies in hermeneutics and homiletical theory. His goal is to persuade his readers that a sermon is more than the transfer of information; it is also an invitation to participate in "God's dramatic narrative that continuously unfolds in reality and through time. ... Anachronism, preaching together of disparate moments of God's drama in a way that is timely, creates proclamation of God's gospel and invites God's people to participate in that gospel drama right now" (1). That is, the preacher attempts to bridge the gap between the original author/text/audience and the modern audience in a new way by relying heavily on anachronism (temporal/special contradiction) as an element throughout the entire sermon. Barton's work challenges the way the preacher thinks about and experiences time and space in preaching, similar to what one would experience in a movie, especially one that is a modern remake of an older classic.

Following a helpful forward and introduction, his work is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 surveys the hermeneutical and homiletical theories of various scholars. He lays the ground work for his practical theology of preaching by drawing from various works, particularly those of Richard Heyduck, Kevin Vanhoozer, and N. T. Wright. Chapter 2 looks at returning to the importance of eschatology in preaching not simply as end time, but rather a matrix for all Christian time. Here he makes his case to reemphasize time in preaching. "Creative eschatology moves towards living in active anticipation of the promised future within the real misery of humanity's shared condition. This is the presence of the future in the midst of the present. In Christ, all tenses of time, past, present, and future, are unified in a theology that presently anticipates the coming of God" (85). Chapter 3 places Scripture in the category of drama. This helps the preacher make the connection between God's work in his people then, and God's work in his people now. "This performative theology reevaluates language, viewing it in terms of speech-acts in which language does not merely convey information but in which it acts; language does things. A dramatic theology seeks to respect continuity of time between interpretive communities, as well as retain the Bible as the community's constitutive text" (108). Chapter 4 attempts to develop anachronism as a theological device for preaching seeking to find it in Scripture, historical theology, post-modern art, and media. Chapter 5 (The Anachronistic Sermon: Preaching Times Together) sharpens Barton's work further, providing the preacher with a new angle for sermon preparation. "The goal of the sermon in the dramatic-anachronistic mode shifts from the appending of an application to the call of God's people to become full participants in the gospel drama today, disciples along the way. The dramatic-anachronistic matrix shifts our sermon

shapes from academic outlines to spirited scripts" (193). The book concludes with an appendix with five of the author's sermons as examples of this anachronistic approach to preaching.

For those looking for an alternative approach to sermon preparation that is, perhaps, more sensitive to storytelling as seen in films, with a clearer, more intentional focus on time, Barton's work will be helpful. My struggle with the work was with its lack of focus and attention to the authoritative nature of the biblical text. That is, grasping what the text is saying and what it is doing, before preachers move to the audience. If we are going to take a new look at communicating truth and how it is bridged and applied to an audience, it would behoove us to make sure we are communicating the right truth and not merely translating the text to modern hearers in creative ways. Nevertheless, I agree with Barton that there are far too many sermons that teach principles about Jesus as opposed to actually encountering Jesus in the sermon. But I am not quite convinced that this is the road to take. In any case, Barton has successfully challenged me to think of time, the connection between our timeless God, his timeless message, and our contemporary audience in a new way.



*Preaching Adverbially*. By F. Russell Mitman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. 978-0802875587, 196 pp., \$30.00.

Reviewer: David Giese, Judson Baptist Church and Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois.

The art of preaching is more than a sermon independent from the liturgy; it is the very "intent of the whole liturgical action" whereby the Word, Jesus Christ, is and becomes present through the actions of word and sacrament (3–4). In light of this view of preaching, Mitman sets out, in *Preaching Adverbially*, to explore "the action of doing the preaching and what happens in the doing" (3).

To accomplish this goal, Mitman examines eleven adverbs to describe exactly what is taking place in the preaching event. Why adverbs? The author sees a fundamental difference between "the intentions of adjectives that describe something and adverbs that indicate how an action takes place" (23). Thus, adverbs are employed to describe "the action of doing the preaching and what happens in the doing" (3).

In preaching biblically, the assembly listens "for the Word of God" as the preacher invites them "into an event that is intended to become for the assembly

the Word of God" (20). In preaching liturgically, all liturgical aspects become a unified preaching-event or word-event (4, 23, 27). In preaching sacramentally, the sermon is a means of grace whereby Christ himself is present in the presenting (34). In preaching evangelically, "Gospeling" is inviting the listener into the in-betweenness of neither what God has done ("already"), nor what God will do ("not yet"), but rather what God is doing "now" (49–55). Preaching contextually asks, "Who are the hearers?" and "What is heard?" The second question determines what the word of God becomes for the specific assembly (60). Preaching invitationally calls the assembly into a mystery greater than themselves (82). In preaching metaphorically, such figures carry the assembly from their lived reality into a new reality whereby the metaphors actualize themselves in the lives of the listeners (5, 88). Preaching multisensorially is to utilize all five senses to engage the word of God (5, 103–104). Preaching engagingly is "imaginatively, inclusively, believably, carefully, and gracefully" drawing the assembly into the mystery of Christ (130). Preaching doxologically is allowing the response of joyful praise to be "enacted homiletically and liturgically" (5). Preaching eschatologically enables the assembly to participate in the open-endedness of the "already-but-not-yet-ness" of the word of God (6).

Mitman's style is a wonderful mix of structured yet smooth, conversational yet substantial, scholarly yet approachable, thorough yet concise, and robust yet clear writing. Strategically placed quotations and footnotes throughout the work allow the reader to trace the theological, hermeneutical, and homiletical branches back to the roots that nourish Mitman's thought. The soil of *Preaching Adverbially* has been cultivated by homileticians such as Fred Craddock, Barbara Brown Taylor, Thomas Long, and theologians such as Walter Ong, Gerhard Ebling, Karl Barth, and Walter Brueggemann. Thus, Mitman finds himself closely related to various New Homileticians on the homiletical family tree; *Preaching Adverbially* brings fresh growth on the branches of the New Homiletic.

Successfully accomplishing its stated thesis, the book contributes by answering the question, "What exactly is taking place in the preaching event?" Where David Buttrick, Fred Craddock, Eugene Lowry, and others have explored the same question, Mitman provides answers—eleven to be exact. Helpfully and concisely he articulates "what happens in the doing" of the preaching event with those eleven adverbs (3).

He employs an "oralizing and re-oralizing" hermeneutic (rooted in Luke 4:21) whereby the preacher seeks to re-oralize the text into a new word-event. Though *Preaching Adverbially* is appropriately honest and unapologetic for its homiletical, hermeneutical, and theological location, the tone (at times) belittles

other traditions. So it is necessary for expositors of differing theological and hermeneutical traditions to discern common ground with Mitman carefully and critically.

Viewing homiletics and liturgics as “married arts,” the book also contributes to liturgics via homiletics (2). That is, Mitman’s voice joins those of various homileticians who do not hear the sermon as distinct from the liturgy but as an interdependent note that is inseparable from the liturgical whole.

Mitman provides helpful implications for week-in-week-out preachers. However, *Preaching Adverbially* is less of a “how to” text and more of an exercise in homiletical reflection that both informs the thinker and inspires the preacher. *Preaching Adverbially* would be a valued text for all homiletical scholars, teachers of courses that engage the New Homiletic, and homiletically minded mainline preachers.



*The Preacher’s Portrait: Five New Testament Word Studies.* By John Stott. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016 (1961). 978-0802875532, 105 pp., \$10.00.

Reviewer: John Koessler, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois.

For the preacher, image is everything. Not the crafted image a preacher might want to project to the listener but an inner sense of what it means to be a preacher. Thomas Long has pointed out that all preachers carry with them an inner sense of who they are and what they are doing. Sometimes it is vague and ill-defined. At others times it is concrete. The danger of these shaping metaphors is their power to disable as well as enable.

It is easy to see how preachers might lean into a particular style of ministry that matches their personalities. However, it is also a problem because the result is often a preaching ministry that is too one-sided and may even be unbiblical. In *The Preacher’s Portrait*, John Stott provides the needed corrective. The work is a brief reflection on five biblical metaphors that should shape the preacher and guide the preacher’s work: steward, herald, witness, father, and servant.

Not only is each one biblical in origin, the five are also perennial. The culture of preaching, unfortunately, is easily given to fads and personality cults. Preachers are tempted to draw their models from secular media figures or the latest pulpit stars. The result from either source has a short shelf life. But the biblical images explored in this book will not wear out. They are also adaptable to

a variety of contexts, personalities, and styles. Indeed, Stott points out that the witness metaphor demands it. "You cannot be a witness if you are reporting only what others have told you," Stott writes. "You must speak from your own experience" (51).

Likewise, the steward metaphor is affected by the preacher's location. "Although distinct from the congregation, the preacher is one of them. Thus although preachers have the right to address the congregation using 'I' and 'you,' they will often prefer to use the first person plural 'we' because they are conscious that the word applies to themselves as much as to anyone else" (19).

Preaching is many things. It is an art form. It is a discipline. It is a mode of theological reflection. The steward metaphor underscores the all-important fact that preaching is primarily a sacred trust. "As faithful stewards who have been commissioned by God, preachers must guard and protect the goods they have been given" Stott explains (14). The "good deposit" is the content of the preacher's message—doctrine or teaching. More broadly, it is the source from which preachers draw their teaching. Those who preach are not merely preachers of truths but of the truth—the word of God. For this reason, Stott unashamedly asserts that responsible preaching must be expository. Preaching presents the truth that recorded in the Scriptures. "It follows that every sermon should be, in some sense, an expository sermon. Preachers may use political, ethical, and social illustrations to illuminate the biblical principles they are presenting, but the pulpit is no place for purely political commentary, ethical exhortation, or social debate" (14).

Preachers speak for God. They act as heralds. This metaphor focuses on the content of the preacher's message. Stott points out that there are two essential parts to Christian herald's message. One part is the message of the resurrection. However, Stott warns that this alone insufficient. "It is not enough simply to preach the resurrection, for it is principally by Christ's death that we are saved" (26). If the herald image focuses on the preacher's authority, the father image points to the importance of affection in the preaching task. We may have hard things to say to those who hear us, but ultimately we are on their side. We are not merely talking to them. We care about them.

Anyone who preaches stands on dangerous ground. There is much in the task that appeals to the ego. It is easy for listeners to think more highly of the messenger than of the message. It is just as easy for the messenger to court the favor of those who hear. Stott offers a strong word on this: "People who congratulate a preacher on a sermon, and preachers who expect such congratulation from their people are offensive to God" (80). By reminding us that preachers are not to call attention to themselves but to Christ Jesus, John Stott

drives a stake through the heart of the performance oriented and personality cult driven models to which we are so easily drawn.



*Preaching with Biblical Motivation: How to Incorporate the Motivation Found in the Inspired Preaching of the Apostles into Your Sermons.* By Ray E. Heiple, Jr. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2017. 978-1629952826, 408 pp., \$59.99.

Reviewer: Kevin Koslowsky, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Heiple laments the sin-avoiding, emotional, and sentimental preaching of the contemporary church. He digs into the apostolic preaching of Acts to identify the biblical motivations available for preachers. He concludes, “the chief motivation of the sermons of Scripture...is the motivation of truth” (265). Preachers express truth with passion and emotion, but they do not rely on “powerful rhetoric or moving stories” (267). Heiple writes with pastoral wisdom and sensitivity, and his book shows the extensive research of his dissertation. But the cost of the volume puts the it beyond the reach of most preaching pastors.

Heiple helpfully reviews motivational theory and its differentiation between internal and external motivation through educational literature. In turning to the impact of motivational theory on the church he reviews mostly popular level articles and books. He blames Arminian theology, revivalism, church growth, and the seeker-sensitive movement for their emphases on internal motivations which overlook the impact of sin on the listener. He limits his review of motivation in Reformed preaching to Bryan Chapell, the Westminster Standards, and Jonathan Edwards. And he critiques fellow redemptive-historical preacher Chapell’s exclusive emphasis on grace as motivation, but Heiple does not interact with the broader hermeneutical questions let alone Chapell’s own clarifications of the primary but not exclusive use of grace as motivation. Still, Heiple’s consideration of the fear of God as a motivator, including a useful appendix on the topic, reminds preachers of the multitude of motivations used in Scripture to promote Spirit-enabled obedience.

The heart of this work is a careful examination of five apostolic sermons in Acts 2, 3, 10, 13, and 17. Heiple’s work with original languages, interaction with commentaries, and sensitivity to grammatical indicators offer a helpful pastoral explanation of these sermons, but he unnecessarily limits his consideration to these five texts alone as he identifies these five sermons alone as passages “that

are most similar to modern-day church sermons" (105). His argument would have been strengthened if he had offered a broader review of the biblical motivation for Christian obedience. He offers glimpses of this broader biblical context when he argues for the substantive similarities between the preaching of the Old and New Testaments (109), provides exegetical examples from the Psalms and Revelation (127), offers repeated Scriptural support for apostolic sermons from other sections of Scripture (140), and appeals to the Epistles to support a biblical perspective of valid motivations for preachers (357). While the title indicates a wider context, the book restricts consideration to apostolic preaching in Acts.

Heiple reminds preachers that truth is the primary motivator. Preachers must defend the authority of Scripture and boldly proclaim the gospel. The interpretive questions he provides to examine biblical preaching (118) and the clear exegesis of apostolic preaching begins a conversation about proper biblical motives in preaching, but he needs to dig deeper into the hermeneutic and apologetic challenges. The questions surrounding motivation remain.



*Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology.* By James K. A. Smith. Cultural Liturgies Volume 3. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 978-0801035791, 256 pp., \$22.99.

Reviewer: Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

This is the third in the Cultural Liturgies trilogy (2009–2017) from Smith, professor of philosophy at Calvin College. True to its subtitle, it deals with public (even political) theology. Smith asks rhetorically: "What if we are creatures of craving, defined by our desires, who make our way in the world governed by what we long for? And what if the political is not just some procedural gambit to manage our mundane affairs but an expression of a creational desire and need ...? ... If politics is habit forming, it is also love shaping, which means that we are on the terrain of liturgy" (10).

And, if this is the case, as it surely is, the body of Christ must play a critical role in the reordering of skewed loves, to align the people of God with a love of God—the polity of the divine kingdom. Smith affirms that "the body of Christ is a culture, and specifically a formative culture" (xii). Indeed! We must see the church "not as a sphere-trumping institution that would reign over society but as a habit-forming polis in which we gather to be shaped and (re)formed by the Spirit in ways that make us good neighbors, even to our enemies" (150). The kingdom

of God is to be subverting and overwhelming the kingdoms (and loves) of the world. How exactly is this accomplished? For Smith, continuing the thesis developed in his prior volumes of *Cultural Liturgies*, worship does it all. To counter the liturgy of politics means to undertake the liturgy of worship. "Worship is the 'civics' of the city of God, habituating us as a people to desire the shalom that God desires for creation" (16).

If worship à la Smith included preaching, I'd have been satisfied with his thesis, but alas! "As I've already shown in ... *Desiring the Kingdom*, the rites of worship—confession, offering, baptism, communion—carry a social imaginary that is an inescapably 'political' vision of a people called as a royal priesthood" (53). Preaching—and that includes spiritual formation by Scripture and its Author—finds no place, it seems, in Smith's conception of how a divine kingdom is established, how divine loves are inculcated! For him, "liturgical catechesis [in worship] is the theological exercise by which we come to understand our heavenly citizenship" (197).

Thus, unfortunately, there is no vision of Scripture spiritually forming the people of God, pericope by pericope, as citizens of a world in front of the text—the kingdom of, and according to, God. Without such a comprehension of spiritual formation, without catching the thrust and theology of Scripture pericope by pericope, we will hard pressed to discover specifics on what kind of life God's people, citizens of a new kingdom, ought to lead. The revelation of such specifics and their concrete application into real life are, of course, the functions of pericope-by-pericope preaching.

At one point, Smith confesses: "My goal is to make things more complex, not more simple. These are knotty realities, and our theoretical and theological accounts should be sufficiently complex" (14). In this Smith is successful. There's far too much interaction with other writers which an average reader (like me) will not have read or be immediately familiar with. Just in the 33 pages of Chapter 1 are references to works by 51 discrete authors, the vast majority of whom were unfamiliar to me. Indeed, at one point we even have third-order references: "VanDrunen sees Luther as simply extending Augustine" (46). That might be proper for a thesis or dissertation, but it is too esoteric for a popular book. The plethora of references also probably dictated the elimination of a bibliography at the end of the work. There is something to be said for rendering ideas accessible, especially those that are consequential. Convinced though I am that *Awaiting the King* was a book worth writing, my recommendation is that Smith also provide the rest of us a "dumbed-down" version of it, just as he did for the second volume of his trilogy. And may it come soon!



*The Worlds of the Preacher: Navigating Biblical, Cultural, and Personal Contexts.* Edited by Scott M. Gibson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018. 978-0801099618, 164 pp., \$22.99.

Reviewer: Gary L. Shultz Jr., First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Florida.

Preachers work to connect the world of the Bible to the world of today. They are not concerned with just the world in general, however, but the particular world of a particular congregation. As preachers work to connect these worlds, they cannot help but do so through their own personal worlds. Relevant communication of God's truth requires constant attention to all of these worlds. Preachers must grasp not only the history, language, and culture of the Bible, but the history, language, and culture of their listeners, all the while paying attention to themselves and how they know and experience God and the world.

The goal of this book is to clarify, explain, and help preachers navigate these worlds. It serves as a tribute to Haddon Robinson, the late seminary president and professor who wrote the influential textbook, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, now in its third edition. One of Robinson's most widely known lectures is "The Worlds of the Preacher," where Robinson lays out four worlds and how preachers must begin to navigate and connect them: the ancient world of the Bible, the modern world, the world of the preacher's listeners, and the preacher's personal world. This lecture is the first chapter of the book. Each subsequent chapter, written by someone affiliated with one of the three schools at which Robinson served, explores different aspects of these worlds.

The two essays following Robinson's essay begin where Robinson always began, with the world of the Bible. Two essays near the end of the book then circle back to this emphasis. Chapter 2 considers the world of the Old Testament, pointing out the major areas preachers must concern themselves with in order to understand that world, and then describing some ways the Old Testament can be connected with today's world. Chapter 3 considers the world of the New Testament, exploring how both the New Testament and preaching are theology applied, which means biblical preachers must think deeply about both the thinking of the biblical authors and the thinking of their contemporary listeners. Chapter 8 discusses the mission of preaching as it is found in Scripture and carried

out today, while Chapter 9 highlights the importance of history in knowing both the world of the Bible and the modern world.

Four other essays focus on the worlds to which preachers speak, the modern world and the particular world of their listeners. Chapter 5 discusses how ethnic and cultural issues impact the preacher and preaching, and includes several suggestions for effectively exegeting culture. Chapter 6 leads preachers to analyze and adapt their preaching to their listeners, walking the preacher through several different questions and application tools. Chapter 7 emphasizes the importance of understanding local culture, history, and customs, while Chapter 10 demonstrates how preachers can effectively communicate in a world dominated by visual images. The inner world of the preacher is examined in Chapter 4, providing suggestions to foster growth and spiritual maturity.

As a book that purposely builds on Haddon Robinson's insights and methods there are few novel ideas present, but many helpful reminders. Each preacher is stronger in exegeting certain worlds than in others, so all preachers will benefit in some way from this book. As I recently began a new pastorate in another state, I was helpfully reminded of the importance of learning about the history, culture, and language of my new church and my new community, and how this knowledge would strengthen my preaching. I was encouraged to reflect more deeply on how I understand and experience Scripture, and the role my spiritual maturity will play in what my congregation hears from me. I was renewed in my calling to apply the theology of the biblical world to this particular people in this particular place. Our world today needs to hear the truth found in the Bible's world, and preachers who practice the insights found in these essays will help that to happen.



*From Hermeneutics to Exegesis: The Trajectory of Biblical Interpretation.* By Matthew R. Malcolm. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2018. 978-1462743773, 176 pp., \$24.99

Reviewer: Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

Malcolm, who did his graduate work at Nottingham with Anthony Thiselton, is the dean of the faculty of liberal arts at Universitas Pelita Harapan, in Indonesia. His book "gives attention first to the field of hermeneutics (which is more abstract), and then to the practice of exegesis (which is more applied)" (xv). After an introductory chapter, there follow six chapters on hermeneutics, a transitional

chapter, and three more on exegesis. Obviously, the focus is more on hermeneutics than on exegesis.

Malcolm discusses the various usages of “hermeneutics,” finally settling on this: “Hermeneutics means the study of what is happening when effective interpretation or understanding takes place” (5). And “exegesis” is the “intentional, attentive, respectful interpretation of a particular written text” (6). Together, it sounds as if “hermeneutics means the study of what is happening when [exegesis] takes place.” I wasn’t sure of the value of the distinction thereby made between the two.

The chapter on general and special hermeneutics laid out the differences between each and touched briefly upon theological interpretation/hermeneutics, as well. “If general hermeneutics refers to the study of human understanding, then interpretation of the Bible necessarily falls within its scope” (54). But a practitioner of “Christian interpretation” (special hermeneutics) “adopts the faithful prejudice of approaching the Bible as a divine inspired witness to the Lord Jesus Christ” (54). I would agree that Scripture is christological, but lacking any fine-tuning of how Scripture is christological (I believe it is christiconically so—see below), the book only leaves readers, especially us preachers, without a lifeline.

Adopting Thiselton’s two-horizon hermeneutic, Malcolm’s model of interpretation reminds us that when we attend to the biblical author’s horizon and to our own readerly horizon, we must consider: 1) Realm: who is the author and where does the work belong (and who are the readers and where do they belong)? 2) Mission: why was the work written (and why are we reading it)? 3) Emergence: what exigence drives the work (and what cultural milieu drives readers)? 4) Reception: how has the work been received in history (and how has the work been received in the readers’ theological tradition)? (80–87, 104–108). I found these caveats and considerations the most helpful items in Malcolm’s book.

Unfortunately, Malcolm lapses into a standard christocentric understanding of the Old Testament in his exegesis chapters: “It is essential ... for the Christian interpreter to ask how any Old Testament passage under consideration relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (138). Such a reading is untenable for preachers who, with their congregations, approach the text pericope by pericope (something non-preacher scholars seem to disregard). In such a transaction, the life-change called for by each preaching text (pericope) portrays a facet (or a pixel, if you will) of the image of Christ, calling readers of Scripture and listeners of sermons to align their lives with the christicon in that particular pericope. But Malcolm does not see it that way. His illustrative example employs the story of David and Goliath (140–149). Sadly, his exegesis omits much of the intricacies of the text: the similarities between the Philistine’s armor and Saul’s;

the fact that both Saul, the king, and Eliab, David's brother, were exceedingly tall themselves (giants?); the deliberately excessive use of "man" in the narrative; and all of these adding up to the text's thrust/force regarding the stature, resources, and experience necessary for a child of God in a battle for God's glory, God's name, God's reputation. Instead, Malcolm probes the world behind the text for what happened, rather than privileging the text and world it projects in front. And, not surprisingly, after this exercise Malcolm wants us to go typologically to the New Testament and see Christ retrospectively in 1 Samuel 17. He would have the preacher say, "The Christian reader cannot help but recall the burden of the New Testament that Christ himself is God's surprising, conquering stone" (141)! Malcolm's style is accessible, the book is small enough (though the price is a bit hefty for 170-odd pages), and the contents form a quick and adequate survey of the field, perhaps best suited as an introductory textbook on hermeneutics.



*Preaching by the Book.* By R. Scott Pace. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2018. 978-1462773343, 123 pp., \$19.99.

Reviewer: Alex Kato, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Scott Pace's *Preaching by the Book* is a methodical preaching primer full of biblical citations and sound advice. It continues Broadus's legacy of propositional preaching, representing the thesis that prioritizes the individual text. While homileticians will find few new proposals here, it could aid preachers who have not studied the craft in a structured way. Instructors or mentors seeking a concise, practical, biblically-based volume might consider the book. Pace covers the standard topics with frankness and expertise, and his work focuses many fruitful conversations about preaching.

Following an opening chapter on homiletical theology, the book mostly follows a seven-step process for sermon development: (1) Begin with prayer; (2) Read the passage; (3) Discover the point; (4) Study the parts; (5) Identify the precepts; (6) Apply the principles; and (7) Develop our plan. The closing chapters treat introductions, illustrations, and invitations.

Pace's process is not novel, but he does emphasize steps that some take for granted. His section on beginning with prayer is robust and specific, and he returns to the Spirit's work at various points throughout the book. His chapters on reading and planning both emphasize following the text's lead in not only

content but also form. The final section, on invitations, is a welcome, practical guide for those who are learning to offer one every week. While new preachers will often need more guidance than this thin volume offers, it will orient them to many vital homiletical aims.

A few traits limit the book's utility. Pace spends extensive time in the prescriptive mode, often rightly so. However, intertwining theological declarations with practical suggestions, he rarely differentiates the relative weights of his pronouncements. For example, he asserts not only that "Scripture must be the source and substance of our sermons" (12), but also that "sermon points should be present-tense statements that use first-person plural language" (60), and that "we must always be prepared to receive people by having some kind of breath neutralizer (breath strip, small mint, etc.) that we discreetly place in our mouth as we transition to the invitation" (110). Also, though Pace extensively cites Scripture, other references are sparse; as such, advanced students of preaching will need to find their own resources if they wish to further investigate statements they find intriguing or controversial.

Instructors or mentors considering *Preaching by the Book* may wish to know that it assumes a complementarian stance. That said, Pace's convictions are evident only in his sporadic use of the term "spokesmen" and one section that refers to "our wives."

Readers of this Journal, especially those in Southern Baptist or similar traditions, should consider *Preaching by the Book* as an introductory text for new or aspiring preachers. While it is methodical in style and is not a gateway to the academic study of preaching, it is thoughtful and practical, and it prioritizes not only Scripture but also the Spirit. In particular, novice preachers who seem to have the gift and the itch would find here a dependable method, a myriad of tips, and a wise guide.



*Expository Exultation*. By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018. 978-0435561139, 328pp., \$29.99.

Reviewer: Ken Langley, Christ Community Church, Zion, Illinois.

John Piper believes preaching should be both "expository," a rigorous clarification of the realities portrayed in Scripture, and "exultation," a worshipful embodiment

of the preacher's treasuring of those realities. This book unpacks those two words in the title.

Piper focuses on the most common kind of preaching, preaching in worship services. The first few chapters argue that God has ordained preaching not only to herald the gospel to the unconverted in evangelistic settings, but as part of the worship life of his gathered people. Preaching, rightly done, serves worship and is worship: through preaching, God awakens and intensifies worship in hearers and preacher alike.

After establishing the setting and purpose of preaching, Piper discusses how preaching becomes a means of worship. On one hand, expository exultation is a humanly impossible act effected by the Holy Spirit. On the other, God is pleased to use natural powers—clear thinking, valid logic, and compelling speech—to achieve preaching's ends. Preachers would be wise to reflect on both the supernatural and natural dimensions of their calling; to emulate Piper's practical dependency in "How I Pursued the Miracle in My Preaching" (chapter 7) and to practice the right use—and there is a right use—of eloquence "lest the cross be emptied of its power" (chapter 9).

Most of the second half of the book advocates close attention to the words and grammar of the Bible so that the reality to which words and grammar point might be seen and rejoiced in, not only the specific realities of each pericope but their overarching realities: God's glory as goal, Christ's cross as ground, and the Spirit's enablement as means of Christian living and preaching. Piper urges preachers not to ignore either the particularities of texts or these grand unifying themes of the Bible. Ignoring the specifics, as is sometimes done in redemptive-historical preaching, mutes what these texts contribute to the Bible's message and makes all sermons sound the same: You can't live this text; Christ did it for you; accept his imputed righteousness. Ignoring the grand themes leads to moralistic preaching: Obey this injunction; follow this example; just do it.

The final section of the book applies what Piper said about the goal, ground, and means of Christian experience to preaching the Old Testament. Our Lord's fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets means that we do not preach what is no longer offered or commanded under the new covenant, recognizing that Christ's atoning death purchased all the good that God offers in Scripture. But this doesn't mean every sermon should make a beeline past the particulars of the text to get to Calvary: Piper's caution about this should give pause to those who tend to do that.

No one familiar with John Piper will be surprised that a strength of this book is a contagious passion for preaching. Piper values and loves preaching; he's thought about the craft for many years, and every preacher will read this, Piper's

fullest treatment of the subject, with profit. Another strength is its warning to Christ-centered preachers: even though Piper would probably self-identify as Christocentric, he does not think every sermon should be about the cross at the expense of the more specific theology of the pericope. Also valuable is Piper's discussion of what Paul meant and did not mean in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2: rhetoric and eloquence are not dismissed as irrelevant or worse, but given a legitimate though limited role in getting the message heard so the Spirit can perform his miraculous work in listeners.

Some readers may also appreciate Piper's discussion of seeing every text in light of the author's larger vision of reality. He develops at length a case study, Paul's command in Romans 12:13 to practice hospitality, showing how this injunction should be read in light of eighteen doctrinal convictions Paul expresses elsewhere. But it's doubtful Paul had all that theology in mind when he wrote "practice hospitality." Perhaps the nearer context is a better place to look for theological grounding, avoiding one of the chief dangers of topical preaching, stringing together texts that don't actually belong together. Also unconvincing is Piper's attempt in more than one place to prove a Trinitarian structure in his case for preaching. Father, Son, and Spirit are surely all involved in preaching, but the book's explication of each Person's role is not persuasive.

Oddly, the book seems overly repetitive. Summaries and reviews of preceding chapters are helpful, but here they're overdone.

John Piper is deservedly respected for his Bible-saturated, God-exalting, pastorally wise writing. This culmination of thirty-plus years of reflection on preaching will undoubtedly further appreciation for his larger body of work.



*Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture.* By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 978-1433553493, 430 pp., \$32.99.

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

Why would anyone read the Bible? And, how should s/he read it? These are questions Piper addresses. Those who know his style will be grateful for Piper's clear expression as he guides them into both mind- and soul-challenging spiritual depths. Both the substance and length of Piper's development of these crucial questions are worth the serious preacher's attention.

Here is the author's proposal: "The Ultimate Goal of Reading the Bible [is] that God's infinite worth and beauty would be exalted in the everlasting, white-hot worship of the blood-bought bride of Christ from every people, language, tribe, and nation" (35). Six implications of that proposal are expounded over the next ten chapters, comprising Part 1 of this volume. Not untypically, Piper's use of Scripture offers selected verses as examples of his proposals. His approach is not truly expositional, but rather topical proof-texting. This use of Scripture does not provide a model for preachers, but is consistent with its use by systematic theologians.

Part 2, "The Supernatural Act of Reading the Bible," develops another implication of the Piper's proposal. "A proper reading of the Bible is a supernatural act" (179). Only those whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of God can see God's glory through the reading and/or hearing of the Scriptures, with the result that only those who are being supernaturally transformed can savor his glory. "No matter how natural the process of reading is, and no matter how natural the objects discovered are, no reading and no discovery happen without dependence on God or without seeing all things in relation to his worth and beauty—if we are reading the way God means for his book to be read" (180–81). The necessity of supernatural illumination does not, however, eliminate the human responsibility of reading the Scriptures with the expectation that God will reveal himself.

Part 3, "The Natural Act of Reading the Bible Supernaturally," comprises nearly half the book. Depending on God's supernatural aid, the human reader must bring to bear all his natural abilities to read and grasp the text's intent; to look long and hard at the words on the page with the expectation that they will not only give up meaning, but also accomplish God's purpose of revealing his glory. What follows is a recital of basic Bible study methods from Piper's own practice. He turns next to the "ordinary aim of actual, eye-on-the-page reading" which is "to grasp the meaning of the text," that is, "what the author intended to communicate by his words" (299, 300, 301). Piper offers five reasons for viewing meaning as "what the author intended to communicate."

In the Bible, God intends through the intentions of the human authors, and in addition, God, communicating in the words of the text, "always has more in mind . . . than the human authors are fully aware of" (321). Here, Piper seems to imply that beyond the semantic (saying) meaning of a biblical text there is a pragmatic (doing) meaning that invites the reader to see and savor God's glory. In order to understand both the semantic and pragmatic meanings of a text the reader must apply patient looking, that is, "active reading and aggressive attentiveness" (337). Humbly interrogating the text with questions about its words

and phrases, employing sentence diagramming or arcing in order to get at the nitty-gritty of its grammar and syntax, which makes sense of its propositions, enables the reader to “come to terms with the author” (354). This mechanical approach has limits. While identifying propositions may prove helpful when engaging epistolary or didactic writings, this approach will not prove beneficial in interpreting the majority of Scripture, its narrative material.

Piper’s proposals are fortified with the support of hundreds of biblical references and with quotations from scores of poets, philosophers, and theologians. While the content is deep and thick, the divisions of the argument into smaller sections throughout each chapter make comprehension more manageable.

To sum up: An intentional and focused engagement with Piper’s text will benefit any preacher. The very nature of the subject matter, seeing and savoring God’s glory, also requires a reverential, devotional approach. The result of such a reading should prove incrementally transforming.



*Understanding the Gospels: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching.* Edited by Herbert W. Bateman and Benjamin I. Simpson. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017. 978-0825444166, 283 pp., \$19.99.

Reviewer: Kevin Maples, First Baptist Church Madisonville, Madisonville, Kentucky.

*Understanding the Gospels* was written to honor Darrell Bock for his contributions to evangelical scholarship on the Gospels. Its authors comprise former students and current or former colleagues of Bock. The book aims “to cultivate a greater appreciation for the Gospels” (23), thereby elevating their use in both the classroom and the pulpit. Although the book is written from an evangelical perspective, it effectively interacts with a wide array of voices, referencing and engaging various positions.

As the title indicates, the intended audience is preachers and teachers. The book could be a valuable resource as an introductory text for a Gospels or New Testament survey course, a refresher read for seminary graduates, a reference book on various New Testament issues, or a sermon preparation tool for pastors. Although written by fourteen different contributors, a seamless flow and consistent structure reveals careful planning and editing. Individual chapters or

sections may be read independently, enabling its use as a handbook referencing individual Gospels and discrete New Testament issues.

The book is organized into four sections: “Interpreting and Communicating the Gospels,” “Understanding the Gospels,” “Applying the Gospels,” and “Discovery Studies in the Gospels.” In the opening chapter of the first section, Herbert Bateman distinguishes between two historical contexts of the Gospels—the context of the life of Jesus and the context of the recipients of the Gospels—and urges pastors and teachers to keep both contexts in mind as they interpret the Gospels. Joel Williams draws from recent discussions about the narrative shape of the Gospels and offers practical steps to take and common missteps to avoid while interpreting narrative passages in the Gospels. In the final chapter of this section, Donald Sunukjian makes an excellent contribution by demonstrating how different sermon forms can be utilized to reflect the Gospel writer’s flow of thought and lead the listener to the theological truth of the passage.

In the second section, “Understanding the Gospels,” a chapter is devoted to each of the four Gospels offering answers to why this Gospel was written, what the major interpretive problems/issues in this Gospel are, what central truth this Gospel writer was seeking to communicate, what the significance of this Gospel is for today, and how one should teach or preach this Gospel. This section bridges some of that gap between New Testament studies and preaching by demonstrating how to apply insights from New Testament scholarship in the pulpit.

Craig Blaising opens the third section, “Applying the Gospels,” with an overview of how the early church utilized the Gospels which, he argues, is important for the pastor and teacher to know, “if for no other reason than to avoid the simplistic errors that come from historical isolationism” (142). In the next chapter, Timothy Ralston builds upon Blaising’s history of the early church by tracing the use of the Gospels in worship to the present day, urging readers to restore the Gospels to the prominent place in the worship service they once held. In the last chapter of this section, Michael Burer deals with the Gospels, discussing “both generic and specific issues related to application of this genre” (170).

The final section, “Discovery Studies in the Gospels,” introduces four major areas of discussion: the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament, historical Jesus, Paul’s relationship to the gospel tradition, and biblical theological themes in the Gospels. Each of these areas receives a chapter length overview sufficient to orient the student or pastor to the major contours of recent Scholarship. Finally, the book concludes with a long list of selected resources. This short book covers a large expanse of issues related to the preaching and teaching

of the Gospels and would provide an excellent resource for either the classroom or the pastor's study.