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Manuscripts: Though most articles and book reviews are assigned, submissions are welcome. They must be typed and double-spaced. All articles will be judged to determine suitability for publication. Please send articles to the General Editor, Scott M. Gibson, at scott_gibson@baylor.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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PREACHING THEN AND NOW

SCOTT M. GIBSON

General Editor

The preacher is not only an exegete, but he or she is also a sociologist, an anthropologist, and an historian. We live in the biblical text, but we also exist in the present world, attempting to connect the ancient truth with today.

The preaching professor and the weekly preacher share the same ground, we traverse the same territory of investment in the Bible and its impact on men and women and boys and girls throughout history. In this edition of the *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* we look backwards, we consider the present, and we look to the future as we reflect on preaching.

At the October 2018 gathering of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, I, along with my colleagues at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, explored the "Baylor University Most Effective Preachers in the English-Speaking Language World Survey." There were two plenary presentations examining the 1996 and the 2018 survey results, comparing and contrasting these studies, providing background and analysis. The first article is the detailed address presented to the Society—looking backward and at the present.

Robert L. Compere's article that is an analytical study of John A. Broadus's classic textbook on preaching, also engages helpfully with the past. This article is a follow-up and final essay on the revisions that took place by later editors on Broadus's *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, first published in 1870.

While my article on the Baylor study and Compere's article on Broadus explore the past, Steven D. Mathewson engages with the present in a response to Abraham Kuruvilla. Kuruvilla, professor of pastoral theology and a past president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, recently wrote an essay titled, "Time to Kill the Big Idea? A Fresh Look at Preaching," in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* in 2018. Readers will find Mathewson's response enlightening.

The future of preaching is engaged by Gregory K. Hollifield in his exploration of what it will take for preachers to be effective later in this century. Hollifield focuses on the need for preachers to be aware of what an emerging secondary orality requires of preachers today and in the future.

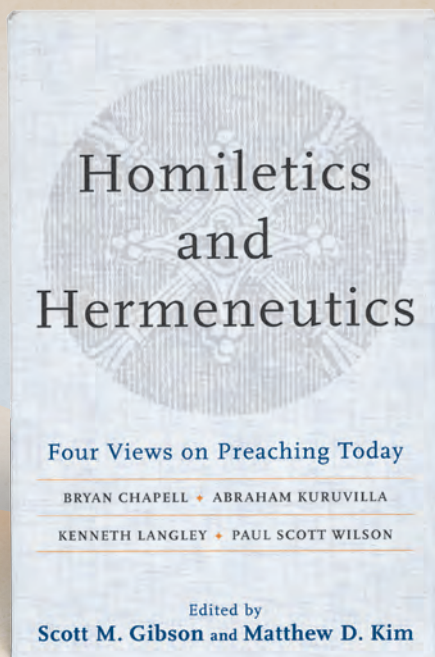
Joel C. Gregory spoke to the attendees at the October 2018 gathering during the Saturday lunch. Gregory addressed the future of preaching and the trends he considers will be shifting over the next several years, trends that will have an impact on the way we preach, and possibly the way we teach preaching.

Dennis Phelps, outgoing president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society preached the President's sermon on Friday morning of the society's meeting. His sermon from Exodus 33 is a helpful reminder to all who preach.

This edition ends with a rich book review section. Edited and curated with skill by Abraham Kuruvilla, this segment of the journal provides helpful insight and critique of some of the most recently published books in the field of homiletics.

The past, present, and future of preaching is an on-going discussion and study. This edition of the journal is intended to push our thinking in preaching so that we might be better equipped to understand it and to teach and practice it well.

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THE BAYLOR UNIVERSITY MOST EFFECTIVE PREACHERS IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD SURVEY: BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

The impact and recognition of Baylor's prestigious 1996 and 2018 Most Effective Preachers in the English-Speaking World Survey is yet to be measured. This paper seeks to explore both the 1996 and 2018 surveys, the origins of both surveys and the strengths and weaknesses of the study. In addition, the surveys will be evaluated in light of their recognition not only in the field of homiletics, but also on a more popular level. The paper will first examine the 1996 survey and then the 2018 survey. A comparison of the two surveys will follow with analysis.

THE 1996 MOST EFFECTIVE PREACHERS SURVEY

As part of Baylor University's Sesquicentennial that was to take place in 1995, President Herbert H. Reynolds¹ sought to highlight the place of preaching by conducting a survey of the preaching world in order to devise a list of the top twelve preachers in the English-speaking world.² The study was set in motion in 1993.³ "Baylor's desire to examine the nature of effective preaching is drawn from its traditional relationship with Baptist churches, its commitment to preparing ministry students and the opening last year of the George W. Truett Theological Seminary" noted Larry Lyon in a 1996 press announcement from Baylor's Media Communications on the release of the results of the twelve most effective preachers survey.⁴ For Reynolds, he wanted, "the possibility of making a statement to the Christian world about Baylor's commitment to the proclamation of a Christian message."⁵ Reynolds retired from the presidency in 1995. Under the presidency of Robert B. Sloan, the survey continued.⁶ "It seems appropriate for a

Christian institution, especially a Baptist [institution], to recognize great preachers,” underscored Sloan.⁷

Various members comprised the initial committee, including Glenn O. Hilburn,⁸ chair of the religion department, Milton Cunningham, director of denominational ministries at the university,⁹ sociology professor, J. Larry Lyon and W. Glenn Jonas, at that time a recent Baylor Ph.D. graduate in church history. Jonas, also a local pastor, had been conducting post-doctoral research through the Oral History Institute at Baylor University. Lyons and Jonas became the directors of the study.¹⁰

Lyon was tasked to develop the survey and engage in statistical analysis. Jonas composed a list of contacts for the survey with professors of preaching, using the internet and information from the Association of Theological Schools.¹¹ As Jonas notes, “we defined it [the English-speaking world—the reach of the survey] as North America, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Australia.¹²

The study set out to answer two questions: 1) what qualities define effective preaching, and 2) who best incorporates those qualities?¹³ From the contact information that Jonas gathered, Jonas and Lyons sent a survey—via United States mail—to 333 homiletics professors from “seminaries, divinity schools and other ministry training centers in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.”¹⁴ The survey included “denominational as well as nondenominational schools....”¹⁵ This first survey was developed to determine the qualities of effective preaching.

Of the 333 surveys sent, there were 151 responses. “Most respondents listed several questions that they considered essential.” An average of five questions were provided by the respondents.¹⁶ Jonas and Lyons state with humor, “Some professors simply sent us their course syllabi; one sent a videotaped lecture from his homiletics class.”¹⁷

The next task was to compile the responses. Jonas recalls, “We went into a conference room in the Carroll Library [at Baylor University] and spread them out on the tables to find if there were trends.”¹⁸ Jonas and Lyons observe, “We compiled all the qualities they suggested and grouped them into ... seven broad categories.”¹⁹ As Lyons observes, “In some respects, the definition of what is effective preaching is just as important as the determination of who is the most effective.”²⁰

The Categories of Effectiveness

The broad categories of effectiveness Jonas and Lyon discovered as they grouped the responses from the first mailed survey are as follows:

Biblical/exegetical. Effective sermons are based in scripture and exhibit good exegetical preparation. "Effective preaching is based on solid biblical exegesis," one respondent remarked. "The fabric of the sermon is woven from the scripture text," said another.

Relevance. Effective sermons are relevant to listeners. The sermon "is pertinent to [people's] ordinary daily struggles to live the gospel." "The preacher should bridge over from the historical to the contemporary setting in order to address the cultural milieu of the congregation."

Preacher's persona. Effective sermons reflect the preacher's own life experiences and commitment to the Christian faith. They combine passion with integrity. "The preacher should have fully absorbed, or be fully absorbed in, the dominant theme or image of the sermon. Their words are more than woodenly read or recited—they become alive with the preacher's passion."

Theology/orthodoxy. Effective sermons are faithful to Christian tradition. They are doctrinally "within the parameters of the Christian faith." "The sermon must touch on or reflect (if not deal with directly) some of the effective Christian truths; even if the style is folksy or amusing the content must not be trivial."

Sermon structure. Effective sermons are structured around a central focus or theme, with a clear introduction, main body and conclusion. The sermon is organized in a "logical style that progressively builds the main argument or proposition of the sermon." It "should demonstrate clear thinking [and] have a structure...that flows easily and naturally and contain[s] language that can be easily understood."

Effective communication. Effective sermons clearly communicate the central idea through use of simple language and illustrations so as to convince the listeners of the message. Effective preaching is "persuasive" in that it "convinces or convicts the hearer." The effective preacher "effectively communicates a sense of God's presence and authority."

Delivery/style. Effective sermons are delivered skillfully, with appropriate poise, body language, gestures, eye contact and voice quality.

"The preacher always displays proper pronunciation, articulation, phrasing, rate, tone, pitch, and gesture." "Does the sermon have aural style and appeal? Is it conversational in tone? Is its language directed to the ear rather than to the eye? Is the sermon poetic; is it playful with words and oral images?"²¹

Now that the list of the effective qualities was determined, the second part of the study was next.

The Second Part

Armed with the seven qualities of effectiveness, Lyons and Jonas sent a follow up letter and survey to determine the answer to the second question, who best incorporates those qualities? Jonas remembers, "We sent a follow up letter to those who responded to our first letter. 'All of your responses noted the qualities of great preaching. Please provide us ten to twelve names.' And they responded well."²² Further, Lyons and Jonas note, "We also asked for nominations from the editors of American and Canadian religious periodicals, and added to the list the African-American preachers cited by *Ebony* magazine in its November 1993 issue and names suggested by some of the nominated preachers."²³ The replies from the follow-up survey produced a list of 1,548 preachers from 341 respondents of homiletics professors and editors of religious periodicals.²⁴ "When all were compiled into one master list, 12 remarkable individuals emerged as those mentioned most often."²⁵

The list of twelve effective preachers included, as noted in Jonas and Lyons:

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., senior fellow of the Woodstock Theological Center in Washington, D.C. He was been president of the American Theological Society, managing editor of *Theological Studies* and theologian in residence at Georgetown University, and has written numerous books and articles on preaching.

Fred Craddock, the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament, Emeritus, in the Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He has held several pastorates in Tennessee and Oklahoma and has lectured and published extensively on preaching.

James Forbes, senior minister of the Riverside Church in New York City. Forbes is the first African-American minister to serve as pastor of this church, one of the largest multicultural congregations in the nation. Prior to coming to Riverside in 1989, Forbes pastored churches in Virginia, and Wilmington, North Carolina. He has served as a faculty member at Union Theological Seminary and Auburn Theological Seminary.

Billy Graham, of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. A Southern Baptist who was ordained in 1940, he has led crusades throughout the world and conducts his ministry through weekly radio programs, television specials, a newspaper column, *Decision* magazine, and World Wide Pictures. Graham is regularly listed in Gallup polls as one of the "ten most admired men in the world" and has appeared on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Life*.

Thomas Long, the Francis Landey Patton Professor of Preaching and Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary. Long began his professional career as a Presbyterian pastor in Atlanta, Georgia, but has served on the faculty of various seminaries for the past 20 years. He is the editor of *Theology Today* and is the senior homiletics editor of the *New Interpreter's Bible*. He has written many books and articles on preaching, including "Beavis and Butt-Head Get Saved."

Lloyd Ogilvie, is chaplain of the United States Senate and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Hollywood, California. He hosts a nationally syndicated radio and television program, "Let God Love You." Ogilvie has authored numerous books and articles on preaching and is general editor of the 32-volume *Communicator's Commentary*.

Haddon Robinson, the Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Previously he has served as president of the Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary and as a professor of homiletics at Dallas Theological Seminary. He was president of the Evangelical Theological Society and has written extensively on the subject of preaching. His book *Biblical Preaching* (1980) is currently used at over 100 seminaries and Bible colleges.

John R.W. Stott, rector emeritus at All Souls Church, Langham Place, London, and president of the London Institute for Contemporary

Christianity. He was chaplain to Queen Elizabeth from 1959-1991. Stott is president of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship and has initiated a strong and continuing Third World ministry.

Charles Swindoll, president of the Dallas Theological Seminary. He has held pastorates in Texas, Massachusetts and California. Swindoll's ministry extends internationally through numerous books and articles as well as a sizable cassette tape distribution system called "Insight for Living." He has been honored as clergyman of the year by the Religious Heritage of America.

Barbara Brown Taylor, rector at Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church in Clarkesville, Georgia. Previously she spent nine years in urban ministry at All Saints' Church in Atlanta, Georgia. She has taught at Chandler School of Theology, the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest, McCormick Seminary and the College of Preachers in Washington, D.C. She has written four books, including *The Preaching Life* and *Gospel Medicine* and serves on the editorial board of the *Living Pulpit*.

Gardner C. Taylor, pastor emeritus of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York. He has lectured on preaching at Colgate, Harvard, Yale and other seminaries across the nation. Taylor has been called "the dean of the nation's black preachers" by *Time*.

William H. Willimon, the dean of the chapel and professor of Christian ministry at Duke University. He preaches each Sunday in the Duke Chapel and directs the campus ministry programs. He was among the first alumni to receive an Award of Distinction from Yale Divinity School and serves on the editorial boards of *The Christian Ministry*, *The Christian Century*, *Pulpit Digest*, *Preaching*, *the Door* and *Leadership*. He has written 37 books, including *What's Right with the Church* and *Worship as Pastoral Care*. His work for *Pulpit Resource* is used by over 8,000 pastors in the U.S. and Canada and Australia.²⁶

The Findings of the List

At least five or six evangelicals are represented with several mainline preachers filling out the remainder of the twelve. Jonas and Lyons observe, "Billy Graham and Charles Swindoll represent the 'electronic church,' while Haddon Robinson

of the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary represents a more scholarly evangelical perspective." They continue, "Fred Craddock, James Forbes, Thomas Long, Lloyd Ogilvie, William Willimon and Barbara Brown Taylor are from mainline churches."²⁷ They observe, "The ratio between evangelical and mainline is somewhat surprising." Their reasoning is,

The high exposure of the electronic church and the statistical declines in mainline Christianity led us to expect that the list would be dominated by television and radio preachers. However, even the mainline representatives make extensive use of modern communication technologies, and these have enhanced their global recognition.²⁸

"Each one has a pretty slick publishing arm—pamphlets, videotapes, articles in journals and popular magazines," observed Larry Lyon.²⁹

Lyon also noted the preponderance of preachers from the East Coast of the United States,³⁰ with John R.W. Stott being the exception from even further east, Great Britain!

The list includes one Catholic preacher, Walter J. Burghardt. Jonas and Lyon state, "Walter J. Burghardt's presence on the list challenges the stereotype that Catholicism places little emphasis on homiletics. Burghardt has written extensively on the subject of preaching, and his influence outside Roman Catholic circles is evident in the fact that so many of our resources nominated him."³¹

The inclusion of Billy Graham on the 1996 list brought a measure of tension. Those on the committee who were to the left did not want Graham included on the list, while those on the right argued, "how can Baylor put out a list of great preachers and not have Billy Graham on the list?"³² The subsequent results of the survey demonstrated Graham's recognized place on the list, despite some opposition.

There are two African-American preachers on the 1996 list, James Forbes and Gardner C. Taylor.³³ Only one woman was featured on the list, Barbara Brown Taylor. "Disappointing, if not surprising, is the fact that only one woman, Barbara Brown Taylor, is on the list," remark Jonas and Lyon. They continue:

There may be two explanations for this. We can read it positively, and see her presence as a reflection of the advances that women have made in the clergy. It is unlikely that any woman would have been considered an effective preacher a generation ago, much less named as one in an international survey. One [sic] the other hand, the presence of only one

woman on our list suggests that women still do not have full acceptance as preachers.³⁴

There may yet be another reason why only two African-American preachers and one female preacher were included on the 1996 list: the constituents of the survey sampling. Of those surveyed—homiletics professors in seminaries and universities—the preponderance of them are white males. This is not an indictment but simply an observation. These professors were polled to determine the qualities that determine effective preaching. Their homiletical expertise would suit them well to determine the criteria. Then, they were asked once again to provide who best incorporates these qualities. They responded as one might expect—they drew from their own experience, which would be, for either mainline or evangelical preaching professors, those whom they considered to be effective preachers, who mostly were white males.

Does this invalidate the findings of the study? Not necessarily. What it does demonstrate is the way in which studies can be tilted by various elements taking place in culture and in the study itself. Certainly, one can appreciate the variety in the findings of the study—the preachers included were from the mainline church, evangelicals, women, people of color. This is a strength. Yet, the study reminds us of the weaknesses that are inherent in any research of this type which any thoughtful observer will want to consider when analyzing the data.

Lyon and Jonas had plans to further the influence of the study, including a coffee table book.³⁵ “The William Morris agency would’ve produced a book that would include a sermon and were even talking about doing CDs,” explained Jonas. “We were going to go ahead with a plan to produce a book.” But the hopes to move ahead with this book project and others that Jonas and Lyon had in mind were halted.³⁶

The preachers were invited to come to Baylor and preach in the chapel the following school year. “Each of the 12 preachers,” notes a Baylor press release about the survey, “will be invited to participate in conferences or to deliver sermons on the Baylor campus during the 1996-97 academic year and to receive the newly created ‘Baylor Great Preachers’ award.”³⁷ Most of the preachers came to preach throughout the year at Baylor’s chapel.³⁸

Perhaps the most recognized media attention the 1996 survey received was a feature article in *Newsweek* magazine written by Pulitzer-prize winning author Kenneth L. Woodward, “Heard Any Good Sermons Lately?” Woodward reported the outcomes of the Baylor study and interviewed several of those found on the most effective preachers list, calling the preachers “Baylor’s round apostolic 12.” Among those quoted are Long, Forbes, Brown Taylor, Craddock, Willimon

and Burghardt, who, as a Jesuit complained that many priests use the eucharist as “an excuse for giving bad sermons—one reason why some Catholics are leaving the church for Pentecostal congregations.”³⁹

Outgrowth of the 1996 Survey

Since the Baylor University, the progenitor Most Effective Preachers in the English-speaking World, did not capitalize on the publication or video possibilities of the study, others stepped in. Perhaps the best recognized promoter of the Baylor Effective Preachers survey is Bill Turpie, at that time associated with Odyssey Network⁴⁰ where he worked as a producer and reporter for Odyssey. He recognized the value of the Baylor survey and developed a series of videos, “Great Preachers,” which aired on the Odyssey Network. Turpie explains,

...when Baylor University released its poll a few years ago of the most effective preachers in the English-speaking world, the Odyssey Network decided a series on preaching made good programming sense. Thus was born the series Great Preachers. The program provides an introduction to the featured preacher, an edited version of a message, and a short interview focusing on his or her approach to preaching and the sermon just preached.⁴¹

The series was popular gaining a solid audience.⁴² Turpie even developed the series beyond the twelve preachers of the Baylor study, involving an ad hoc advisory group to assist him in determining the slate of preachers to be included in the new episodes.⁴³ Not only did Turpie produce a video series, but he turned the Baylor survey results into a book. He enlisted ten of the twelve preachers for the videoing of a sermon and interviews, and then transcribed the sermon and interviews for a book.⁴⁴ Reflecting on the videos, Turpie notes, “*Great Preachers* has also found a place in the curriculum of many theological seminaries and Bible schools.”⁴⁵ What Lyon and Jonas wanted to do with the outcomes of the survey, Bill Turpie accomplished.

Conclusion

What has been made of the 1996 Baylor Most Effective Preachers in the English-Speaking World Survey is remarkable in its reach and impact. Though not without its flaws, the survey placed the importance of preaching at a recognizable level both academically and popularly.

THE 2018 MOST EFFECTIVE PREACHERS SURVEY

In May 2018, Baylor University's Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching made the following announcement on their webpage:

In 1996, Baylor University conducted a survey to identify the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. Now, two decades after the original survey, the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary has identified the 12 most effective preachers of 2018.⁴⁶

At the media announcement for the 2018 survey results, W. Hulitt Gloer said:

We wondered how preaching might have changed since 1996. Coming up on the twentieth anniversary we thought that this a good time to repeat the survey and see what the results are and what they might show about the state of preaching in the world today.⁴⁷

The first phase of this second study was from January 2016 to March 2016. In February 2016 the survey criteria of what makes an effective preacher from the 1996 survey was sent to professors of preaching for their recommendation as to what criteria needed to be reworked. Upon receiving feedback, the criteria of effectiveness was then reworked based on the recommendations from the professors polled. Some of the interaction with professors can be seen in Michael Quicke's blogpost from Northern Seminary. As one of the homiletics professors who received the request for help in reworking the 2018 survey of effective preacher's criterion, he reflected, "After reviewing the [1996] list, I went through the *pro forma* online responses that over 300 other preaching professors had worked through. After each criterion, there was a box for additions, deletions, and comments. (I admit that I made a few comments along the way!) But the one that really made me think was Criterion 6." He continues in his blog:

Criterion 6 and its additions are:

Effective communication. Effective sermons clearly communicate the central idea through use of simple language and illustrations so as to convince the listeners of the message. (My addition) *Effective preaching is*

“persuasive” in that it “convinces or convicts the hearer.” The effective preacher “effectively communicates a sense of God’s presence and authority.”

Those who know me will not be surprised that I wanted to tease this out. So I sent a little plea. To my addition I commented:

“I am always concerned to rate effective communication in terms of its impact upon congregations—their thinking, behavior, relationships, mission, etc. I recognize that it is very difficult to evaluate this, but the reality of changed hearers matters. Transformed hearers are even better! This is easier to see when a preacher is in pastoral relationships beyond the itinerant. I see the word ‘effective’ as key, and this is the main criterion for asking the big question: what happens for the kingdom?”

“Yes, what happens, indeed?”⁴⁸

Once the responses from the preaching professors was received, the survey for developing the criteria for effective preachers was then sent to approximately 500 professors of preaching, with 14% response rate.⁴⁹

Categories of Effectiveness

The broad categories of effectiveness in the 2018 study numbered the same as the 1996 survey, with slight modifications regarding the criteria in each category. The 2018 categories of effectiveness are as listed:

Biblical/Exegetical. The effective preacher’s sermons are the result of careful exegetical study of selected Biblical texts, revealing an awareness of their grammatical/syntactical, historical, cultural, literary, and theological dimensions and ever attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Relevance. The effective preacher’s sermons demonstrate a proper hermeneutic which bridges the gap between the meaning of the text in its historical context and its meaning for the contemporary context of the hearer resulting in the application of its meaning to every day life.

Person of the Preacher. The effective preacher’s life and ministry demonstrate such authenticity, integrity and commitment to the

Christian faith that the sermon is never questioned or compromised by the character of the preacher.

Theological/Orthodox. The effective preacher's sermons proclaim the great truths of the Christian faith in keeping with the great Christian theological and ethical tradition.

Sermon Form. The effective preacher's sermons employ a form/structure/shape which allows the meaning of the text to be exposed in an understandable manner so that the hearer is engaged from beginning to end.

Effective Communication. The effective preacher's sermons clearly communicate the central truth(s) of the Biblical text by the use of accessible language and effectives [sic] images and illustration so as to have an affective impact on the lives of the hearers and an awareness of the presence and power of God.

Delivery. The effective preacher's sermons are delivered skillfully employing a style authentic to the preacher and appropriate to the hearers. The style and delivery never supersede or hinder the content of the sermon but enable hearers to better hear and understand it.⁵⁰

With the criteria for effective preaching established, the gathering of survey results and analysis would be next.

The Second and Third Parts

The study's second phase involved the distribution of the survey to an email database of professors from both the Academy of Homiletics, the mainline professors of preaching professional organization and the Evangelical Homiletics Society, the evangelical professors of preaching professional society. The duration for the survey was from March 2016 to December 2017, with the tabulation of the survey results taking place in January 2018. The announcement of the results of the survey was made in May 2018.⁵¹ Of the approximately 500 professors surveyed, the response rate was 35.8%.⁵²

The list of 2018 twelve most effective preachers included:

Dr. Alistair Begg is the Senior Pastor at Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio, a position he has held since 1983. He is also the Bible teacher on "Truth For Life," which can be heard on the radio and online around the world. Begg is a council member of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. For "outstanding dedication to preaching, church leadership, and evangelism," Westminster Theological Seminary bestowed Begg as an honorary doctor of divinity. He also received an honorary doctorate from Cedarville University. In addition to Begg's pastorate and preaching, he has written numerous books.

Dr. Tony Evans is the founding pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas. The church began with 10 members meeting in his home in 1976 and now has a membership nearing 10,000. Evans is the first African American to earn a doctorate of theology from Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) and has taught classes in the past at DTS. He is a pastor, speaker, author, radio and television broadcaster, and has been the chaplain for 30 years for the NBA basketball team the Dallas Mavericks.

Dr. Joel C. Gregory holds the George W. Truett Endowed Chair in Preaching and Evangelism at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He was recently recognized by Baylor and his peers for his 50th preaching anniversary. Gregory brought the concluding message at the Baptist World Congress in Durban, South Africa in summer 2017 and also serves on the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Worship and Spirituality. In that connection and with Baylor University Press, he edited and was the lead author of *Baptist Preaching: A Global Anthology*.

Dr. Timothy Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, New York. Keller is also the Chairman of Redeemer City to City, which starts new churches in urban cities worldwide. Christianity Today has said, "Fifty years from now, if evangelical Christians are widely known for their love of cities, their commitment to mercy and justice, and their love of their neighbors, Tim Keller will be remembered as a pioneer of the new urban Christians." Keller has authored several books in the course of his ministry with a few making *The New York Times* bestsellers list.

Dr. Thomas G. Long is the Bandy Professor Emeritus of Preaching and Director of the Early Career Pastoral Leadership Program at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia. His introductory textbook, *The Witness of Preaching*, has been translated into a number of languages and is widely used in theological schools around the world. In 2010, *Preaching* magazine named *The Witness of Preaching* as one of the 25 most influential books in preaching for the last 25 years. Long gave the distinguished Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale, which were published in his 2009 book *Preaching from Memory to Hope*. Long was named one of the [12 most effective preachers in the English speaking world by Baylor University's 1996 survey](#).

Dr. Otis Moss III is the pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois. He is a preacher, activist, author, and filmmaker. Moss is an ordained minister in the Progressive National Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ. He is on the board of *The Christian Century* magazine and chaplain of the Children's Defense Fund's Samuel DeWitt Proctor Child Advocacy Conference. Moss has written numerous poems, articles, and books. His work has also been featured on *Huffington Post*, *Urban Cusp*, and *The Root*.

Dr. John Piper is the chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Piper is a pastor, author, and leader of *desiringGod.org*. He served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis for 33 years and has authored over 50 books, many of which are best sellers and award winners. Piper has made most of his books freely accessible through his online ministry, *desiringGod.org*.

Dr. Haddon Robinson was the Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Robinson wrote more than a dozen books, including his hallmark text, *Biblical Preaching*, which is still used by seminaries and Bible colleges around the world. In 1996, he was named in a Baylor University poll as one of the ["12 Most Effective Preachers in the English Speaking World."](#) In 2006, Robinson was recognized by *Christianity Today* in the top 10 of its "25 Most Influential Preachers of the Past 50 Years." In 2008, he received the E.K. Bailey "Living Legend Award," and in 2010, *Preaching* magazine named him among the "25 Most Influential Preachers of the Past 25 Years." Dr. Haddon W. Robinson, longtime

faculty member, former President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and one of the world's foremost experts in Biblical preaching, went to be with the Lord on July 22, 2017.

Pastor Andy Stanley is the senior pastor of North Point Community Church, Buckhead Church, Browns Bridge Church, Gwinnett Church, Woodstock City Church, and Decatur City Church. He is also the founder of North Point Ministries, which is a worldwide Christian organization. A survey of U.S. pastors in 2010 through Outreach Magazine identified Stanley as one of the top 10 most influential living pastors in America.

Dr. Charles Swindoll is a pastor, author, educator, and radio preacher. Swindoll is the senior pastor at Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas. He was named Clergyman of the Year by Religious Heritage of America in 1988 and was named one of the [twelve most effective preachers in Baylor University's' 1996 survey](#). Swindoll ranked second in a 2009 survey as the biggest influence in the lives of Protestant pastors. His reach is through preaching, teaching, radio, and his more than 70 publications. Swindoll has been awarded four honorary doctorates for his contributions to ministry.

Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor is an Episcopal priest, professor, author, and theologian. In 1996, she was named one of the [twelve most effective preachers in the English-speaking world by a Baylor University survey](#). She has served on many faculties, including the Certificate in Theological Studies program at Arrendale State Prison for Women in Alto, Georgia. Taylor has been awarded nine honorary doctorates, and in 2014, TIME magazine placed her in its annual TIME 100 list of most influential people in the world.

Dr. Ralph Douglas West serves as founder and senior pastor of The Church Without Walls in Houston, Texas. The church began with 32 members and now embraces more than 24,000 families meeting in three locations and conducting six services each Sunday. West serves as Adjunct Professor of Preaching at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University. Through publications, television, and the internet, his messages are available across the world and are witnessed by thousands beyond his church each week.⁵³

The Findings of the List

W. Hulitt Gloer, then director of the 2018 survey and former director of the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching, Truett Seminary, Baylor University, noted, "In a world where talk is cheap and there seems to be no end to it, the preacher has to recover the priority and power of the word." Preaching matters and this survey continues to underscore this assumption. Shawn Boyd the Program Coordinator of the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching, adds, "They preach it, they believe it and they live it."⁵⁴

Perhaps the most notable shift in the 2018 Most Effective Preachers survey is the dominance of evangelicals. Begg, Evans, Gregory, Keller, Piper, Robinson, Stanley, Swindoll and West—nine of the twelve—are recognized evangelicals, with three mainline preachers remaining: Long, Moss and Taylor. What accounts for the tilt toward more evangelicals appearing on the list? One reason may be the continued decline of the mainline church. Several mainline seminaries have closed with mainline churches shuttering their doors. Another factor is the decline in the mainline professional scholarly organization, the Academy of Homiletics, which boasted around 300 members in the 1990s.⁵⁵ The Evangelical Homiletics Society has grown from its founding in 1997 and currently holds around 325 members.⁵⁶ The groups from which the survey results were drawn came from both societies—with the Evangelical Homiletics Society being the stronger of the two. An additional factor of the evangelical dominance in the 2018 survey results may also be the popularity factor. Many of these preachers have media tentacles that stretch across the internet, television, radio and print. They are more noticed in popular culture because of the reach they possess in getting their message to the masses. All of the evangelicals listed are published authors, with Tim Keller leading the way as a *New York Times* best-selling author.⁵⁷ As W. Hulitt Gloer notes, "More preachers can be heard by more people than ever before in history."⁵⁸

There are three African-American preachers—a quarter of the survey—on the list: Tony Evans, Otis Moss III, and Ralph West. The broad range of preachers is a positive feature, indicating that there is no single way to preach.⁵⁹ There are, however, no other ethnic minorities included on the list other than African-American and only one female, Barbara Brown Taylor. One reason for the paucity of females may be that the Academy of Homiletics and the Evangelical Homiletics Society are dominated by white men. This is not a criticism, but a statement of the reality of the pool from which the poll was taken. In addition, in terms of women preachers, some members of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, due to theological convictions, would not be supportive of women in a preaching

role and therefore would most likely have not nominated a female preacher for the survey.

There may yet be another reason for the absence of women in the study, which may have particular bearing on the nominations arising from the members of the Academy of Homiletics. Members of both societies were provided multiple opportunities to suggest names for consideration.⁶⁰ Even among the female members of the Academy of Homiletics the response might have been different had members responded with different—or even multiple—suggestions. Yet, comparing the surveys with the population, the proportions may be representative of the wider population of English-speaking preachers.⁶¹

A final possibility for the lack of women preachers on the list could be apathy toward the survey. “What does it matter?” may be an underlying consideration.⁶²

The 2018 survey was not without praise or critique. The Episcopal Church boasted that one of their own [Barbara Brown Taylor] had made the list, with the headline reading, “Episcopalian included in Baylor survey naming a dozen who can really preach.”⁶³ Likewise, the National Religious Broadcasters celebrated the inclusion of “NRB members Alistair Begg, Tony Evans, and Charles Swindoll.”⁶⁴

But others reviled the survey, calling it “bizarre” for “the 12 very best all happen to be American (Alistair Begg, who no doubt rejoices in being named to the topmost slot—best of the best—is a Scot by birth, though he’s now a US citizen).”⁶⁵ A humorous lampooning critique of the survey came from *Flaming Dove News*, which provided its own list of preachers from “Bluett Seminary,” a play on words of Truett Seminary, Baylor’s seminary which conducted the survey. The list included, among others, Benny Hinn and Joel Osteen.⁶⁶

Relevant Magazine questioned in a headline, “Why Did Only 1 Woman Make This List of America’s 12 Most ‘Effective’ Preachers?” The article quotes Thomas Long, one of the preachers recognized in both the 1996 and 2018 survey, saying about female preachers, “They are powerfully innovative and affecting. By and [sic], there ought to be more women on the list.”⁶⁷ It is not surprising that a critique and alternative list was issued by *Nevertheless She Preached*, an LGBTQ advocacy group.⁶⁸ The headline from Faithfully Magazine stated, “Women of Color Absent From Baylor University’s ‘Most Effective Preachers’ List.” The author continues, “Notably, no women of color nor preachers in English-speaking countries outside the United States made the cut.”⁶⁹ There is no denial that there was only one woman—and no women of color—appearing in the survey, which highlights the limitation of the study itself.

As for the reaction of the recipients in being included on the most effective preachers list, Tony Evans succinctly stated, "I was stupefied."⁷⁰ The same reporter observed that Andy Stanley "seemed genuinely shocked to be on the list."⁷¹

COMPARING THE SURVEYS—DIFFERENCES

The survey should not be viewed as a list of winners. Instead, they are potential examples of preachers to whom others can look up as they develop their own skills in preaching. Gloer observes, "The most effective preachers we will never know about." This preacher may be in a rural church, a small suburban congregation, or in a storefront in a major metropolitan area.⁷²

In this section an analysis will be made of the differences between the 1996 survey and the 2018 survey. The differences explored will be in terms of constituencies, criteria and outcomes.

Different Constituencies Surveyed

The 1996 survey was international in scope, polling preaching professors from "seminaries, divinity schools and other ministry training centers in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand."⁷³ However, the 2018 survey only polled the two North American professional homiletics organizations: The mainline Academy of Homiletics and the evangelical group, The Evangelical Homiletics Society, although the Evangelical Homiletics Society boasts of members from South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Philippines, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, United Kingdom and the Aaland Islands.

The second survey may raise questions about the definition of the "English-speaking World," for, in comparison, the 1996 survey was, indeed, multinational, whereas the 2018 survey seems to be more limited.

The Difference in Criteria

The categories for both surveys remain virtually the same: Biblical/exegetical, Relevance, the 1996 category was Preacher's persona, while the 2018 survey tweaked the title to Person of the Preacher, Theology/Orthodoxy in 1996 changed to Theological/Orthodox, Sermon structure in 1996 morphed into Sermon Form, and the final category, Effective Communication, remained the same.

There are edits in the 2018 characteristics of effective preachers that are noticeable. The 1996 and 2018 Biblical/exegetical category emphasized the

importance of biblical exegesis, yet the 2018 rendition stressed “an awareness of their grammatical/syntactical, historical, cultural, literary, and theological dimensions....” Not only is exegesis underscored, but the exegete is to be “ever attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit,” an added dimension to the criteria.

In the Relevance category, the 1996 definition addresses sermons that understand the history of the biblical text and speak to daily struggles of the listener. The 2018 version puts the connection of the ancient text—with hermeneutical appropriateness—to meaningful application in everyday life.

The Theological/Orthodox statement is more smoothly identified in the 2018 adaptation, stating that the effective preacher’s sermons “proclaim the great truths of the Christian faith in keeping with the great Christian theological and ethical tradition.”

The Sermon Structure/Sermon Form rendering in 1996 emphasized the “clear introduction, main body and conclusion” that has a central focus and is contrasted with the 2018 statement that leans more towards the preacher’s freedom to structure the sermon however he or she sees fit for that text and that occasion: the “preacher’s sermons employ a form/structure/shape which allows the meaning of the text to be exposed in an understandable manner so that the hearer is engaged from beginning to end.”

As for Effective Communication, the 1996 qualities addresses the need to express “the central idea through use of simple language and illustrations so as to convince the listeners of the message,” with “simple language and illustrations.” In addition, the 1996 version underscored the importance of persuasion not so in 2018. Yet, both the 1996 and 2018 characteristics speak to a sense of recognizing God’s presence and power in the preacher.

When it comes to Delivery, the 1996 criteria are specific, almost microscopic or instructive when listing effectiveness in preaching: appropriate poise, body language, gestures, eye contact, voice quality, proper pronunciation, articulation, phrasing, rate, tone, pitch, and gesture.” The 2018 criteria focus more on the preacher’s authentic delivery: “sermons are delivered skillfully employing a style authentic to the preacher and appropriate to the hearers. The style and delivery never supersede or hinder the content of the sermon but enable hearers to better hear and understand it.”

Side by side, both lists are similar, with the 2018 version being a more clearly and smoothly written wording. Each of the 1996 criteria are not written in the same form, quoting regularly from some of the responses received, whereas the 2018 criteria appear to be cast with more precise definition. Additionally, each sentence in the 2018 criteria list begins with “The effective preacher’s....” The emphasis here is on the effective preacher, whereas in the 1996 list each sentence

begins with “Effective sermons....” The shift is subtle, but since the survey is addressing the most effective preacher, the criteria was recast to reflect the intention of the survey.

Different Outcomes

Comparing the list of preachers from 1996 to that of 2018 demonstrates an overwhelmingly evangelical emphasis with fewer mainline preachers represented. As discussed earlier in this article, there are numerous reasons for this shift, including the decline of the mainline church and the rise of evangelicalism.

Another difference in the 2018 survey to that of the 1996 poll is the absence of a Catholic preacher in the top 12. With the cultural shift that has taken place in the intervening years since the first survey in 1996, the Catholic church has seen the impact of the sexual abuse crisis and the resultant loss of favor inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church. Further study would be needed to assess the real impact of the sexual abuse crisis on preaching.

When examining the surveys, the difference in the ages of the preachers in both studies comes to light—the average age of the preachers for the 1996 study was 58.5. The average age of those in the 2018 survey is ten years older, 68.3. The higher age average might suggest the staying power of the preachers listed in the 2018 survey. The youngest preacher in the 1996 survey was Barbara Brown Taylor who was 45 at the time. For the 2018 survey, Otis Moss III is the youngest at 48.

The results of the 2018 Effective Preachers poll demonstrated an increase in the number of persons of color—making up a fourth of the total list. Reasons for this phenomenon are discussed elsewhere in this paper. One can wonder what the results of this survey will be in another ten years when it comes to men and women of color.

Still another difference between the 1996 and 2018 Most Effective Preachers surveys concerns response rate. The response of preaching professors regarding establishing the criteria of effective preaching shows a 45% response rate in 1996 and a 14% response rate for 2018, a sharp difference from the first survey in 1996. The response rate for garnering a list of preachers, 1996 reveals a 53% response rate, while the 2018 yielded a 35.8% response rate. The responses from the 1996 survey were more robust than the 2018 results, although the 2018 rates are respectable, the difference in response does not go unnoticed.

COMPARING THE SURVEYS—SIMILARITIES

In comparing the 1996 and 2018 Most Effective Preachers in the English-speaking world, the list includes mostly white men. This similarity is not surprising due to the limitations discussed elsewhere in this article.

Another similarity is the presence of one woman among those recognized as an effective preacher. An additional similarity is that there are African-American preachers included on the lists from 1996 and 2018.

One also observes that a third of the preachers listed in the 2018 survey results also appeared on the 1996 Most Effective Preachers list: Long, Robinson, Swindoll and Taylor. This repeat of preachers may suggest the quality of longevity and an on-going appreciation for their preaching.

An additional similarity is that both surveys had their critics. The 1996 survey did not appear to ignite as much criticism as the 2018 results. The difference in eras may account for the shift in popular culture with the increase of emphasis on various kinds of diversity. In addition, the growth of the internet, social media and other opportunities for comment are more present and accessible in 2018 than they were in 1996.

LESSONS LEARNED

What might be the lessons learned from these studies of the Baylor University Most Effective Preachers in the English-speaking World? One lesson is that preaching still matters. The place of preaching continues to have academic and popular appeal. A second lesson is the place of personality in popular culture. While this is not a new phenomenon, further studies might want to account for this measure. “Saul has slain his thousands,” writes the historian, “but David has his tens of thousands.”⁷⁴ The cult of personality is real.

A third lesson learned might be the composition of the study—insuring that the professors surveyed are truly international in scope. Additionally, might a concurrent survey be conducted among laypersons as to whom they perceive to be an effective preacher according to the criteria?

A fourth lesson concerns response rates. The 1996 survey responses were demonstrably more robust than the 2018 survey. More will need to be done to engender engagement with any future survey of effective preachers.

A fifth and final lesson may be what can we learn from one’s critics? Exploring the criticisms of the surveys may yield insights that would make the next survey even more effective.

CONCLUSION

The Baylor University survey of the Most Effective Preachers in the English-speaking World is regarded by many “as one of the most prestigious in the preaching profession since Baylor released the last such list in 1996.”⁷⁵

“In a world where talk is cheap and there seems to be no end to it, the preacher has to recover the priority and power of the word,” says W. Hulitt Gloer, director of the 2018 survey. “Words are the tools of the preacher and that gives them incredible power.”⁷⁶

This paper set to explore the origins of the Baylor University Most Effective Preachers in the English-speaking World survey, to analyze the results and to compare the 1996 survey with the 2018 survey.

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LET THE BIG IDEA LIVE! A RESPONSE TO ABRAHAM KURUVILLA

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Abraham Kuruvilla has thrown down the gauntlet. He has proposed that it is time to kill the “Big Idea” approach to preaching. He claims that this approach, espoused by Haddon Robinson and other homileticsians, lacks hermeneutical rigor and fails to demonstrate what the biblical authors *do* with what they say.¹

I hold Abraham Kuruvilla in high regard,² and I find myself in agreement with many details in his proposal. However, I find his overall argument unconvincing. To be sure, he raises some legitimate concerns that should influence the way Big Idea preachers study and preach the biblical text. Yet the Big Idea approach is simply not the culprit for some of the hermeneutical and homiletical missteps that he rightly criticizes.

My counter-proposal is to let the Big Idea live. Here are four responses to the concerns Kuruvilla has raised.

THE BIG IDEA APPROACH, WHEN PROPERLY PRACTICED, IS NOT REDUCTIONISTIC

Kuruvilla states that he is “not against reductions *per se* in homiletics.” In fact, he utilizes an “appropriately created reduction” in his sermon preparation, which he designates as “the Theological Focus.”³ Rather, he objects to reducing the biblical text to propositions that “end up having a self-contained existence independent of the text and denuded of all its specificity.”⁴ He claims: “[I]n the Big Idea world, such a distillate of the text can effectively depose the text from its rightful throne and stand alone.”⁵ Using sarcasm to make this point, he writes: “Perhaps deity would have served himself and his people better had he just stuck to a bulleted list of timeless Big Ideas rather than messy stories and arcane prophecies and sentimental poetry.”⁶

However, Kuruvilla's criticisms do not reflect the methodology of the better practitioners of the Big Idea approach. First, Big Idea preachers insist on paying close attention to the literary genre and the literary artistry of the text. Bryan Chapell observes: "Many an error has been made by interpreting proverbs as promises, prophecy as history, parables as facts, and poetry as science."⁷ As early as 1984, Haddon Robinson taught preachers how to understand biblical narratives and encouraged them read Robert Alter's landmark book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.⁸ He also required his students to read a textbook on the literary genres of the Bible—*How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart.

Second, it is misleading to cite a list of principles from 2 Samuel 11-12 in the *Life Essentials Study Bible* as an example of the Big Idea approach or its logical outcome.⁹ As Kuruvilla has rightly observed, the Big Idea approach hones in on "the essential core of what the author is saying."¹⁰ The genius of big idea preaching is to identify the "peg" on which all other ideas hang. Haddon Robinson often clarified a distortion of his view, pointing out that any Scripture text contains multiple ideas. However, good exegetes and preachers look for the unifying idea that holds the other ideas together.

Kuruvilla's deeper concern, though, is with "principilizing" versus "theologizing." I appreciate his pursuit of the "theological focus" of the text, and I grant that Big Idea preachers have not always defined the Big Idea—or the "timeless truth" or the "take home truth"—as a distillation of the text's theology as carefully as they could.¹¹ As Kevin Vanhoozer says, we "need to focus not on abstract principles alone but on concrete (canonical) universals" which reflect the Bible "in all its literary diversity."¹² My point is, there is nothing inherent in the theory of Big Idea preaching which precludes an emphasis on the text's theology or the diverse literary forms through which Scripture communicates.

Third, the best practitioners of Big Idea methodology are well aware of the danger Kuruvilla cites about losing the "specificity of a particular pericope." Kuruvilla is "convinced that no two biblical pericopes can ever have the same thrust or force."¹³ I remember Haddon Robinson critiquing students in class for "Big Idea" statements which were "too generic and would fit every other passage in the Bible."

However, the specificity problem is not unique to the Big Idea approach. Even Kuruvilla's methodology can fall prey to over-generalizing. Recently, I preached Judges 17-18. Towards the end of my sermon preparation process, I consulted Kuruvilla's fine commentary, *Judges: A Theological Commentary for Preachers*. His Theological Focus for Judges 17-18 is: "Godless leadership leads to godlessness in society that invites the discipline of God."¹⁴ This statement is

certainly true, but it is so general that it fits just about every narrative in the book of Judges! It does not reflect the specificity of this particular pericope—the problem of idols.¹⁵

It seems that a theological focus for Judges 17-18 needs to reflect at least two more exegetical details besides the dominant theme of idolatry. The second is the contrast between Micah's "house of God" (*beth 'elohim*) in 17:5 and "the house of God" (*ha-beth 'elohim*) in Shiloh which was available to worshipers the entire time (18:31). The third key exegetical detail is the effects of idolatry on both Micah and the Danites. Micah ended up with nothing (cf. 17:24). The Danites eventually ended up in captivity (cf. 18:30). Thus, I would offer the following Big Idea (or Theological Focus) for Judges 17-18: *When we turn from God to idols we miss the presence of God and experience emptiness or bondage.*

Before leaving this issue, it is worth noting that some overlap between big ideas (or distillations or theological foci) of multiple pericopes is inevitable since the same themes keep re-surfacing in the Scriptures. For example, the idea that *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble* shows up in Daniel 4, Luke 18:9-14, James 4:1-10, 1 Peter 5:5-7, and the story of Haman in the book of Esther.¹⁶ While multiple passages do not share the same *exact* thrust or force, they may share the same big idea.

THE BIG IDEA APPROACH DEPENDS ON EXEGETICAL RIGOR

Related to his first concern, Kuruvilla suggests that the quest for a distillation of a text may cause Big Idea sympathizers to "neglect critical exegetical observations" that clue the interpreter into a particular biblical text's thrust and force.¹⁷ He cites Paul Borden's exegetical idea and timeless proposition for 2 Samuel 11-12 as an example:¹⁸

Exegetical idea: David learns to accept what the grace of God gives him and what the grace of God does not.

Preaching Idea: Believers must learn to accept what God's grace has given them and what God's grace does not.

The exegetical clues this idea allegedly misses include the chiastic structure of 2 Samuel 11-12, the incompatibility between David and Yahweh (who decides what is evil and what is good), the contrast between the Jewish king and the Hittite soldier, the "send" motif, the "take" motif, and the blot on David's reign.

However, the actual sermon Paul Borden preached on this text shows that these criticisms are unfounded.¹⁹ Borden's entire sermon is built on the contrast between the Jewish king and the Hittite soldier. It also deals with the blot on David's reign, and it takes into account the "take" motif (David took what God's grace did not give him). While the sermon does not highlight the "send" motif, it hardly runs contrary to it. Whether or not an exegetical analysis of 2 Samuel 11-12 needs to reflect the chiasmic structure Kuruvilla proposes is open to debate.

Kuruvilla provides a "theological focus" statement for 2 Samuel 11-12 in his book, *Privilege the Text!* His statement reads: "Reverence for God and deference to his word is manifested in the reined exercise of power, the restriction of self-indulgent passions, and the recognition of evil as reprehensible in the sight of God; this respect for the authority and rulership of the true sovereign brings blessing."²⁰ It should be apparent that without a sermon manuscript or an exegetical summary of the passage, Kuruvilla's "theological focus" statement could be open to the same criticism of neglect which he leveled against Borden's.

My point here is not to argue which statement is more accurate. It is simply to observe that without a sermon manuscript or a summary of the preacher's exegetical observations, it is not easy to assess how well or how poorly a distillation reflects solid exegesis. After all, a big idea is not a sermon! It is simply an attempt to provide listeners with a peg on which they can hang the details—including the exegetical details of a text. Thus, it will not work to use Borden's big idea as evidence that the Big Idea approach fails to observe the exegetical nuances of the text.²¹

I suspect that the disparity between Kuruvilla's "Theological Focus" statement and the Big Idea statement of Borden reflects the difficulty of biblical narrative rather than diverse hermeneutical approaches. It is a reminder of the need for rigorous exegesis—something that both Kuruvilla and Borden model so well. As D. A. Carson has stated, "We are dealing with God's thoughts: we are obligated to understand them truly and to explain them clearly."²²

THE BIG IDEA APPROACH SERVES AUTHORIAL INTENT— BOTH ITS "SAYINGS" AND "DOINGS"

Kuruvilla rightly reminds us that communication of any kind involves "a communicator *doing* something with what is communicated. Authors, including those of Scripture, *do* things with what they say."²³ (838). This distinction between "semantics" and "pragmatics" is a recurring theme in modern linguistics—particularly in "Speech-Act Theory."²⁴ Semantics has to do with the meaning of sayings. Pragmatics has to do with the usage or function of sayings.

Take, for example, the following saying: *There is a car coming.*²⁵ Semantically, this statement means that a four-wheeled vehicle powered by a gasoline engine is moving down the street and coming closer. Pragmatically, the statement can function either as a warning or as an encouragement. If my young grandchildren are playing ball in the front yard, the statement functions as a warning to keep away from the street. If they are hungry and not-so-patiently waiting for a pizza delivery, then the saying functions as an encouragement.

Kuruville contends that Big Idea preaching follows the lead of classical rhetoric, functioning more as an argument than a demonstration. Kuruville says: "The Theological Focus is a reduction of what the author is *doing*—pericopal theology, the pragmatics of the text. The Big Idea, on the other hand, is a distillation of what the author is saying, the semantics of the text."²⁶

But this is too simplistic. Big Idea preachers are aware of pragmatics as well as semantics. I remember a class with Haddon Robinson in which he assigned Mark 4:35-41—Jesus' calming of the storm—as a preaching text. Robinson noted that preachers often settle for a big idea like: *God will get you through the storms of life when you have faith in Him.* Or, some preachers might opt for a big idea like this: *Jesus possesses unlimited power over the most powerful forces in the universe.* However, Robinson observed that Mark uses a time reference ("That day when evening came," 4:35) to link the story to Jesus' teaching on the kingdom that had taken place earlier in the day. Thus, he argued that the function of the story is to encourage believers that they have not given their lives to a lost cause. His big idea was something like: *You can be sure that the kingdom to which you have given your life will succeed because the King has unlimited power.* While Robinson did not use the language of "semantics/pragmatics" or "locution/illocution/perlocution" (Speech Act Theory), he certainly recognized the need to discern what the author is doing what what he is saying.

Ostensibly, any Big Idea or Theological Focus statement looks more like a saying (semantics) than a doing (pragmatics). Kuruville's Theological Focus Statements for 2 Samuel 11-12 and Judges 17-18 are no exception.

I am convinced that Big Idea approach can help "listeners experience the text and its theology—the agenda of the A / author—in all its fullness" just as well as the Pericopal Theology Approach.

THE BIG IDEA APPROACH REQUIRES HOMILETICAL PROWESS

Kuruville sees "reductions" (distillations such as his Theological Focus) as having "a specific, narrow, and circumscribed use for them—in sermon *preparation*, not necessarily in sermon *delivery*."²⁷ Kuruville suggests, per a quote from Thomas

Long, that Big Idea preachers have “been trained to leave the exegetical sleuthing in the study, to filter out the zest of that discovery, and to carry only processed propositions across to the other side. The joy of ‘Eureka!’ becomes, in the sermon, the dull thud of ‘My thesis [Big Idea] for this morning is’”²⁸

I agree with Kuruvilla that this is unfortunately true in far too many pulpits, on far too many Sundays. However, while Long’s statement about the way Big Idea preachers are trained makes for a great sound bite, it generalizes too broadly. I remember hearing Duane Litfin—a Big Idea preacher—encourage preachers to take their listeners over the “same set of tracks” they followed in their exegetical study of a passage. This is precisely what Kuruvilla believes preachers should do: “let their listeners encounter and experience the text as they themselves did when they were studying the text (i.e. before they crafted a Big Idea).”

Kuruvilla is right that the Theological Focus—and, I would add, the Big Idea—“can never be a stand-in for the text to ferry the experience of the text + theology to listeners.”²⁹ Still, we help our listeners when we can offer a Big Idea statement that provides a peg on which they can hang all of the other ideas and exegetical details that they encounter as they listen to a sermon. This does not mean succumbing to a dull lead-in like “My big idea for this sermon is X.” That is a beginner mistake. I remember Haddon Robinson challenging his students to be as subtle as possible in presenting the sermon’s Big Idea.

It took me awhile to recognize that Robinson’s methodology—breaking a Big Idea into its component parts (subject and complement) and analyzing it with three functional questions—is a way of thinking, not some kind of a cookie-cutter approach that leads to bland sermons. He provided the methodology out of a quest to help preachers think themselves clear and preach clearly. Yet he employed it in service to the text—not as some kind of straightjacket into which a preaching text must fit.

CONCLUSION

In his article, Kuruvilla offers an intriguing analogy of what he believes that Big Idea preachers do to the text. Following the lead of the Viennese music theorist, Heinrich Schenker, Kuruvilla analyzes the “underlying structure of the 1939 hit, “Over the Rainbow.” He shows how that haunting melody could be distilled to a descending F-major scale—F, E, D, C, B-flat, A, G, F.³⁰ This is a clever illustration, but it badly distorts what competent Big Idea preachers do when they identify or preach the Big Idea of the text.

Let me suggest another musical analogy. James R. Gaines tells the story of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Musical Offering*—a sixteen movement piece he

produced for Frederick the Great. During an evening with the Prussian king in May of 1747, Bach received a musical challenge. Frederick gave him a complex theme with twenty-one notes and asked him to use it as the basis for a three-part fugue. Bach met this difficult challenge on the spot. Then, Frederick raised the stakes. He challenged Bach to a seemingly impossible task—the creation of a six-part fugue on the same theme.

Two weeks later, Bach emerged from his composing room with a sixteen-movement piece. It consisted of the six-part fugue along with ten canons placed around the Royal Theme. Gaines describes how Bach's *Musical Offering* issued a scathing attack on the lifestyle and values of the young king. Bach used the ten canons to invoke the Ten Commandments and refer to the Law. One of these canons even functions as a musical equivalent of an optical illusion. When played six times, the canon returns to where it began, only an octave higher. Bach inscribed this canon with these words: "As the notes ascend, so may the glory of the king."³¹ Yet the genius of this canon is that it does not seem to rise at all. This is Bach's comment on the glory of Frederick.

Towards the end of his riveting account, Gaines does something that Big Idea preachers do. He artfully weaves into his narration a distillation—dare I say it, the Big Idea—of Bach's message: "Beware the appearance of good fortune, Frederick, stand in awe of a fate more fearful than any this world has to give, seek the glory that is beyond the glory of this fallen world, and know that there is a law higher than any king's which is never changing and by which you and every one of us will be judged."³²

I walked away from Gaines' book, *Evening in the Palace of Reason*, stirred by the entire narrative and all of its intrigue and suspense. When Gaines shared Bach's "Big Idea," it did not land like a dull thud. Instead, it crystallized all of the details into a unifying whole. When done properly, that's what Big Idea preaching does. It does so for the purpose of preaching the biblical text in a way that leads to life transformation and conformity to the image of Christ.

Perhaps it is not time to change methods.

NOTES

1. Abraham Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea? A Fresh Look at Preaching," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61:4 (2018): 825. You can read Kuruvilla's article and his rejoinder to my response at <http://homiletix.com/kill-the-big-idea/>.

2. In fact, I was tempted to refer to him throughout this article as “Abe” because of my affection for him as a friend and as a brother in Christ. But referring to him by his last name is standard protocol in a venue like this.

3. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 844.

4. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 829.

5. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 833.

6. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 829.

7. Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 62.

8. Haddon Robinson, “Preaching from Biblical Narratives—Interview: Paul Borden/Haddon Robinson,” *Expositives Set III*, #2 (1984, Denver Seminary), Side 1.

9. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 829-30.

10. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 827.

11. I have tried to address this elsewhere in my comments on preaching Old Testament narrative texts: “[W]e cannot pit propositional against narrative. Nor can we assume that narrative texts do not contain propositions. Rather, we must recognize that the narratives of the Hebrew Bible communicated theology. To be sure, the communication is subtle. But we cannot confuse subtlety with non-propositional” (Steve D. Mathewson, “Prophetic Preaching from Old Testament Narrative Texts,” in *Text Message: The Centrality of Scripture in Preaching*, ed. Ian Stackhouse and Oliver D. Crisp [Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014], 35).

12. Kevin Vanhoozer, “A Response to Walter C. Kaiser Jr.,” in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 61.

13. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 834.

14. Abraham Kuruvilla, *Judges: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017), 264.

15. The two-part epilogue of Judges, of which Judges 17-18 forms part one, mirrors the prologue. The prologue deals with the problem of the wars of “destruction” (1:1-2:5) and the problem of idols (2:6-3:6), while the epilogue deals with these problems in reverse order. Judges 17-18 re-raises the problem of idols, while Judges 19-21 focuses on the problem of the wars of “destruction” (which Israel is now carrying on against itself).

16. I am grateful to Scott Wenig for providing me with this example.

17. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 831.

18. Kuruvilla, “Time to Kill the Big Idea?,” 830. I co-authored this chapter with Paul Borden, but Borden gets the credit for this Big Idea statement.

19. A manuscript of Paul Borden's sermon on 2 Samuel 11-12 appears in Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 190-199.
20. Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege The Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 126, 146.
21. For a Big Idea proposal for 2 Samuel 11-12 that contains considerable overlaps with Kuruvilla's Theological Focus statement for the same text, see Scott Wenig, "A Different Exegetical and Homiletical Approach to a Prominent Biblical Narrative: Interpreting and Preaching 2 Samuel 11-12," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 10:2 (September 2010): 15.
22. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996): 15.
23. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," 838.
24. For a helpful (and readable!) discussion of how biblical exegetes can utilize Speech Act Theory in their study of the biblical text, see C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis Well* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 51.
25. I have adapted this example from P. H. Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 313.
26. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," 845.
27. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," 844.
28. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," 843.
29. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," 845
30. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," 831-32.
31. James R. Gaines, *Evening in the Palace of Reason: Bach Meets Frederick the Great in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 235.
32. Gaines, *Evening in the Palace of Reason*, 237.



BY 2050: PREPARING EFFECTIVE PREACHERS FOR AN EMERGING SECONDARY ORAL SOCIETY

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*"Tell me the facts and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe.
But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."*

Native American Proverb

ABSTRACT

By 2050 America will be remarkably different in significant ways. Current trends, if unabated, portend a minority-majority population with secondary orality firmly entrenched and biblical illiteracy continuing to spread. This year's youngest Bible college and seminary graduates will be in their mid to late fifties in 2050. To assist today's professors of homiletics in their preparation of preachers who will remain effective leading up to the mid-century and beyond, this paper explores what an emerging secondary orality requires of biblical preaching. Following an overview of orality's primary features and a brief reconsideration of the orality inherent in the Bible and preaching act itself, the paper offers a set of admonitions to guide the student-preacher destined to face secondary oral audiences.

INTRODUCTION

Predicting the future is a precarious business, but that hasn't stopped economists, sociologists, and others with a vested interest in the future from trying. Government groups and research agencies have generally selected 2050 as the year to look towards, which has had a cascading effect. "Once a major

organization sets their research parameters to that year," explains Zoe Schlanger of *Newsweek*, "it makes good organizational sense for other organizations to use the basis of that research to do the same for their respective topic."¹

Two predictions from sociologists looking ahead to the mid-21st century deserve the special attention of homiletics currently teaching in the United States. Ruy Teixeira, senior fellow at both the Century Foundation and the Center for American Progress, predicts minorities will make up more than half the nation by 2050.² James Slack, addressing workshop participants at the 2003 International Orality Network Conference, reported 20 million people join the ranks of the functionally non-literate every year, so that by 2050 the functionally non-literate will outnumber the population of all people living today.³

Currently, the Center for Intercultural Training claims, 5.7 billion people (80% of the world's population) are oral learners either because they are illiterate or their reading comprehension is inadequate. In America, 14% of the population may be classified as illiterate, 29% as functionally illiterate, 44% as preferred oral learners, and only 13% as highly literate.⁴

This year's youngest Bible college and seminary graduates will be in their mid to late fifties in 2050. To engender their renewed appreciation for and confidence in preaching as an oral act and, more practically, to prepare them to preach effectively in the mid-century and beyond, we, their professors of homiletics, must think critically about what will be required for effective biblical preaching in a minority-majority nation of secondary oral and biblically illiterate peoples. To that end the following paper overviews orality's primary features and the state of orality in present day America, revisits the orality inherent in the Bible and preaching act, then concludes by offering a set of admonitions to guide the student-preacher destined to face secondary oral audiences.

COMING TO TERMS WITH ORALITY

Aristotle defines spoken words as "symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sound."⁵ Leonard Bloomfield helpfully adds in *Language*, "Writing is not language, but merely a means of recording language by visible marks."⁶ Of the thousands of languages spoken throughout history, "only around 106 have ever been committed to writing to a degree sufficient to have produced literature, and most have never been written at all."⁷ The fundamental orality, as opposed to literacy, of language is inescapable and permanent. Words were meant to be spoken first, written later, if ever.⁸

That which is written is fundamentally different from that which is spoken. The cultures and worldviews spawned by literacy and orality are likewise

different, a fact often overlooked by literate society members.⁹ The table below highlights some of those differences.¹⁰

Oral Cultures		Textual Cultures
Spoken Storyline Concrete	<i>Communication</i>	Written Outline Abstract
Communal	<i>Lifestyle</i>	Institutional
Social Dimensions	<i>Time and Space</i>	Mathematical Dimensions
Immediate	<i>Gratification</i>	Deferred
Circular Conceptual	<i>Life Perspective</i>	Linear Historical
Group Oriented Apprenticeship Teacher is Valued Mnemonic Devices	<i>Learning Patterns</i>	Individually Oriented Textbook Information is Valued Archived Text
Words are: Events/Alive/Attached	<i>Lexicon</i>	Words are: Objects/Dead/Detached

The ranks of the “non-literate” are estimated to swell worldwide by twenty million annually. Researchers would classify relatively few of those peoples as primarily oral. In a *primary* oral society, visual representations of spoken language are unknown. Literacy is virtually absent.

In *residually* oral societies literacy has been introduced and integrated, but orality remains the primary means whereby people process and image information. In *secondary* oral societies people have transitioned from a print-oriented culture back to an oral framework. The use of advanced technologies to diffuse messages embedded in story, music, and/or drama in culturally relevant expressions is evidence of a second orality.¹¹ Although those few people creating and manipulating the technologies to relay their messages are highly literate, not so the masses who rely on those technologies for their information.¹²

America is quickly becoming a secondary oral society. For a rapidly growing percentage of her populace the “Guttenberg Parenthesis” is closed.¹³ Appearing in print no longer guarantees a claim’s veracity.¹⁴ So while many Americans can read at some level, they gather and process most of what they know and believe within an oral framework. In that framework, community, immediacy, personality, and story are fundamental.

- Community: reality is interpreted, communicated, and validated communally rather than individually.
- Immediacy: words refer to real, familiar experiences and live “in the moment” rather than to disembodied abstractions that reside “on a page.”
- Personality: the interpreter’s relationship with the audience is as important as the message, if not more so, because he/she is the perceived “authority” of the message.
- Story: abstractions / principles, where they exist, derive from story; story, not principle, is primary.¹⁵

Missiologists over the past quarter century have been studying the implications of orality, and storytelling especially, for sake of greater effectiveness in evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.¹⁶ They are now recognizing how an “unconscious textuality bias so dominates [their] pedagogical theory and practice that it suffocates any breath of air that [their] oral tradition partners and oral-preference learners might take on their own.”¹⁷ Homileticsians desiring to train effective preachers for an emerging secondary oral society should take note of their findings. Being highly literate ourselves, we must, like our missionary colleagues, beware the assumption that if we “can just simplify [our] outlines and exposition oral learners can grasp what [we] are saying.”¹⁸

The time has come for us, too, to consider the implications of the Bible’s and preaching’s oral nature and the place of story therein. Orality is not equivalent to storytelling, as the former is an orientation, a culture, and a framework / worldview of cognitive processes, media, relational networks, and ways of structuring content.¹⁹ Nevertheless, stories are an important part of orality and central to life as we know it. Stories are a powerful means to inspire worship, facilitate evangelism, offer ministry, build fellowship, and inform discipleship—the very meta-purposes of preaching.

What are the outstanding features of orality for which preachers ought to account? They are not, according to the International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, “crucially or exclusively associated with what is spoken by mouth. They are, instead a correlation of ways of processing that are common to face-to-face, highly relational societies. The correlation of ways of processing and communicating involve *concrete [rather than abstract] notions; sequential [rather than random] expression of events; and relational [as opposed to individualist] contexts*” [emphasis mine].²⁰ Before delving into what all this means for today’s American preacher, we would benefit from a quick reminder that the Bible and act of preaching are orally-intensive.

RESPECTING THE “INSPIRED” NATURE OF THE BIBLE AND PREACHING

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” meaning, naturally, inspiration preceded inscripturation. God breathed out before any author wrote down. Those holy men of old somehow “heard” before they recorded.

In the beginning God spoke the world into existence and breathed life into Adam. Pagan gods are mute and lifeless, but the true God speaks and enlivens (1 Corinthians 12:2). Little wonder then that the Bible, His special revelation, is steeped in orality. It records the triune God speaking to Himself and to His creation; men and women speaking to God and one another. The Bible’s kings and prophets, psalmists and the Savior, all are made known to us primarily through the words they spoke. On top of that, behind many of the Bible’s books stands an oral tradition—eventually reduced to print but revived again when the Bible is read to listening congregations.

Homiletics relates directly to one’s views on the nature of Scripture’s inspiration and is defined by how those views shape one’s philosophy and practices in sacred proclamation. As Haddon Robinson asserts in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, “Expository preaching... emerges not merely as a type of sermon—one among many—but as the theological outgrowth of a high view of inspiration.”²¹

The Bible makes much of the spoken word. Spoken words make up much of the Bible. Preaching itself is an oral act. It therefore follows that biblical preaching is naturally suited to communicate effectively to an oral society, especially when the preacher takes seriously and accounts for the inherent orality of Scripture and respects the listening needs of *hearers*.

ADMONITIONS FOR STUDENTS ASPIRING TO PREACH EFFECTIVELY IN 2050 (AND THOSE WHO CURRENTLY TEACH THEM)

In view of the foregoing, professors of homiletics should ask: How can we train today’s student-preachers to capitalize on the inherent oral nature of the Bible and the preaching act so as to preach effectively to an emerging secondary oral and biblically illiterate society? The following admonitions offer a starting point. They derive from the correlative ways of processing and communicating in an oral culture cited earlier, respect for the place of story in an oral culture, or both.

Before proceeding, a word of caution is in order. Just as Paul’s one-off sermon on Mars Hill was contextually appropriate but an unlikely representation of how he addressed the disciples over a two-year period at the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10),²² the admonitions that follow are particularly designed for

preachers addressing a biblically illiterate, likely unregenerate, secondary oral audience. They would require modification when regularly addressing biblically literate, presumably spiritually mature, disciples.²³

Prepare to address hearers rather than readers.

Sermons are meant to be heard. Only a small percentage make it into print. Fewer still are actually ever read. It's a vain mistake for preachers, often the young, to think of themselves on any given week as preparing a sermon that will speak to the ages. Chances are their sermons will be all but forgotten before nightfall.²⁴ Better to think about those few listening souls who will actually occupy the pews from 11 to 12 on Sunday morning than a reading public beyond the walls whom the preacher will never meet and doesn't exist.

Contemporary hearers are all about "instancy" and intimacy. For them sound and image have largely replaced the printed word. Seeing, not reading, is their new basis for believing.²⁵

Sermons that effectively address such hearers use concrete imagery, flow narratively, and are highly relational. They "move," to borrow from David Buttrick's *Homiletic*, into and out of one thought after another rather than break down the points of an outline. They don't unravel a pericope's details as much as they stitch together the pericope's ideas in the hearer's heart.²⁶ They draw in listeners, transforming distant observers of texts into virtual participants in the texts' actions. They invite attention not *to* a text but *through* a text to realities beyond.

Hearers expect more than readers. They study a speaker's facial expressions and track closely his hand gestures, therefore it behooves preachers to work on their delivery. The biggest barrier, literally and figuratively speaking, to effective sermon delivery for many is the pulpit. By simply resting his hands on it, the preacher limits his gestures which, in turn, inhibits his facial expressions. One of the surest ways to overcoming this barrier is to take one step back from the pulpit. The absence of a handrest forces the preacher to think about what he's doing with his hands, which, in turn, shapes his countenance. These together work with the tone of his voice, each playing off the other, to enhance his message.

Use concrete images.

Missionary Elizabeth Wilson recalls the moment she realized she was living among an oral people group in the mountains of South Asia. Her colleague had asked their language helper for the equivalent for three shapes in the local

language. For the square he used the word for handkerchief; for the circle, a word naming a round flat bread eaten by the people; and for the triangle, a mountain.²⁷ The names for the shapes were concrete images.

A growing number of terms commonly used in preaching today are for post-Christian, biblically illiterate, secondary oral hearers too abstract and therefore confusing.²⁸ Temptation, sin, gospel, born again? What do these terms mean to them? What do they convey to the young people in our pews?²⁹

Jesus' response to Nicodemus' confusion over the phrase "born again" in John 3:3 is instructive. Note how He, after marveling over His interlocutor's lack of understanding (willful or not), moved down the ladder of abstraction to remind Nicodemus of what was for him a familiar story centered around a concrete image—a serpent cast in bronze (verse 14). Here Jesus related an abstract idea to a story, a symbol, and a ritual, that is, the people looking to the serpent in faith. All of which leads to the next admonition.

*Integrate symbols and rituals.*³⁰

Here are two means used throughout Scripture and by oral cultures still to retell and reinforce their stories and the worldviews they're meant to instill. The Passover lamb of the Old Testament and Christ's cross in the New are profound symbols tied to key narratives. Gathering for worship on Sunday and opening the Bible together are rituals pointing to the story of Christ's resurrection and our duty to submit to God's word.

For the author personally, the most memorable sermon delivered in recent years by the Evangelical Homiletics Society's outgoing presidents came from Abe Kuruvilla. Expounding the story of David and Goliath, Abe wryly likened David to Spiderman and Goliath to Batman. The symbols were immediately striking and relatable for this fan of comic book heroes. Then, to make his sermon even more memorable, Abe concluded by explaining the meaning of and reinterpreting the sign of the cross while performing the ritual associated with it. "God came from Heaven to earth, to move us from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light," or "God fights for me," he illustrated while crossing himself. Symbols and rituals such as these aren't soon forgotten, thereby giving the Spirit a greater opportunity to transform the hearer through his recollection of the stories and the sermons tied to them.

Identify then adapt or replace the text's mnemonic devices.

Skilled storytellers make their narratives memorable through repetition, wordplay, exaggeration, humor, and other mnemonic devices. Skilled exegesis of a biblical pericope will reveal any number of mnemonic devices, including parallelism, chiasm, wordplay, alliteration, and so forth. The intended audiences who first *heard* those pericopes were, we'd assume, better prepared to "catch" and be aided by those embedded devices than today's hearers listening to the text in another language. Therefore, it's important for today's preacher to identify his text's aids to memory during the exegetical stage of his preparation then to determine during the homiletical stage whether those same aids will enhance his audience's ability to remember the affected parts of the passage, whether those aids can be effectively adapted, or whether they should be replaced altogether with other aids in the sermon.

If one's definition of biblical inspiration includes God inspiring the selection of mnemonic devices used by the Bible's authors, the last course of action suggested in the preceding paragraph will seem suspect if not patently unacceptable. If so, that preacher must decide whether he's serving his text and audience most faithfully by 1) explaining its mnemonic devices that fail to aid contemporary memories, or by 2) creating new devices that will help contemporary hearers recall what his text's author was attempting to make memorable. Robinson's highly regarded definition of expository preaching suggests that clearly and memorably communicating a pericope's idea(s) is of greater importance than using the same aids the writer used to drive home those ideas originally.

Preach the stories.

Earlier generations of preachers might be excused for avoiding the Bible's narratives, as they assumed their hearers were already well-versed in those stories' details from their time in Sunday school. But declining attendance there, eventuating in many churches' decision to eliminate Sunday school for adults, if not everyone, has contributed to a widespread biblical illiteracy that robs the 21st century preacher of our forebears' excuse.

Every genre of Scripture has its value. That rich diversity contributes to the Bible's overall profitability (2 Tim. 3:16). And yet, stories, comprising more than 40% of the Bible's contents, transcend culture and time unlike some of those other genres. Ever appropriate, but especially so in an emergent second orality, we must preach the stories.

Preach the stories as stories.

We do the sacred storytellers a great disservice when we quickly summarize their narratives' contents so that we can move on to the more serious work of distilling their accounts into a set of propositions or life principles. As Robinson once reminded the author, "If Moses had wanted to give us eight principles on leadership, he could have given us eight principles. Instead, he gave us stories."

A failure to spend adequate time retelling a story removes it from what Zack Eswine calls its "context of reality." One of the results is "expository equivocations," whereby the preacher infuses words grounded in physical reality with metaphysical, psychological, or personal internal meanings. For example, the pit into which Joseph was cast becomes a metaphor for stress, financial struggles, troubled relationships, etc.³¹

Much has been written already on the subjects of preaching narratives and preaching narratively.³² Here the emphasis is on the latter, of thinking of the sermon as a self-contained story—with a beginning, plot, and end—instead of an introduction leading to a handful of propositions and conclusion.

Good stories flow, as should good sermons. This doesn't mean that every narrative-based sermon must unpack a story in chronological order. That's what textual cultures expect, observes Ong, whereas oral cultures are comfortable with storytellers who start in the middle of the action then explain precipitating events.³³

Effective storytellers aren't bound to a particular ordering of events, nor do they separate their tales' morals from the flow of their tales' action. Rather, their "points" emerge naturally and impress themselves upon hearers' hearts subtly. By this their carefully developed skill they turn voluntary attention into involuntary. Their hearers don't make themselves listen. They can't help but listen! And simply by listening, they're transformed.³⁴

Here's another reason for preaching the Bible's stories in a narrative format. Doing so not only shows respect for their author's choice of genre and context of reality, it's an effective means of reshaping the hearer's worldview. Personal transformation takes place when one worldview replaces another. Worldview is one's conception of life's metanarrative. That metanarrative is a collection of smaller, interconnected narratives that seemingly make sense of the world—its origin, current state, hope, and end. "Every culture uses stories to tell us what it means to be human, what kind of world we live in, why there is suffering and pain, and what, if anything, we can do to deal with that suffering and pain."³⁵ So it is stories, says N. T. Wright, that are "actually, peculiarly good

at modifying or subverting other stories and their worldviews.”³⁶ To change the world one must change its narrative. “Stories create worlds. Tell the story differently and you change the world. And that’s what Jesus aimed to do.”³⁷ To evangelize is to present an alternative story—God’s story. It’s a story of star wars—of darkness versus light; of God’s empire striking back through Israel, the incarnation, and the church; and of the long anticipated triumphant return of Jesus. The gospel is, to borrow from Scot McKnight, the story of King Jesus.³⁸

Missiologists have discovered that when preaching gives only propositional truth and doesn’t present biblical stories to challenge existing worldviews, it runs the risk of syncretism. “The cultural stories will continue to comprise the heart of the [hearer’s] worldview and discipleship will deal only with” the hearer’s behavior, values, and beliefs.³⁹ This realization underscores what Wright stated so memorably, “Tell someone to do something, and you change their life—for a day; tell someone a story and you change their life.”⁴⁰

Start with the story they know and tell them the story they don’t.

Isn’t that precisely what Peter did in the first Christian sermon at Pentecost? He started with the rumors of his drunkenness, turned back to Joel and David in Israel’s history, and related it all to Christ’s resurrection story. Paul did something similar at Mars Hill. By changing the narrative they challenged the way their hearers had always conceived of their worlds, the first step on their road to transformation.

Preach the backstory when there is no immediately visible story.

All of the Bible’s commandments, poetry, oracles, and letters grew out of a story clearly indicated in their surrounding contexts or in the larger sweep of redemptive history.⁴¹ This is the backstory that illumines and makes relatable the non-narrative portions of Scripture.

In his later years especially, Robinson proved himself a master not only at handling the Bible’s narrative texts but at adeptly communicating non-narrative pericopes in a way that interwove their particulars with the story behind or sublimated in them. His sermons *The Testimony of J. B. Work* (the poetry of Job), *Scandal in the Parsonage* (the prophecy of Hosea), and *Put That on Master Charge* (the epistle to Philemon) are particularly noteworthy in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is predominantly recorded orality. Preaching is preeminently oral exposition of the Bible. It follows that biblical preaching will remain a potentially effective means of communicating divine truth to an emerging secondary oral American society. The extent to which today's student-preachers are able to tap into that potential leading up to 2050 and beyond will depend largely on how well we their homiletics professors acquaint them with the primary features of orality and equip them with strategies for addressing secondary oral listeners.

Orality is about more than storytelling, as important as story is in the emerging culture. It involves a different way of processing information which emphasizes concrete (rather than abstract) notions; sequential (rather than random) expressions of events; and relational (as opposed to individualist) contexts. Oral peoples value community, immediacy, personality, and, yes, story. Effective will the preacher be who is prepared to preach accordingly.

NOTES

1. Zoe Schlanger, "Forget 2015 – 2050 Is the Year for Predictions," 4 January 2015, *Newsweek*, <http://www.newsweek.com/forget-2015-2050-year-predictions-296481>, retrieved 29 January 2018.
2. Ruy Teixeira, "When Will Your State Become Majority-Minority?" 8 May 2013, <http://www.thinkprogress.org>, retrieved 19 November 2017.
3. James Slack, *Introduction to Orality*, The International Orality Network Conference Workshop, Dallas, TX, 2003; cited in Charles Madinger, "A Literate's Guide to the Oral Galaxy," in *Orality Journal* 2:2 (2013), 19.
4. Center for Intercultural Training, "Resources4missions," <http://resources4missions.org>, retrieved 12 July 2018. Statistics on American literacy come from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy survey conducted by the U. S. government in 1992 and 2003, as reported by the Center for Intercultural Training.
5. Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. with notes by J. L. Ackrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 43; quoted in Ronald Bush, "A Holistic Strategy for the Evangelization of Oral Learners" (Ph.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 65.
6. Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 21; quoted in Bush, 65.

7. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 7.

8. Ibid., 8, maintains, "Writing can never dispense with orality.... Oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality."

9. Members of the International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization claim in *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (Hong Kong: ION/LCWE, 2005), 5, "All societies, including those having a highly literate segment, have oral communication at their core. Oral communication is the basic function on which writing and literacy is based. When literacy persists in a culture for generations, it begins to change the way people think, act and communicate—so much so that the members of that literate society may not even realize how their communication styles are different from those of the majority of the world who are oral communicators."

10. This table, found in Bush, 72, is based on multiple sources, especially Charles Madinger, "Coming to Terms with Orality: A Holistic Model," *Missiology: An International Review* 38:2 (April 2010), 203; and William C. Parker, "Cultural and Academic Stress Imposed on Afro-Americans: Implications for Educational Change," Princeton: E.R.I.C., #ED134646, <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, 5. Only the line marked "Time and Space" require explanation. Bush, 78, clarifies, for people in an oral culture "time and space are anchored to human interaction and community." But for people in textual cultures "time is a linear progression of quantifiable moments, and space is a mathematical assessment of intervals between points." A biblical example of the former, i.e., relative dating, practiced by oral cultures can be seen in Isa. 6:1: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord."

11. Madinger, "Coming to Terms with Orality," 211.

12. It's important to note that literacy doesn't vanish in a secondary oral society. As Ong, 11, makes clear, this "new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print." Yet, at the same time in modern America, fewer and fewer people are taking time to type a question then "Google" the internet for an answer to read but instead call out to a voice-activated device, "Hey, Siri..." or "OK, Google..." then listen for a response.

13. The concept of a "Guttenberg Parenthesis" was formulated by L. O. Sauerberg of the University of Southern Denmark. Professor Thomas Pettit, of the same university, describes the "parenthesis" as "the idea that oral culture was in a way interrupted by Gutenberg's invention of the printing press and the roughly 500 years of print dominance; a dominance now being challenged in many ways by digital culture and the orality it embraces." See Greg Peverill-Conti and Brad

Seawell, "The Guttenberg Parenthesis: Oral Traditions and Digital Technologies," 1 April 2010, <https://commforum.mit.edu/the-gutenberg-parenthesis-oral-tradition-and-digital-technologies-29e1a4fde271>, retrieved 26 January 2018.

14. "Thomas Pettit on the Guttenberg Parenthesis," Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/10705406>, retrieved 26 January 2018, maintains that during that parenthetical period people were keen on categorizing. Information found in books was categorized as truth. The devolution of print media—from books to paperbacks to newspapers to desktop publishing—combined with the evolution of modern technologies, especially the internet, has caused people to question once again "what is truth?" "Print," says Pettit, "is no longer a guarantee of truth, and speech no longer undermines truth."

15. Lynne Abney's "Orality Assessment Tool" ([www.story4glory.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Orality](http://www.story4glory.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Orality_Assessment_Tool_Worksheet1.pdf)

[Assessment_Tool_Worksheet1.pdf](http://www.story4glory.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Orality_Assessment_Tool_Worksheet1.pdf), retrieved 16 July 2018) teases out the differences between oral and print communicators according to basic learning preferences, the importance of sound, importance of real-life experience, style preference, importance of dialogue, importance of drama and melodrama, and importance of context.

16. It was a colleague, Mark Morris, who has served abroad and stateside as a missionary under the auspices of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and who teaches missions-related courses at the author's college, that first questioned him about "oral homiletics." This same colleague later shared several resources from the field of missiology on the subject of orality, including a copy of Bush's Ph.D. dissertation—one of two primary sources for the first half of this paper.

17. Madinger, "A Literate's Guide to the Oral Galaxy," 19. Madinger proceeds by lamenting, "We eliminated icons from the Eastern Church, physical gestures from the Latin Church, rhythm and drumming from African cultures, and the ties to our ancestors from our Asian brothers and sisters." Writing on literacy's power to bind, Ong, 12, states, "Though words are grounded in oral speech, writing tyrannically locks them into a visual field forever.... [A] literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what [a] word is to purely oral people."

18. ION/LCWE, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 23.

19. Madinger, "Coming to Terms with Orality," 204. Likewise, "literacy is far more than the technologies of writing and reading. It is also the ability to understand and use the information conveyed through the terms and concepts that compromise a message" (ibid., 206).

20. ION/LCWE, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 48.

21. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus, eds., *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 803.

22. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Church Awakening: An Urgent Call for Renewal* (New York: Faith Works, 2010), 107.

23. Missiologists engaged in studies on orality insist orality strategies are essential for evangelism and, following that, a bridge or gateway to written Scripture. According to Ong, 14-15, literacy remains essential “for the development of... [an] explicative understanding of literature and of any art....” Moreover, “There is hardly an oral culture or a predominantly oral culture left in the world today that is not aware of the vast complex of powers forever inaccessible without literacy.” One such power is the ability to develop a comprehensive theology following a “sustained reflection on the whole of Scripture.” (Anthony Francis Casey, “How Shall They Hear? The Interface of Urbanization and Orality in North American Ethnic Church Planting” [Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013], 178.) This inherent limitation of orality points to the need for preaching strategies that go beyond the strictly narrative.

24. Sermons are a type of oration, and as such are subject to the same limitations. Per Ong, 141, an oration “addresses itself to a particular situation and, in the total absence of writing, disappears from the human scene for good with the situation itself.”

25. Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 127; quoted ION /LCWE, 59.

26. Ong, 13.

27. Elizabeth Wilson, “Breakthroughs,” in *Orality Breakouts: Using Heart Language to Transform Hearts*, Samuel E. Chiang, ed., (Hong Kong: ION/LCWE, 2010), 27; quoted in Bush, 186.

28. Ong, 8, maintains that “abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading.” In short, much of our current stock in trade as expository preachers requires literate hearers.

29. Consider “born again,” an abstruse term from the moment Jesus coined it in John 3. Nicodemus, the religious scholar who first heard the expression, didn’t “get it.” Two millennia of biblical scholars have struggled to unpack it. To this day we disagree over many of the finer (and not so fine) points of John 3:1-21. Some of those contentious points being: whether Jesus meant “born again” or “born from above;” what it means to be “born of water and the Spirit;” to whom Jesus (or John?) was referring by His use of “we” in v. 11; whether Nicodemus was truly ignorant or obstinately refusing to accept Jesus’ words (v. 12); where Jesus’ dialog

with Nicodemus ends and John's exposition begins (vv. 16-21); if "whosoever" (v. 16) includes everyone or only the elect; whether v. 18 teaches an unconditional eternal security.

30. Symbols may be visual, i.e., objects, or verbal, i.e., metaphors.

31. Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 28-35.

32. See, for example, Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Ralph L. and Gregg Lewis, *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1983); Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) and *How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989); David L. Larsen, *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995); Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001).

33. Ong, *Orality and Textuality*, 139-47.

34. Helpful resources for honing one's storytelling skills include John Walsh, *The Art of Storytelling: Easy Steps to Presenting an Unforgettable Story* (Chicago: Moody, 2003) and accompanying workshops, examples, and tips at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zVzn_P-aMM&list=PLMgRojzaGeTtNVxrNzYzJKWXztj82Hr12.

Walsh's websites www.biblestorytelling.org and www.btstories.com include his telling of 260 Bible stories, helpful "story insights," and other tools. The International Storytelling Center (www.storytellingcenter.net), located in Jonesborough, Tennessee, hosts an annual storytelling festival and storytellers in-residence throughout the year.

35. ION/LCWE, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 35.

36. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 40. Ong, 140, similarly observes, "knowledge and discourse come out of human experience and that the elemental way to process human experience verbally is to give an account of it more or less as it really comes into being and exists, embedded in the flow of time. Developing a story line is a way of dealing with this flow."

37. Tom Wright, *The Original Jesus: The Life and Vision of a Revolutionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 36.

38. Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

39. ION/LCWE, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 36-37.

40. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 40. In ways I'm sure I still don't realize, I continue to be shaped by the Bible stories and comic books of my youth.

41. Ibid., 39: "Even at its most proverbial and epigrammatic, Jewish writing retains the underlying substructure of the Jewish story about the covenant god, the world, and Israel." Ong, 140: "Behind even the abstractions of science, there lies narrative of the observations on the basis of which the abstractions have been formulated.... Behind proverbs and aphorisms and philosophical speculation and religious ritual lies the memory of human experience strung out in time and subject to narrative treatment."



THE FUTURE OF PREACHING: AN ADDRESS TO THE EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Even an off-the-cuff observer can promptly assess the perils of prediction. From the seventies, Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* only shocks now with its side-splitting misses.¹ John Naisbitt's 1980 potboiler, *Megatrends*, might be re-issued as *Mega-mistakes*.² Actually, two schools of thought dominate the prediction vocation. Jeanne Dixon represented the quantity school. Her fame rested on predicting the JFK assassination. Yet this was only one success among thousands of her predictions of future non-events. Nostradamus, on the other hand, personified the ambiguity school. Since the soothsayer was sufficiently vague, his auguries may have been attached to anyone. At any rate, Nostradamus's disciples attribute Napoleon, Hitler, and 9/11 to his foresight.

With such caveats in mind, I hazard a handful of predictions about the future of preaching. I have learned that an expert is someone who belongs to a university two or three states away from where the expert fulminates at a professional meeting. In fact, there is an inverse relationship between proximity and perceived expertise. The nearer you are to your usual colleagues, the less expertise you possess. Also, this is not a formal paper but rather an address based on personal observation as a pastor, itinerant, and professor of preaching over a fifty-four-year preaching ministry.

GOD WILL PERSIST IN CALLING PERSONS TO PREACH

First, *God will persist in calling persons to preach*. His call follows a paradigm well stated in Jeremiah 1. That teenager gripped by a divine vocation found his identity in a specific locality, family, and chronology. The call even resonated in his very

name, Jeremiah (“YHWH hurls”). That call threw him down into his own time. His locality was a village outside Jerusalem, Anathoth. He was *for* the city without being *of* the city. His family represented that of a country priest—his father, Hilkiah. His chronology spanned the shallow revival of Josiah, the apostasy of Jehoiakim, and the tragedy of Zedekiah.

Those particular markers remain in the life of all of us called to preach. If I recast Jeremiah 1 as my own experience, I would say, “The word of the Lord came to Joel in Fort Worth, the son of Cliff and Edith Gregory, from the time of Lyndon B. Johnson through the days of Richard Nixon unto the days of Donald Trump.” In every epoch of His kingdom, God has continued to call out proclaimers from a concrete context of place, family, and chronology. The ringing promise of Ephesians 4:11 has never failed the church: “Some he made his messengers, some prophets, some preachers of the Gospel; to some he gave the power to guide and teach his people” (Phillips). The durability of the preaching ministry does not rest on the invention of the church but rather on the intervention of God throughout its history. In no era or epoch has God ceased to call.

Yet the traditional public credentials that once validated a call from God have disappeared in my lifetime. Not that long ago, ordination, education, ecclesial dress, and the very pulpit itself authenticated the calling of the minister. The contemporary young adult steeped in a rationalistic, materialistic education has heard of “margin call,” “outcall,” “will call,” and “recall” but not God’s call. Today the secularist may not even know the meaning of the word “ordination.” Ministerial education carries no weight of respect or stamp of the exceptional. The blue jeans-clad pastor stands out for not standing out. Even the pulpit has been replaced with a shaky music stand or elevated cocktail table. Those very things that served as culturally vetted markers for ministerial authority started disappearing with Elvis and have vanished entirely in the age of the Kardashians.

It is unimaginable today, for example, that anyone would replicate the title or intent of Edgar DeWitt Jones’ paean to famous preachers who delivered the early Lyman Beecher Lectures, *The Royalty of the Pulpit*.³ The very memory that Harry Emerson Fosdick’s lectures were so crowded the police had to be present leaves one dumbfounded.⁴ Yet, a more fitting title for such a roll call today might be *The Public Banality of the Pulpit*. In fact, a seasoned churchman in the booming tech-town of Austin, Texas, recently decried the astonishing reality that only 10 percent of the population goes to church. Some of the others are astonished that the church still even exists.

PREACHING WILL CONTINUE IN THE CHURCH

Second, *preaching will continue in the church*. As a teenage ministerial undergraduate in the late sixties, I heard a discouraging prediction: the sermon was as dead as Thomas J. J. Altizer and John A. T. Robinson announced God to be. The sermon would be replaced with psychodramas after the homiletic pallbearers removed the irrelevant pulpit from the platform. The call of the hour was act, march, and protest—not just talk. It is ironic that the climactic moment of that era was MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech, a type of public pulpit rhetoric certainly demonstrating that delivered exhortation still had life.

Contemporary predictions of empty churches and silent pulpits embody a parochial, insulated, white, myopic view of the world church. In the Global South the sermon is flourishing, crowds gather in unbearable conditions to listen to long sermons, and worshippers await a word from God with expectation. The same is still true of most African-American churches. Privileged white folks endure a twenty-minute sermon as if taking a bitter pill while brothers and sisters of color expect a word from the pulpit that will give them the nerve to face another week. While the majority culture silently reflects during the sermon, "Will he ever shut up?" the black congregant cries out, "Stay right there!" Thus, the death of the sermon has been pronounced in only one portion of one expression of the world church.

One sign of preaching's persistence is this bareboned statement: only the preacher has a congregation. If you placed a congressman, biochemist, historian, television chef, or raconteur in a three-hundred-seat auditorium with the promise that once a week he or she would speak about the same subject for years with no change of subject, you can guess the results. Initial enthusiasm would diminish, the crowd would scatter, and eventually the weekly occasion would cease. Yet all over the planet, good, bad, and even miserable sermons delivered by a local pastoring preacher call the same folks to the same place in an endless succession of Sundays. And when an old preacher leaves, a new one comes and continues the series. You cannot find anything else in the culture like that. Indeed, preaching will continue.

THE FORM OF THE SERMON WILL CHANGE

Third, what will continue to change is *the form of the sermon*. O. C. Edwards and Hughes Oliphant Old have produced the two recent magisterial histories of preaching.⁵ One conclusion cannot be avoided. No one rhetorical form has defined the Christian sermon since Melito of Sardis preached the first extant sermon.

Indeed, many sermons would not be recognized as such by contemporary evangelicals. Added to that is the discovery that 75 percent of sermons in Christian history have been allegorical. Even when Luther and Calvin rejected allegory, they still fell into it as if it were a homiletic Bermuda triangle. In recent decades the debate has been waged among deductive, inductive, and narrative proponents. One famed preacher stated, "If it is not expository, it is not preaching." I expect the debate in the twenty-first century will revisit questions not even being asked now. The Archbishop of Canterbury tweeted his Easter sermon while an Oxford don a hundred miles away fulminated against bright undergraduates for being "infantilized" in a tweeting, texting world. All of this predicts stalwart debates about different forms in the future.

THE LENGTH OF THE SERMON WILL NOT BE DEFINED

Fourth, *the length of the sermon will not be defined*. South of my town was a church on I-35 with the captivating sign, "The Thirty-Minute Church." Sing, give, listen, and leave in half an hour. Contrast that with the earlier edition of Rob Bell at Mars Hill Bible Church. He expounded each Sunday for fifty minutes on Leviticus, the series that built the church. On the other hand, the notable Princeton preacher Reverend Dr. Cleophus LaRue preaches less than thirty minutes and makes the congregation hunger for more. I once was lecturing at a continuing education event for preachers attended by one Jewish rabbi. While Protestants moped about having to stop after thirty minutes, the rabbi complained his synagogue had voted to muzzle him after eight minutes.

The future endurable length of a sermon will be defined by the same two qualities that have always defined acceptable sermon length: unity and movement. The questions, "What in the world is this about?" and "Where in the world is this going?" will continue to set the acceptable length of a sermon. If the congregation detects unity and movement, it will grant the preacher more time. The sermon that skips from Saul and Agag to Paul and the Philippian jailer with no noticeable connection will cause most to impatiently peer at their digital devices.

SOCIAL MEDIA WILL ENABLE CHURCH SHOPPERS

Fifth, *social media will enable church shoppers to find the style they want with unprecedented clarity*. In the pre-digital church world, finding out the rhetorical style and biblical code of a certain preacher was basically hit-and-miss. A conversation in the company mail room, a neighbor's guess, or a relative's

suggestion might lead the seeker to visit a church. That visit might have led to disappointment as well as edification. Throughout the nineties, those seeking and finding a preacher whose theology and style they preferred relied mainly on hearsay, whether it was accurate or not. In this bold new world of streaming services, Facebook posts, and YouTube clips, however, serious computer users can find the kind of preacher they desire.

Do you want an exhaustive exegetical preacher who expounds on every word? Do you want a life coach who merely wags the Bible about before ignoring it? Do you want a warm devotional preacher with pastoral intonations? Do you seek a progressive mainline liberal spouting a new cause each week? Presto! The Web can lead you to the right church door. Indeed, it has never been so easy for a preacher and constituency to find each other. The 24/7 availability of preachers on the Web enables the avid searcher for a certain sermonic sound to connect quickly and change preachers just as quickly. The availability of sermon samples on the Web often will be a greater determining factor for church choice than denomination or location.

THE MULTI-LOCATION AND MULTI-SERVICE CHURCHES HAVE PEAKED

Sixth, *the multi-location and multi-service churches have peaked*. This is a bold but intuitive observation. Years ago at a meeting of mega-church pastors, the late Adrian Rogers was involved in a discussion about how large a church can possibly get. Typically, he coined a striking proverb: “God didn’t make anything larger than a whale.” The group pondered that in silence until the epiphany came. Just as there is an upper limit to physical creation, there is also an upper limit to the size of church creation. God could have made an animal as large as He wished, but He stopped with a whale. There are indeed limits to His creations, imposed by God Himself.

It might be argued that Charles Haddon Spurgeon pastored the first Protestant mega-church. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was open from dawn to midnight daily, with sixty various enterprises rooted in the church. Yet, by the age of forty-two, Spurgeon complained that he had created a machine that was eating him up. George W. Truett pastored First Baptist Dallas from 1897 to 1944. The church grew for twenty-nine years, but records show that even under the great Truett it declined for the last fifteen years of his pastorate. It was one of the largest churches in America at that time. Nevertheless, getting there and staying there are indeed two different things. The gifted, charismatic pastor/founder/builder rarely sustains what he started.

Added to this is the millennial and post-modern desire for community. The template for huge churches has started to grow stale. The non-liturgical liturgy has become a liturgy, from the coffee in the foyer to the ripped musician in the smoke and lights. This raises the question, "What is healthy, sustainable church growth?" The Christian church has a long set of minutes, something like two thousand years. For the most part, church life has featured a faithful pastor in a local parish or community church that might be called a single-cell church. That is what the organic preaching of the gospel has produced in all times and places. While the church may ebb or flow, or wax and wane, over a long period of time, churches have tended to be single-cell organisms. The faithful preaching of the gospel has typically produced a single-cell church and will continue to do so in the future as the setting of preaching.

EDUCATION FOR PREACHING WILL RETURN TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

Seventh, *education for preaching will return to the local church*. Preparation for preaching will return to the local congregation with accelerating velocity. Daniel O. Aleshire, who served as the executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, spent a semester at Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary. He oversaw the accreditation of theological schools of every variety for decades. He emphasized the return of theological education to the church setting.

I recently spoke at an independent charismatic church in northwest Arkansas. The pastor invited me to remain for a continuing education event on Monday. He had invited preaching pastors from cities in the area to attend. Some 179 ministers appeared Monday morning. Among these, forty-nine attended from one area megachurch, which underwrites their presence as pastoral mentees. Over a year they can earn up to thirty hours that may be transferred to any one of sixteen seminaries collaborating with the church. Two seminaries have professorial representatives embedded at this megachurch. They act as utility professors teaching a range of subjects. A Chicago church where I preached in August does the same thing with one ministerial intern during a one-year span. Whether large scale or individual, the trend is clear and the trajectory apparent. Preparation to preach is headed back to the place it happens, the local congregation.

Our brothers and sisters of color have done this from the inception of the black church. The majority of churches of color where I preach have an active program to train ministers within their respective congregations. This may be more or less formal, but it is present. A curating, mentoring, and church-based model has always typified the black fellowship of believers. A friend in North Carolina conducts a church-based ministerial training school on Monday nights

with students who drive fifty miles one way to attend. I have spoken several times at their certification. Such entities are not necessarily accredited, and they serve bi-vocational preachers. Yet what has been sporadic and informal is now becoming normative and formal. The Truett program called Preaching Plus, underwritten by a Lilly grant, gathers younger pastors around seasoned tall-steeple church mentor-coaches for a two-year program. This is but another harbinger of what is to come.

THE NUMBER OF WOMEN PREACHING WILL INCREASE

Eighth, *the number of women preaching will increase at a quickening rate*. What has been the case in mainline Protestantism will find more traction among evangelicals. Even though the evangelical movement tends towards complementarian views, it is beyond question that egalitarian tendencies are demonstrably increasing in historically evangelical seminaries and colleges. This is not a prescriptive statement but is most certainly descriptive. There will be more women preaching in typically evangelical settings. A wise, highly respected octogenarian pastor who opposes women in pastoral preaching positions stated, "Whether you agree or disagree, there will be no stopping it." I belong to a seminary evangelical in confession and a preaching "department" staffed by three noted evangelicals. Our school affirms the call of God in the lives of women as they determine that call.

CONCLUSION

Preaching thrives when it is just one good thing in the church. Sometimes, however, preaching has been *everything* in the church. That principle does not usually depart from a church after the gifted pastor is finished. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), for example, exuded a towering presence at Westminster Chapel, London. His preaching ministry was the centerpiece of the church, but there was little else. With his retirement the church virtually emptied of the thousands who came to hear the distinguished Welsh physician and pastor. For that particular congregation, preaching was everything. He was followed by R. T. Kendall. Kendall did not experience the same crowds drawn by the doctor, but he did leave a flourishing church with multiple activities and ministries. Indeed, the church suffers when preaching is everything.

Yet the reverse is also true. The church also suffers when preaching is nothing. When "worship" as sometimes defined preempts the sermon, program

replaces proclamation, and denominational emphases overwhelm the heralding of the gospel, the church suffers.

Preaching that flourishes in the future will be one good thing in the church. To quote theologian Forrest Gump, "And that is all I am going to say about that."

NOTES

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1. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).
 2. John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Warner, 1982).
 3. Edgar DeWitt Jones, *The Royalty of the Pulpit* (New York: Harper, 1951).
 4. *Ibid.*, 103.
 5. O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), and Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 7 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

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**REVISIONS OF JOHN A. BROADUS'S CLASSIC WORK,
A TREATISE ON THE PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF
SERMONS MISS THE MARK: MATERIALS PROVIDED AT THE
TIME (INVENTION), BORROWING OF SERMON MATERIAL,
ARGUMENT AND IMAGINATION**

ROBERT L. COMPERE, III
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INTRODUCTION

This article examines discrepancies between the original version of John A. Broadus's *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, published in 1870, and the editions that followed. The original was so popular, not only in the United States but around the world, that four revisions were published. Charles Dargan first updated the work in 1898. He collaborated with Broadus, and then, after Broadus died, cleared all changes with Broadus's family.¹ In 1926, Dargan and C. S. Gardner updated the bibliography only. The second substantial revision came in 1944, by Jesse Weatherspoon. Vernon Stanfield published the final revision in 1979. In an earlier article, I argued that the revisions of Weatherspoon and Stanfield deviated from the original with respect to Eloquence and Definitions for Preaching.² In this article, I assert that certain revisions misrepresent Broadus' original with respect to Materials Provided at the Time (Invention), Borrowing of Sermon Material, Argument, and Imagination. When appropriate, and where one revision closely mirrors another, they will be discussed together.

MATERIALS PROVIDED AT THE TIME (INVENTION)

Broadus explained the basics of invention as they relate to sermon preparation: one should interpret the text, reflect upon it, analyze it, and then collect "all necessary matters which are likely to be useful."³ Additionally, he offered Kidder's practical suggestions for invention to guide further sermon development—namely, writing thoughts about the text, pursuing invention of thought related to the text, and using other studies and helps to stimulate thinking.⁴

Weatherspoon's and Stanfield's Editions

Weatherspoon deleted portions of this section; that which he kept he relocated to part five, chapter 1, Methods of Preparation and Sermon Delivery. Stanfield deleted most of this material and relocated part of it to chapter 27, Special Preparation.⁵ Weatherspoon and Stanfield inserted some of Broadus's material regarding studying and reflecting upon the text; however, instead of using Kidder's suggestions for invention, they inserted the theories of George Buttrick, Henry Coffin, Parkses Cadman, H. A. Prichard, and J. H. Jowett. Some of these theories were quite different from the model Broadus presented. For instance, Buttrick advised looking at commentaries before thinking deeply over the material. Coffin began with the needs of the congregation rather than with the text, and Prichard advised getting the sermon theme from a conversation or experience or book.⁶ Four of these five scholars advised writing a sermon manuscript, a practice Broadus advised against. By updating portions of Broadus' material on invention with the views of contemporary preachers, Weatherspoon's and Stanfield's editions departed from Broadus' overarching view of keeping the text of Scripture first and central during the ever-important sermon preparation stage of Invention. The various models of sermon building they added present a different emphasis of invention when compared with the particular model presented in Broadus's original. Furthermore, they do not reflect the overall model of sermon building Broadus presented throughout the book.⁷

BORROWING OF SERMON MATERIAL

Dargan's and Weatherspoon's Editions

Since Stanley deleted this material, only Dargan's and Weatherspoon's editions will be examined. Four changes to the text indicate a slight contrast in meaning between their editions and Broadus's.⁸

The first change occurs in the introductory paragraph. Broadus explained that the word *plagiarism* is derived from *plagiary*, a word referring to a kidnapper in ancient Rome. Broadus said, "A plagiary, among the Romans, was a kidnapper, one who stole free men and made slaves of them."⁹ To that sentence, Dargan and Weatherspoon added the following: "Also one who stole or enticed away another man's slave *to use or sell as his own*, and this secondary sense appears to be that which gave rise to the literary usage [emphasis mine]."¹⁰ The addition to the statement highlights a slight distinction between borrowing with acknowledgment and borrowing without acknowledgment.

Second, Dargan and Weatherspoon lengthened the footnote inserted after this sentence: "Plagiarism has from the earliest times been censured and satirized, and no man defends it, any more than other stealing would be defended."¹¹ Broadus included the following footnote: "Chrysostom, in his beautiful treatise on the Priesthood (sec. 451), makes a slightly humorous complaint as to the charges of plagiarism made against preachers, sometimes even for repeating something of their own."¹² Dargan and Weatherspoon lengthened Broadus's footnote as follows: "And Augustine does defend the practice in a strange fashion (De Doct. Christ., Lib. IV., cap. Xxix., n. 62), saying that one must not be accused of theft or plagiarism for preaching 'alienos sermons,' if he lives according to the teachings they contain, for thereby it becomes his own; 'for the word of God is not *alien* to a man who obeys it.' Strange what quibbling sophistry great minds sometimes permit themselves to use!"¹³ The additional material added humor to Broadus's footnote and also subtly downplayed negativity associated with the borrowing of sermon material.

Third, Dargan and Weatherspoon changed the following sentence: "*Never* appropriate the complete outline of a discourse."¹⁴ Dargan and Weatherspoon added the words "without acknowledgment." Thus, they said, "*Never* appropriate without acknowledgment the complete outline of a discourse."¹⁵ This change indicates more obvious approval of borrowing entire sermon outlines, especially when considered in the context of their fourth change to this section, where they deleted a sentence in which Broadus explained that borrowing "one head of the discourse" may be practiced rarely by preachers.¹⁶ By excluding the statement, Dargan and Weatherspoon actually removed the qualifying statement "one head of the discourse" and therefore allowed a more permissive attitude toward the practice of borrowing entire sermon materials.¹⁷

Overstreet, in his dissertation "The 1889 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching and the Recovery of the Late Homiletic of John Albert Broadus (1827-1895)," compared Broadus's Yale lectures, delivered in 1889, to Dargan's edition, published in 1898, to see if content from the Yale lectures was incorporated into Dargan's edition.¹⁸ He noted that Dargan added two sections to his text, Freshness in Preaching and Helps and Sensational Preaching—Cautions, which resulted from lectures Broadus delivered at the 1889 Lyman Beecher Lectures. Overstreet argued, "The infusion of Yale lecture content into [Dargan's edition] is consistent with Broadus's instruction to update one's work with pertinent and relevant material. While the lecture content supplement in [Dargan's edition] adds new content to Broadus's late homiletic, his instructions are often identical and always consistent with the core of his homiletic as articulated in [Broadus's original]."¹⁹ However, Overstreet did not attribute to the Lyman Beecher Lectures the more

permissive attitude toward the borrowing of sermon material found in Dargan's edition; in fact, he doesn't mention it at all. The changes made by Dargan and Weatherspoon with respect to borrowing are not consistent with Broadus' original.

Dargan and Weatherspoon expanded the acceptability and need for borrowing sermon material as long as the originator of that material is acknowledged properly. Their view of borrowing sermon material may seem like a minor difference when compared to Broadus's, but their views begins to undercut a broader theme of Broadus's original—sermons are developed by the preacher by studying Scripture, reflection, and, to a limited degree, incorporating supplemental material; otherwise, the sermon is a work of the preacher without a great deal of outside influence. Dargan's and Weatherspoon's editions pivot on this issue and allows the preacher to rely more heavily on borrowed material than originally prescribed by Broadus.

ARGUMENT

Argument helps present the truth claims of the gospel as a means "to bear down upon the conscience and heart."²⁰ Unfortunately, many preachers rely solely on establishing "authoritative assertion and impassioned appeal"²¹ as their method of persuasion. Broadus believed effective persuasion elicited the will of the hearer. He discussed proper persuasion in his lengthy chapter on argument.

Weatherspoon's and Stanfield's Editions

Weatherspoon and Stanfield altered the chapter significantly. They reduced and rearranged the content of the introduction and deleted section one entirely, where Broadus interacted with Whately regarding *burden of proof*. They also reduced the discussion of *a priori* arguments from seven pages to one page.²² Their chapters retain fewer examples of argument and fewer methods for sharpening one's skill. Although they do not add any new material, their editing reduced the richness of a subject Broadus felt strongly about, thus diminishing his emphasis and the importance Broadus believed the subject deserved.²³

IMAGINATION

Moral qualities and the development of study habits are keys for cultivating one's imagination. Stimulants for imagination are studying nature, the arts, and literature. Exercising the imagination by sheer determination can improve

creativity and enhance creative thinking. Broadus clearly believed that the preacher could and should work to improve his own imaginative powers.²⁴

Weatherspoon's and Stanfield's Editions

In addition to Broadus's reliance on self-discipline and self-training, Weatherspoon and Stanfield identified an additional source for cultivating the imagination: the Holy Spirit. They wrote:

In preaching it is the task of imagination to relate the seen to the unseen, the actual to the ideal, the present to the future, the transient to the eternal. That suggests the need of something beyond rhetoric and logic; it calls for what Isaiah did in the year that King Uzziah died, and what the psalmist did when by reasoning he could find no harmony between human fortune and human character,—it calls for worship, prayer, spiritual meditation.²⁵

By placing this material in the introduction to the section, Weatherspoon and Stanfield indicated the need for spiritual meditation to influence all areas of imagination. Beyond this general influence of the Spirit, they discussed the specific need for reliance on the Spirit. They said, "Imagination finds its inspiration and power in the 'upper room' today as on that wonderful day of Pentecost."²⁶ After developing the theme that dependence on the Holy Spirit should guide the imagination, Weatherspoon and Stanfield closed with the following: "Rhetoric, logic, psychology are the channels and instruments of preaching; the spirit of God is the source of power, as his word is the message of life."²⁷

Broadus did not discuss the role of the Holy Spirit as it relates to imagination. He argued that preachers could improve their imaginative skills by consistently engaging the mind in critical thinking, creative endeavors, and most of all by practice: "The great means of cultivating imagination, as in the case with all our faculties, is actual *exercise*."²⁸ Weatherspoon and Stanfield discussed an additional aspect of imagination—the need for the Holy Spirit to guide and even overshadow the preacher's imagination. The addition of this factor in the cultivation of creativity and imagination changed the overall flow of this section by directly connecting imagination to preaching through the work of the Spirit—a connection Broadus did not make. Broadus seemed to keep the role of the Holy Spirit in the mystical realm throughout his book; he never devoted any section to discussing the Holy Spirit, but he infused Him throughout, even though implicitly. Broadus' emphasis on eloquence, text selection, reflection, persuasion

of the will, and extemporaneous delivery, all depend on the Holy Spirit. One of Broadus' more explicit references to the importance of the Holy Spirit in preaching, though veiled enough to never specifically mention the Holy Spirit, is in the introduction. Broadus said:

But printing can never take the place of the living word. When a man who is apt in teaching, whose soul is on fire with the truth which he trusts has saved him and hopes will save others, speaks to his fellow-men, face to face, eye to eye, and electric sympathies flash to and fro between him and his hearers, till they lift each other up, higher and higher, into the intensest (sic) thought, and the most impassioned emotion—higher and yet higher, till they are borne as on chariots of fire above the world,—there is a power to move men, to influence character, life, destiny, such as no printed page can ever possess.²⁹

Later in the introduction, Broadus says that preaching is “made mighty by God’s Spirit.”³⁰ While discussing public prayers, Broadus made an implicit reference to the Holy Spirit: “All the arguments we have urged in favor of arrangement in preaching, apply, more or less, to order in prayer.”³¹ Imagination, to Broadus, was cultivated through the preacher’s affiliation with the arts, literature, nature, critical thinking, and practice—He did not directly connect it to the Holy Spirit. Rather, he implicitly connected the entire process of preaching to the Holy Spirit. By directly connecting imagination to the Holy Spirit, Weatherspoon and Stanfield minimized this broader, more implicit, connection made by Broadus.

CONCLUSION

With respect to Materials Provided at the Time (Invention), Weatherspoon and Stanfield replaced crucial portions of the text with views different from those of Broadus. Whereas Broadus advocated a text-first approach to thinking through a text, the views presented by Weatherspoon and Stanfield taught that a text-first approach was one of many ways to choose or think through a text. Their editions teach the viability of reading a commentary before reading the Scripture text, generating a sermon text from the needs of the congregation, and getting a sermon idea from a conversation, book, or life experience.

Dargan and Weatherspoon subtly, though substantially, altar Broadus' view of using borrowed sermon material. Broadus rarely allowed for the borrowing of material, and only with citation. Dargan and Weatherspoon allowed for a more expansive role in the borrowing of sermon material.

Weatherspoon and Stanfield changed the section on argument significantly. Although they do not add any new material, they omitted the section, *Burden of Proof*, and significantly reduced the other portions. Overall, the editing minimized the importance of argument and left out key components for sharpening one's skill.

Weatherspoon and Stanfield added to the section on imagination the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit—a theme Broadus did not address. By discussing the role of the Holy Spirit in this section, they changed Broadus' intent and emphasis. For Broadus, imagination was a faculty of the mind that can be improved by focus and endurance.

NOTES

1. Charles Dargan, *A Treatise*, "Preface to the Revised Edition", n.p.
2. Robert Compere, "Revisions of John A. Broadus' Classic Work, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, Miss the Mark: Definitions for Preaching and Eloquence," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 16:1 (March 2016): 46-54.
3. John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co.; New York: Sheldon & Co., 1870), 126.
4. *Ibid.*, 126-7.
5. J.B. Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York, London: Harper, 1944), 293-9; Stanfield, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: Harper, 1979), 241-6.
6. Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 296-9; Stanfield, *On the Preparation*, 242-6.
7. Roger Duke, "John A. Broadus, Rhetoric, and *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*," in *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy* (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 74-75; Broadus, *A Treatise*, 38-86; 248-88, 406-43.
8. The texts in question are found in Broadus's part one, chapter 4, General Materials of Preaching—Originality, Borrowing, and Plagiarism. Dargan's part one, chapter 5, General Materials of Preaching, and Weatherspoon's part one, chapter 5, General Materials of the Sermon, correspond to this chapter. (Compere, *A Study of the Revisions*, 271)
9. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 135.
10. Dargan, *A Treatise*, 137; Weatherspoon *On the Preparation*, 88; appendix 2, 105; 128w.
11. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 135.
12. *Ibid.*

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13. Dargan, *A Treatise*, 138; Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 88; appendix 2, 106; 129wa.
 14. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 137.
 15. Dargan, *A Treatise*, 140; Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*.
 16. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 141; appendix 2, 114.
 17. Dargan, *A Treatise*, 144; Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 91.
 18. Overstreet did not compare Broadus's original edition to Weatherspoon's edition.
 19. Mark Overstreet, "The 1889 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching and the Recovery of the Late Homiletic of John Albert Broadus (1827-1895). Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005," 60.
 20. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 159.
 21. *Ibid.*, 158.
 22. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 173-80; Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 183-4; Stanfield, *On the Preparation*, 156.
 23. Smith, "Introductory Preaching Courses," 28.
 24. Compere, *A Study of the Revisions*, 69-70
 25. Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 287; Stanfield, *On the Preparation*, 229.
 26. Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 291; Stanfield, *On the Preparation*, 233.
 27. Weatherspoon, *On the Preparation*, 291; Stanfield, *On the Preparation*, 223.
 28. Broadus, *A Treatise*, 405.
 29. *Ibid.*, 18.
 30. *Ibid.*, 19.
 31. *Ibid.*, 496.



ANOTHER SINNER'S PRAYER

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Exodus 33:12

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years much has been said among North American theologians and preachers about “the sinner’s prayer.” I personally have two problems with the sinner’s prayer that is the topic of so much debate.

We have too few sinners—too few sinners inside the Body of Christ, reaching out to too few sinners outside the Body of Christ. Most of us enjoy a comfortable context wherever we serve. We do not have to spend much time around folks who drink, smoke, chew, swear, do drugs, or make self-destructive choices. We detach ourselves too easily from those without Jesus. In fact, if we are not careful, we lose the perspective that *all* really are sinners. However, as a colleague once said, “I like to sin. Don’t you? I enjoy it. If I didn’t enjoy it I wouldn’t do it.” I am a sinner because I like to sin. And I have learned how to hide my sinfulness pretty well, thank you. One of my problems with the sinner’s prayer is that it seems like we have too few sinners. There is a second issue.

There is too little praying—I mean, are we seeking God and interceding as passionately as we sing, study, preach, write, and celebrate? What about in our churches? Are we praying as intentionally and strategically as we are organizing, planting, launching, meeting, leading, teaching, dreaming, and serving? How many of our congregations are known for our praying? Yet, did not Jesus Himself say, “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13)?

So, this morning, I want to look at another sinner’s prayer. It is a prayer on which we can all agree. It is a prayer we can all pray. Turn with me to Exodus 33:12, as we consider “Another Sinner’s Prayer”.

Here is the context. God's people are in a temporary location. His covenant has been ignored and His people have rebelled (Exodus 32). Sin separates them from God. Still, God keeps His covenant but draws away from His people (32:34-33:2). Instead, He sends an angel. His pulling away is an act of grace according to Exodus 33:3. His followers are afraid they are stuck. They repent and His covenant fellowship is restored (33:4-6). They are willing to go wherever to find Him (33:7), are found alert at their assigned stations (33:8), and engage in active worship of Him as their one true King and God (33:10).

However, their temporary circumstance is about to change. God did not intend for them to stay where they are. It was simply a time of learning, discipleship, transition, establishing an identity, strengthening their faith, and free worship. God's plan was to take them to His promise, His provision, His full redemption.

As their leader, Moses, recognizes he is a sinner, too. He has a history of anger issues. He struggles to trust God. Sometimes he is egocentrically and narcissistically proud. Sometimes he is disobedient. He is impatient, frustrated, afraid, and impulsive. Yet, he develops an open, authentic, honest, no holds barred relationship with God (33:11). Notice how Moses, the sinner, prays.

Moses prays another sinner's prayer. We can all pray this sinner's prayer. What is this other sinner's prayer? It involves three requests. Look, beginning at verses 12-13.

"SHOW ME YOUR WAYS" (33:13)

Moses' request

Note that the negative Moses uses in v. 12 is the absolute prohibitive in Hebrew. It means "You have *never* let me in on this, God. You have not allowed me into Your heart the way that I have sought to allow You into my life. You have *never* let me know Your paths, God. You have not shown me this journey. You have not revealed Your ways to me. You have not shown Me Your direction about how I am supposed to deal with these people and fulfill this mission to which You have called me. So, Lord, show me Your ways. Cause me to know Your paths."

The prophet in Isaiah 55:8 realizes this when God reminds him, "My thoughts are not your thoughts; My *ways*, not your *ways*."

We have to be shown the ways of God. We must learn what pleases God. The ways of God do not come to us naturally, but supernaturally. They have to be revealed to us. And He has revealed them to us in His Word.

When Moses prays for God to show him His ways, he is not speaking about an educational model but a relational model. He anticipates a daily walk with God, growing in pleasing God. Paul asserts in 2 Corinthians 5:9 "... our ambition ... is to be *pleasing* to God." In Ephesians 5:10 Paul admonishes followers of Christ to "... discover what *pleases* the Lord."

Discovering the ways of God is a continual pursuit. It is a lifestyle, not a destination or body of knowledge. It requires the disciplines necessary to seek God's ways for the rest of our lives. That is why short cuts in walking with God are so dangerous. They develop the habit of short cutting in service to God. When we allow students to think that they have succeeded by short cutting we are doing a disservice to them, and more importantly we are doing a disservice to God.

Moses was a sinner like us in many ways but he did not settle for short cuts in walking with God. He worked at it. The reason is disclosed in v. 13: "so that I may know You and find favor in Your sight." I thought Moses had already found favor with God! Yet, here he is making this request so that he may find favor with God. What is going on? The meaning is actually that Moses may *continue* to find favor with God. "That I may *continue* to know Your sanctifying favor, Your sanctifying grace." Not God's justifying favor or grace. "So that I may walk with You in a way that is progressive in my growth and experience with You." This is the reason why Moses wants God to show him His ways. It is not for some self-centered accomplishment.

The basis of Moses' request is not because he believes he is worthy of it or merits it. Look again at the verse. He says "if there is a relationship, based on that relationship please reveal to me Your way of living."

There is another basis for this request. Look at the end of this request in v. 13. Moses reaches back and grabs hold of the promise of God. He acknowledges that the people do not belong to him but belong to God. "These are Your people, they are not mine. I don't own them. They are Your possession. Remember Your promise to Your people, God."

It is God's church; it is not my church. It is not our church. It belongs to Him. And God is responsible for taking care of what belongs to Him.

God's answer

Notice how God responds in v. 14. It is personal to Moses. "My presence will go with you." God assures Moses that He will answer his prayer. The word "face; presence" is intertwined 7 times throughout this narrative. God also promises that He will give Moses the gift of rest. He will cause Moses to rest. This is the One

Who has invited us, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

We cannot run from our struggles and challenges and sin. They travel with us wherever we go. We need to know God's ways of living if we are to experience His continual sanctifying favor. We can all pray this sinner's prayer: "Lord, show me Your ways." There is a second request in this sinner's prayer.

"SHOW ME YOUR WILL" (33:15-16)

Moses' request

Moses has an insatiable hunger and thirst for God, *only God*. If God Himself is not in it, Moses wants no part of it. He cannot be satisfied with just an angel or messenger from God. He wants God Himself! No substitute. But he has little confidence at this point about God's direction.

His request for God's will to be clearly affirmed *involves others*, not just himself. This is not an individualistic, self-centered perspective to following God. It involves community.

Is there not One Who taught us to pray "thy Kingdom come, *thy will be done*, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10)?

Some of you are seeking God's will right now. The doors open for service don't seem to match how you thought you would be serving God. Or maybe you feel stuck and you wonder if you should bail on this homiletical stuff and re-enter the job market. Or maybe ministry is not what you thought it was going to be. It is too easy, or it is too tough, or it is too long, or it is too political, or it is too expensive, or it is too isolated. You need to know God's will. You need clarity and assurance NOW.

God's answer

God responds in v. 17. The basis of God's response is that they are in relationship with one another. "You have found favor. You have experienced My grace, My unmerited favor. I have known you by name. I do not just cognate your name. I re-cognate or recognize who you are, Moses. I have known you. We are in personal relationship. I will never leave you. I will never abandon you."

We can all pray this second request with Moses: "Lord, show me Your will." There is a final request to this sinner's prayer.

"SHOW ME YOUR GLORY" (33:18)

Moses' request

Not only does Moses have an insatiable hunger and thirst for God, and only God, but he wants *ALL of God!* He does not want just the mercy drops, he wants to full rain. He does not want a mist or sprinkle, he wants a spring thunder storm. This is a dangerous request. It is a request that risks destruction for the hope of construction.

God's glory is His weightiness, His heaviness, His significance, His honor, His splendor. His glory drives us first to our faces in abject humility and desperate conviction rather than raising us to our feet in some great rally. His glory is why there will be a period of silence in heaven, according to John in Revelation 8:1. His heaviness will demand the stilling of our tongues. His splendor will call back our breath to its Creator. Every resonate voice, every shrill shout, and every melodious song will fall silent and return to its divine Origin, to the One Who loaned it to us in the first place.

Is it possible that we have become too easily satisfied? Is it possible that our hunger and thirst for God has been quenched by crumbs and a thimbleful of His life-giving water? Yet all the while, God is waiting to pour Himself out like a torrential rain on an Iraqi desert ground. What a bold request Moses prays!

God's answer

Notice vv. 19-23. God answers Moses' request. He says, "I will show you My goodness, My moral character. You will hear Me speak My unpronounceable name that is too holy to come across mortal lips, the name revealed to you at the burning bush. You will witness My sovereign royalty and majesty. You will experience My presence. You will indeed partake of My grace. You will know My protection, My promise, My invitation to come and stand beside Me on a rock. You will see My back and know that I have indeed passed by."

God places Moses on a rock. Do you remember what kept Moses from entering the land of promise? Striking the rock. When God places you between a rock and a hard place, what do you do? Shut your eyes. Open your heart. Pray and expect the glory of God to pass by! Beware of striking the rock. He can protect you. Don't miss His majesty by jumping at the first escape route that pops up. He can provide for you.

There is One Who says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will *never* perish, and *no one* will

snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and *no one* is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

Moses' response

In Exodus 34:8-9, Moses responds in reverence, humility, worship, intercession, confession, and petition to God answering his bold request, "O God, show me Your ways. Show me Your will. Show me Your glory!"

Do we hunger for a passing view of the glory of God? Do we hunger to see the glory and honor of God displayed in the saving of a lost soul? In the restoration of a backslidden believer? In the proclamation of the gospel in the freedom and power and demonstration of the Spirit of God?

God has not called us to lives of privilege, power, and the preferences of a Pharaoh's court. He has called us to pray this other sinner's prayer: "Lord, show me Your ways, Your will, and Your glory." His ways are not the ways of political maneuvering and manipulation. There are times that we may not know His will ... until AFTER we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place, and discover ourselves freely worshipping Him in a special moment of His divine presence. Will we trust and serve Him between that rock and the hard place? Do we want to see the glory of God? Are we prepared to be placed between a rock and a hard place?

In that cold, dark, lonely time, remember God's ultimate glory—Jesus. He is God's full weightiness. John declares in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." When pray and seek to see God's glory, we are praying for nothing less than to see His Son and our Savior, Jesus. He is the rock of all the ages; the rock that has been split so that you and I can hide in Him for shelter. He is so infinite that we cannot stand to see all of Him. He is so massive we cannot stand in His glory. He is so holy, we must be protected in His Presence.

But He is so transparent that He reveals Himself to us. He is so personal that He discloses His name. He is so compassionate that He protects us. He is so selfless that he provides for us. He is so powerful that He strengthens us. He is so responsive that He hears us.

Has not the time come for us to pray this other sinner's prayer? How will we prepare for the permanent view of the glory of God in heaven? Will we drink from the full cup and not the thimble? Will we eat the main dish and not the stale, little crumbs? Has the time come to pray this other sinner's prayer: "O Lord, show me Your ways, Your will, and Your glory"?

CONCLUSION

My name is Dennis Phelps. I am a sinner. I am a sinner who needs to pray. I am a sinner who needs to pray another sinner's prayer, a prayer like Moses—"Lord, show me Your ways, Your will, and Your glory." What about you? Will you join me?



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 homiletics 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, "Gospelizing" 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.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

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

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

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

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

Purpose:

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

Vision:

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

General Editor:

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

Book Review Editor:

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

Managing Editor:

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.

Editorial Board:

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.

Submission Guidelines

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.
Dewey 111.

5. 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.

6. Manuscripts will be between 1,500 and 3,000 words, unless otherwise determined by the editor.

Abbreviations

Please do not use abbreviations in the text. Only use them for parenthetical references. This includes the names of books of the Bible and common abbreviations such as “e.g.” (the full reference, “for example” is preferred in the text). Citations of books, articles, websites are expected. Please do not use “p./pp.” for “page(s),” or “f./ff.” for “following.” Precise page numbers or verse numbers are expected, not “f./ff.”

Capitalization

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.

Scripture quotations should be taken from the NIV. If the quotation is from a different version, abbreviate the name in capital letters following the reference. Place the abbreviation in parentheses: (Luke 1:1-5, NASB).

Headings

First-level Heading

These indicate large sections. They are to be flush left in upper case, and separate from the paragraph that follows.

Second-level Heading

These headings are within the First-level section and are to be flush left, in italic in upper and lower case, and also separate from the paragraph that follows.

Notes

All notes should be endnotes, the same size as the main text with a hard return between each one.

Submission and Correspondence

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

Address correspondence to Scott M. Gibson, General Editor, Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Baylor University's Truett Seminary, One Bear Place #97126, Waco, TX, 76798-7126.

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